

# KATHY GRIFFIN STUNT BEARS FRUIT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue assesses the reaction to Kathy Griffin's attempt at humor when she held a bloody head of President Trump:

The reaction against Kathy Griffin has been encouraging. It means the public is still capable of being outraged and that lines of decency still exist. Too bad it took something this vulgar to ignite the pushback.

There are other issues related to this matter that should concern us. Comedians are rightfully given much latitude in delivering their script, but it is important to acknowledge that lines can be crossed. It is not just comedians who need to observe lines—so do civil rights organizations.

To be specific, the way the pop culture treats racial, ethnic, and religious groups is a concern for those civil rights organizations that represent their respective constituencies. From African Americans and Asians to Mormons and Muslims, their advocates have a duty to protest when a line has been crossed; they should also know when to back off. That is not easy, but it must be done.

Overreacting is as bad as underreacting. We at the Catholic League do our best to navigate between not being hypersensitive—lest we buy into the culture of political correctness—and being so inured to assaults on our sensibilities that we just learn to live with it. In other words, we need to know when to take a joke, and when to drop the flag.

The best example of a celebrity who knew how to push people's buttons—without insulting them—was Mel Brooks. He spared no demographic group. Yet he never felt the need to stick it to

any of them. He knew the difference between a good-humored jab and a sucker-punch.

The way comedians are reacting to Griffin's stunt shows that Brooks' influence isn't lost altogether. Take the way Jerry Seinfeld, Jamie Foxx, Al Franken, and Jim Carrey have weighed in on the controversy.

Seinfeld said, "So someone told a bad joke—so what? I don't understand the big deal." But was it just another "bad joke," or did it cross the line? In his defense, he is at least consistent: he is on record condemning the political correctness that is ubiquitous on college campuses, so much so that comedians like him don't want to go there anymore.

Foxx said he still likes Griffin, but concedes that "She went past the line, she'll pay for it in the way she pays for it, and we'll go out and we'll laugh with her again." Importantly, he admits a line was crossed.

Franken said Griffin is his friend, and he will not walk away from her. Nevertheless, he allowed that she made a "horrible mistake." He also admits that a line was crossed. (By the way, true friends do not walk away from friends because they made a serious mistake—so good for Franken.)

Carrey said, "I think it is the job of a comedian to cross the line at all times." This man is a problem.

First, it is not the job of a comedian to cross the line: it is the job of a comedian to make people laugh. If a stand-up comic cannot do so without always crossing the line it means he is an amateur, someone time-frozen in his adolescence.

Second, Carrey is a phony. Most comedians, and that certainly includes him, never bash gays, so they don't have to worry about crossing that line. But they have a lot of practice bashing Catholics, and in the most vile and obscene ways.

Reasonable people can disagree where to draw the line, but only unreasonable people believe that none should exist. Carrey is a problem, and so are those who cannot distinguish between his reaction and the way Seinfeld, Foxx, and Franken responded.