

Black Men's Xchange National Issues Statement of Support per Tracy Morgan's Controversial Comments

WASHINGTON, DC – Cleo Manago, National Director of the Black Men's Xchange (<http://www.bmxny.org/>), the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to advocacy and empowerment for same gender loving (SGL), bisexual and gay-identifying African-descended males, issued the following statement about the Media coverage of Tracy Morgan's most recent controversial comments:



Cleo Manago, Director of
Black Men's Exchange
National

“As national director of one of the oldest and largest movements devoted to empowering same gender loving (SGL), bisexual and gay-identifying African-descended males, I would like to make it very clear that in no way do I condone any verbal or physical attacks against any group. However, the media coverage and subsequent outrage by some Gay and Lesbian groups to Tracy Morgan's so-called gay-bashing rant during his stand-up routine in Nashville exposes the cultural incompetence and racially biased tunnel-vision that still exists in America.



Comedian Tracy
Morgan

During his comedy routine Morgan, a comedian and comedic television personality, reportedly said “[my son] better talk to me like a man and not in a gay voice or I’ll pull out a knife and stab that little nigger to death.”

Morgan is an exaggerating insult comic, no different or worse than Lisa Lampinelli or Joan Rivers, who once referred to First-Lady Michelle Obama as “Blackey 0” (as opposed to Jackie 0 Kennedy.) Regardless of Lampinelli’s and Rivers’ often brutally race-based jokes, both are still highly regarded in the same community now after Morgan’s job.

Further evidence of media bias is the fact that Morgan also referred to his son as a ‘little nigga’ he would stab. This was perhaps the most destructive passage among Morgan’s comments. His comedic focus was not on homosexuality, but on bullying, [Black] masculinity and manhood. Morgan correlated having a ‘gay voice’ with being vulnerable or feminine, a common perspective in communities of color. This includes among homosexuals, many who will lower the tone of their voice for more acceptance among each other.

A cultural interpretation of Morgan words could be, ‘My son better not allow himself to be bullied (like a bitch). He

better be a strong [Black] man, and not weak, or there will be consequences.' Morgan is a comedian. Of course he has no intentions of stabbing his son. Yet he is also a Black male comedian, with Black male American experience. In response to Morgan's Nashville tirade, the level of outcry among Blacks, including those who identify as gay, has been relatively minor. Likely because many were able to culturally interpret Morgan's comments.

TV-One talk show host, Roland Martin supported Morgan writing, 'Why is comedian and "30 Rock" star Tracy Morgan issuing a mea culpa for saying nasty, vicious and vile things during a stand-up routine? Isn't that par for the course of a comedian?' The CNN analyst also explained that he criticized Michael Richards' tirade because it was directed at a specific audience member and unrelated to his routine [1].

To many Black people Tracey Morgan's epithets, "[my son] better talk to me like a man and not in a gay voice," represent notions stemming directly from masculinity self-consciousness and compensatory behaviors rampant in many Black communities. These are consequences of internalized oppression resulting from a long history in America of oppression toward Black men. Having the highest rates of unemployment, criminalization, and death by police brutality (Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, Amadou Diallo, Rodney King, etc.) for centuries has had logical consequences. Where Tracey Morgan is from, in New York, unemployment rates among Black men is up to 50%!

Under these circumstances, mastery of public or verbal displays of Black hyper masculinity and bravado can become a precious commodity even among homosexual Black men. Since material stability and physical safety can be rare some Black males find social capitol instead in their ability to insult or threaten violence, no matter how self-destructive, self-hating, and anti-Black the decision. What the headlines should have read was "Black male Comedian Tracy Morgan goes on a classic, male insecurity based, anti-feminine, self-hate

ridden tirade.”

While much has been made in the media, both mainstream and gay, about the “homophobic” nature of Mr. Morgan’s comments, no reporting or news analysis has covered Mr. Morgan’s statements of violence towards his son, or reference to him as a “little nigga.” While media analysis and opinion makers are worried that Mr. Morgan may be endorsing or at the very least encouraging hatred towards gay-identifying people, they are not similarly concerned that he may be endorsing or trivializing violence towards the most vulnerable of Black people – Black children. By using the Phrase “...stab that little nigger to death,” Mr. Morgan clearly was making an anti-Black comment. But for white controlled mainstream media this clearly is not an important issue.

Some examples of leading gay publications, media and policy voice commentary and headlines around Mr. Morgan’s words include, Ed Kennedy at afterelton.com, who called Mr. Morgan’s comments a, “...despicable homophobic “comedy” rant...”[2]. Justin Jannise, at popnography.com, an out.com outlet said, “Apparently, Morgan started with the usual homophobic vitriol...”[3]. While Cheyenne Jackson, an openly gay co-star on *30 Rock* on which Mr. Morgan also stars, has said, “I am disgusted and appalled by Tracy Morgan’s homophobic rant...The devastating repercussions of hate-filled language manifest in very real ways for today’s LGBTQ[4].” Evan Hurst at Truth Wins Out, a non-profit organization that fights anti-LGBT religious extremism, put out a press release with the headline “Truth Wins Out Calls On Comedian Tracy Morgan to Respond to Allegations of Anti-Gay Tirade Onstage at Nashville Show[5].” Aaron McQuade at GLAAD, Gays & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation said online that “Morgan’s right to admit that violence against LGBT young people is not funny in any context. Now he needs to understand why...GLAAD has offered to arrange a meeting between Morgan and a family whose LGBT son or daughter has been the victim of severe violence because of

his or her sexual orientation or gender identity[6].”

If we analyze and take literally words uttered during comedy routines references to Michelle Obama as Blackey O and President Obama as not being the first Black man to have to clean up a White man’s mess (referring to Obama following George W. Bush) – these comments could wreak havoc on the self-esteem of African Americans. As Roland Martin stated, during their stand-up routines Chris Rock understood why OJ killed Nicole, Robin Williams denounced his wife for being ugly, and Bernie Mac threatened to take a hammer to a kid, all to roaring applause. No one called 911 on Bernie Mac for encouraging child abuse.

The Black Men’s Xchange National does not condone any language or energy that promotes violence and agrees that Tracey should cease any behavior that does not affirm and lift the spirit of all people, particularly his people, Black people. But, given the normal practice of insult comedy in America, how peculiar it is that Tracey Morgan is being targeted for an indeed problematic but otherwise ignored form of entertainment?

If the media and White Gay and Lesbian groups are taking Mr. Morgan’s words at face value why has there been no mention of the remark about ‘stabbing the little nigga to death?’”