

LEARN HOW TO BE HAPPIER AT WORK—TODAY

themuse

HUFF
POST

The Third Metric

Delivered straight
to your inbox

SIGN UP
FOR A FREE CLASS

June 12, 2014

HUFF
POST

ENTERTAINMENT

Sunday's Oscar Show Wins Awards for Sexism, Homophobia, Anti-Semitism, and Racism

Posted: 02/25/2013 11:37 am

Was anybody else offended by the not-very-subtle onslaught of sexist, racist, homophobic, and anti-semitic "jokes" at the Oscar ceremony on Sunday night?

It seems as though the Oscar writers think that Hollywood is so liberal that it can get away with making offensive comments because everyone knows that they are "just joking."

I don't agree.

At a time when America is facing an epidemic of gun violence and debating how to limit the spread of assault weapons, host Seth McFarlane thought it would be clever to make a joke about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

"Daniel Day-Lewis is not the first actor to be nominated for playing Lincoln," McFarlane said. "Raymond Massey portrayed him in 1940's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. I would argue, though, the actor who really got inside Lincoln's head was John Wilkes Booth."

Perhaps hoping to win an award for "most racially insensitive" comment, McFarlane joked about Lewis' habit of staying in character during the filming of *Lincoln*, even when the cameras were off. "If you bumped into Don Cheadle in the studio lot," McFarlane said, looking at Lewis in the audience, "would you try and free him?"

McFarlane also made outrageous remarks about Adele's weight, gays, women, Latinas, and Jews.

It would be difficult to pick a winner in the "most sexist comment" category. McFarlane sang a juvenile song, "We Saw Your Boobs," about movie scenes where former Oscar nominees posed topless. Referring to the decade-long quest to find Osama bin Laden by Jessica Chastain's character in *Zero Dark Thirty*, McFarlane said it was an example of women never being "able to let anything go." To those women who lost weight before attending the Oscar ceremony, McFarlane said: "For all those women who had the 'flu,' it paid off... lookin' good."

Referring to Latina actresses Penelope Cruz and Salma Hayek -- both of whose English is impeccable -- McFarlane said: "We have no idea what they're saying, but we don't care, cause they're so attractive."

After singing the "We Saw Your Boobs" song with the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus, MacFarlane made a point of explaining that he wasn't actually a *member* of the chorus, as if being gay was something to be ashamed of. MacFarlane also observed that the show's producers had invited the cast of *Chicago* to perform on the telecast because "the [Oscar] show isn't gay enough yet."

Perhaps the most offensive comments were made by Ted, the talking stuffed bear who bantered (through McFarlane's voice) with actor Mark Wahlberg about Hollywood's domination by Jews. If putting those words in the mouth of a talking bear is supposed to make these remarks cute and cuddly, it didn't work with me.

The set-up was Ted's desire to gain acceptance with the Hollywood "in" crowd -- which he said were the Jews -- so he could attend a post-Oscar orgy party. After Ted begged Wahlberg to tell him where the orgy would be held, Wahlberg spilled the beans, saying that it would be "at Jack Nicholson's house." This was apparently a not very subtle -- and not very funny -- reference to a 1977 incident that occurred at Nicholson's home, where director Roman Polanski raped a 13-year-old girl. Polanski pleaded guilty but fled to Paris before he was sentenced.

Remarking on all the talent assembled at the Oscar ceremony, Ted said to Wahlberg: "You know what's interesting? All those actors I just named are part Jewish," referring to Joaquin Phoenix (who has a Jewish mother), Daniel Day-Lewis (ditto), and Alan Arkin (whose parents, in fact, were both Jewish).

"What about you?" Ted asked Wahlberg. "You've got a 'berg' on the end of your name. Are you Jewish?"

Wahlberg explained that he is Catholic. Ted responded: "Wrong answer. Try again. Do you want to work in this town or don't you?"

To gain favor with the Hollywood crowd, Ted claimed that *he* was Jewish, that he "was born Theodore Shapiro," and that "I

would like to donate money to Israel and continue to work in Hollywood forever."

When Wahlberg called Ted an idiot, Ted responded: "We'll see whose an idiot when they give me my private plane at the next secret synagogue meeting."

Ted's (or, in reality, McFarlane's) remarks about the "secret" Jewish cabal that controls Hollywood, discriminates against non-Jews, and is tied to Israel were not clever and witty. They were anti-semitic.

I'm certain that many film industry folks sitting in the audience were uncomfortable with the barrage of offensive comments throughout the evening. I'm not a prude and I believe it is OK to make fun of one's foibles. But McFarlane's (and Ted's) comments did not simply poke fun at specific individuals. They targeted entire groups. Sunday night's Oscar show crossed that invisible line between satire and bigotry.

As a progressive and a Jew, I found these comments outrageous, and I'm confident that many of the millions of Americans watching the show on TV were also offended by the bigoted stereotypes about women, gays, Latinas, and Jews throughout the broadcast.

Of course, there were no hooded sheets, burning crosses, N-words, or "fag" jokes. But bigotry comes in various shades. Sunday night's Academy Awards ceremony was ugly and unfunny.

Peter Dreier teaches politics and chairs the Urban & Environmental Policy department at Occidental College. His most recent book is *The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame* (Nation Books, 2012).

Follow Peter Dreier on Twitter: www.twitter.com/peterdreier