

MAINSTREAMING MEANNESS

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Tony Alamo died on May 2nd. Stephen Colbert made headline news on May 3rd. Bill Maher made headline news on May 5th. Dan Savage was back in the news at the same time. All of these men were cited in news stories because of their despicable behavior. And all of them were cheered on save for Alamo, even though he did the least damage to our culture. Let me explain.

After Alamo died, I wrote that he was “a pedophile, a child porn king, a pathological liar, a tyrant, an abusive misogynist, a tax cheat, and a rabid anti-Catholic.” He died in a federal prison after being convicted on several felony charges.

What Alamo did to those whom he interacted with—having sex with little girls—is something that everyone can condemn, but it was his anti-Catholicism that brought him to the attention of the Catholic League long ago. Fortunately, his influence on the culture was marginal—he appealed to the uneducated. Alamo was a subcultural villain, not a player with wide reach.

Colbert, Maher, and Savage are different: They share Alamo’s meanness, but they have an impact on the dominant culture that Alamo only dreamed of. Worse, they have legions of fans who justify their offensiveness.

Colbert engaged in a rant against President Trump that was so obscene that it triggered an FCC investigation. I will not repeat what he said, only to note that it was a sick oral sex remark that he made about the president.

Two days later, Maher lashed out at the president and his daughter, Ivanka, laughing aloud about them having sex together. His show is pay-for-view, not subject to FCC oversight.

The buzz out of Hollywood in early May was the expected cancellation of the ABC show, "The Real O'Neals." The show is based on the life of one of its producers, Dan Savage. When he is not writing about deviant sex acts, he is bashing the Catholic Church.

It is a testimony to the moral corruption of our society that we treat the likes of Colbert, Maher, and Savage in a better way than we treat the likes of Alamo. Tony Alamo was a disturbed individual, as well as a hater, but he did far less damage to our culture than any of the three celebrities. Their unrepentance also stands out.

After Colbert made his foul comment about the president, he refused to apologize, though he did bow to homosexuals: His joke was seen as homophobic, and that is a taboo among the cultural elites. He reached out to homosexuals saying that "for the record, life is short, and anyone who expresses their love in their own way, is to me an American hero."

Leaving aside the perversity of emulating two men for engaging in sodomy, it is striking to note that Colbert was concerned about offending those who were not the centerpiece of his obscenity, but not his real target, the president of the United States.

Some news stories said that Maher's incestuous "joke" about the president and his daughter angered some of Trump's fans. Just them? If someone made the same "joke" about President Obama and one of his daughters—no one would—it is a sure bet that most of Obama's detractors would also be offended. So what is wrong with the maniacs who hate Trump so much that they are not offended by Maher's vile remarks?

No network would ever air a show based on the life of a racist or an anti-Semite, but NBC gave Savage a stage to produce "The Real O'Neals." He has said things that are so disgusting about Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI that no newspaper

would print it. In fact, the *New York Times* would not even allow me to use an asterisk in the place of letters when I sought to publish an ad quoting what Savage has said.

We all know the difference between someone who jokes around with us—he may tell a joke that stereotypes our religion or ethnicity—and someone who is mean. The latter intends to hurt; the former does not. What Colbert and Maher said was intended to hurt. Ditto for what Savage has done. That they hurt others while smiling and laughing does not lessen their offense: it only masks it.

Those who make these “jokes,” and those who think they’re cute, are two of the problems. The third is those who pay them: corporate America. Savage’s show was aired by ABC, which is owned by the “Snow White” folks at Disney. Colbert works for CBS, which is owned by the CBS Corporation, a Goliath that owns and operates dozens of other stations. Maher airs on HBO, which is owned by mega-giant Time Warner.

Colbert, Maher, and Savage may think they have nothing in common with the likes of Alamo, but to any cultural observer not enamored of celebrities, they are simply a better educated version. They have mainstreamed meanness, an achievement deserving of our contempt, not our applause.