

VIACOM'S ETHICS

When Comedy Central flashed a picture of a naked woman with her legs spread and a nativity scene ornament in between—what Jon Stewart called “the vagina manger”—Viacom’s executives weren’t the slightest bit offended (Comedy Central is owned by Viacom). But these same people got ticked off recently when Don Rickles cracked a joke about President Obama.

On June 7, Rickles performed before a Hollywood crowd at the American Film Institute tribute to Shirley MacLaine. He quipped, “I shouldn’t make fun of the blacks. President Obama is a personal friend of mine. He was over to the house yesterday, but the mop broke.” When they showed this event on TV Land (a Viacom network) on June 24, Rickles’ Obama joke was not aired.

On May 8, we mailed a color photo of the “vagina manger” shot to Viacom’s directors; we asked them to direct Stewart to apologize. They refused. But it didn’t take anyone from the NAACP to ask Viacom to nix Rickles’ joke—they did it themselves.

Rickles’ PR man offered this lame comment soon after the decision was made to censor the joke: “Before all of this started, we knew Don’s spot would be cut a bit for time.” More honest was Rickles himself: “Some jerk-offs got offended.”

Such is the state of Viacom’s ethics.