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## we won't tolerate tolerance of racism or sexism

For several days, the media has dominated the airways with statements made by Don Imus. The following is the collective **voice** of the YWCA through our National President & CEO, Dr. Lorraine Cole.

"For nearly 150 years, the YWCA mission has been eliminating racism and empowering women. Thus, the YWCA condemns the reprehensible language of shock jock Don Imus and producer Bernard McGuirk in reference to the African American women of the Rutgers championship basketball team. Such words are antithetical to the YWCA core and a direct affront to the millions of women we represent across the nation and around the world. Their remarks represent two halves of a double-edged sword, racism and sexism. It was undeniably hate speech. Such open and public degradation of any segment within the Black community is outrageous, obscene and perverse under any circumstances.

The fact that the statement was made about young, college educated African American women, who have obviously excelled academically and athletically, is indicative of how narrow the boundary is between racism and sexism. Essentially, no woman of color is immune to being such a target, no matter how accomplished.

Imus attempted to justify his use of such language because of similar concepts and language used in Spike Lee movies and by Rap music artists. But, he seems to have missed the point that what was said should not have been said at all. Racist and sexist language used by anyone is unacceptable, but such language coming from a White man has additional historical overlays that make it even more disparaging.

In his attempted apology, Imus claimed that what he said was not intended with malice and blamed the statement on an attempt at humor. "Here's what I've learned," Imus said. "That you can't make fun of everybody, because some people don't deserve it."

Here is what Imus should have learned -

- Comments, like "hard core hos" and "nappy-haired hos," that degrade women and people of color will never be funny.
- The meaning of a message will often change depending on the messenger.
- People around the country will not tolerate racist and sexist language.

Allowing people like Imus to fill our airwaves with racism and sexism is intolerable. But, despite his long history of making racist and sexist comments, Imus has been allowed to unabashedly perpetuate hate, broadcasting to millions through more than 70 stations around the country. This most recent incident has resulted in only a two week suspension of Imus' show by CBS Radio which owns the station that produces his show and MSNBC which airs and promotes the show. We have yet to hear much about McGuirk, who should be equally implicated in this incident.

YWCA calls upon everyone who is serious about eliminating racism and sexism to draw the line and not allow this incident to occur unchecked. To send a letter to WFAN Radio, which produces the show, CBS Radio and MSNBC to implore them to terminate Imus and McGuirk and their racist and sexist rhetoric from the airwaves."

Lorraine Cole, Ph.D., CEO, YWCA USA

Please visit our National website at [www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org) for further information.

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