

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BLACKFACE?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the reaction to blackface antics:

What's wrong with blackface? What ethical rule is broken by those who think it is funny? Surely not a rule which finds it morally objectionable to mimic another racial, ethnic, or religious group.

In the Arts section of the February 7 edition of the *New York Times*, there was an article, "Singer Begins New Phase 'Stripping Off the Veil,'" that featured drag artist Charles Busch. A photo captures him dancing in his new cabaret show, "Native New Yorker." He is wearing a nun's habit, pulling his garb well above his knees so he can display his black stockings. The caption below notes he is wearing his "drag costume."

I have never heard of Charles Busch until now, but that's because I don't go to homosexual events. To be blunt, his immature antics are not my concern. The *New York Times* is.

The *New York Times* objects to blackface stunts but finds it entirely acceptable to publish a photo of a man in drag mocking nuns.

Similarly, this same newspaper never objects to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a tax-exempt organization based in San Francisco that features homosexual men dressed in a nun's habit; they mock them in several ways. Those who defend this group say the Sisters give to charity.

Maybe we need an Al Jolson Society to test the moral compass of the *Times*. Imagine white guys with blackface who mock blacks while donating money to fight sickle cell anemia. What would the *Times* say about that?

We already know the answer. It would object. But on what basis? It would say blacks were slaves and therefore nothing that offends them can be tolerated. But not all blacks were slaves. In fact, some blacks owned black slaves in the U.S. and in Africa. Moreover, some Catholics were slaves, including St. Patrick.

This can get complicated. If only the *New York Times* would say so. Then it might adopt a principled stand for everyone, instead of protecting some while offending others.

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