

KATHY GRIFFIN OFFENDS CHRISTIANS; PROTEST PAYS OFF

After comedian Kathy Griffin used an incredibly obscene expression to slur Jesus [Warning to readers: we have reprinted it], she ran into a firestorm of controversy, thanks to the Catholic League. By the time it was over, her reputation had taken a quick nose dive.

The date was September 8, and the event was the 59th Annual Creative Arts Emmy Awards. Griffin won Outstanding Reality Program for her Bravo show, "My Life on the D-List," and in her acceptance speech, she complained about how some actors and actresses give credit to Jesus for their success. That was okay. But then Griffin crossed the line when she exclaimed, as she held up her Emmy trophy over her head, "Suck it, Jesus, this award is my God now!"

Our first reaction was disgust and outrage. What immediately came to mind were the following names: Mel Gibson. Michael Richards. Isaiah Washington. Don Imus. Jerry Lewis. All of these famous people have offended one segment of the population or another in recent times, and all have paid a big price for their infractions. And unlike Griffin—who planned her insult—their remarks were wholly spontaneous. So what was going to happen to Griffin? That was up to us, at least in part.

On September 10, we called on Dick Askin, chairman and chief executive officer of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, to denounce Griffin's obscene and blasphemous comment. In actual fact, we did a lot more than that: we posted his e-mail address on our website, knowing that our rabid followers would write to him and weigh in. After all, it was Askin's organization that was responsible for the Creative Arts Emmy event.

What pushed us over the top was the receptive audience Griffin received in Hollywood. According to a story in the *Hollywood Reporter*, her vulgar in-your-face hate speech “drew laughs” from the audience. We told the media, “It is a sure bet that if Griffin had said, ‘Suck it, Muhammad,’ there would have been a very different reaction from the crowd and from the media who covered the event. To say nothing of the Muslim reaction.”

Those who read about our protest online were just as angry, and they let Askin know it. The result? Within 24 hours, the Academy branded Griffin’s comments “offensive” and announced that it would censor them from the taped telecast of the awards ceremony on E! on September 15. It was axiomatic that Fox would not air her offensive remark on its Primetime Emmy Awards on September 16.

We commended the Academy for acting swiftly and responsibly. The ball was then in Griffin’s court: We called on her to issue an immediate and unequivocal apology to Christians. “If she does, she will get this issue behind her,” we told the media on September 11. “If she does not, she will be remembered as a foul-mouthed bigot for the rest of her life.”

By the way, Griffin is not just another ex-Catholic—she hates Catholicism with a passion. In a June interview with *OutSmart*, Houston’s gay magazine, Griffin described herself as a “complete militant atheist” and said that the Catholic Church is “stupid.” No wonder she told the *Los Angeles Times* she hoped people were offended by her obscene verbal assault; this was right after she said it.

It wasn’t just the Hollywood crowd who approved of Griffin’s bigotry—other elites gave her a thumbs-up as well. For example, *New York* magazine gave Griffin “kudos” for her “joyfully blasphemous rant,” going so far as to gush, “thank God we can always count on Kathy Griffin to inject a little energy into a boring awards show.” But the same tabloid found

nothing joyful at all about the remark that got the highly apologetic Imus fired in April, and even went so far as to label it one of the “Great Moments in Bigoted Slurs.” Different strokes for different folks?

Others also shared *New York’s* brand of humor. The website of the *Arizona Daily Star* called Griffin’s words “interesting” and “refreshing,” and a reporter for the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale Fox affiliate said her “raunchy” quip was “kind of funny.” Even more revealing was a new website, SuckItJesus.com, that was created by Griffin’s fans: they wanted her “mild, and comedic” speech to be aired on E!

Perhaps the most defining response of all came from Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists. In a September 12 news release, Johnson called for a boycott of the Emmy awards. Distraught that the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, a private organization, chose not to broadcast Griffin’s anti-Christian rant, Johnson wailed, “this is something I’d expect in a nation like Saudi Arabia or Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.” As we told the media, “Someone needs to give her a copy of the First Amendment—it protects our right to protest objectionable speech.”

Finally, while we were pleased to learn that Griffin’s celebrity stock plummeted as a result of her scripted speech, we also know that there are some very sick people out there who love it every time some bigot takes a shot at Christianity. To wit: the numerous nasty phone calls and messages we received are proof positive of how visceral the hatred is, much of it aimed directly at the Catholic League. No matter, at the end of the day, Griffin lost and we won.