

Senator D'Amato vs. Asians?

by Kenneth Lee

Senator Alfonse D'Amato's imitation of a Japanese accent in his discussion of Judge Lance Ito has caused quite a furor. Critics have excoriated the senator as racist, forcing him to ultimately apologize for his comments on the Senate floor. To his detractors, D'Amato's actions lucidly demonstrated his bigoted ways. But for many other observers, this incident served as a salient reminder of liberalism's double-standard.

Clearly, D'Amato's comments were racially insensitive, foolish and inappropriate. Most Americans were rightfully offended and dismayed by his actions. But does that make him a racist? What most people found objectionable was not so much *what* was said, but rather *who* said it. Everyone one of us has heard an ethnic joke based on crude stereotypes — Asians can't speak English, whites are klutzes unable to dance, all blacks are great basketball players, etc. And most of us have privately chuckled at some of these jokes. Indeed, most comedians include several ethnic jokes in their routine, and no one accuses them of being virulent racists.

But we expect more decorum from a senator. For example, we can laugh at a masturbation joke by Seinfeld, but if a politician quipped about masturbating, things would get out of hand (no pun intended). (Imagine President Clinton saying, "So in declaring today National Masturbation Day, we should ask ourselves not

what our country can do for us, but what we can do to ourselves.")

And this was the case here: D'Amato did not crack an ethnic joke out of malice against Asian-Americans. The D'Amato's bantering was an attempt at humor, and it bombed terribly. Was it inappropriate and

num rapper Ice Cube threatened to burn Korean stores down in the song "Black Korea," the critics were silent. When Leonard Jeffries accused Koreans of planning an "invasion" against the black community during his speech at Cornell earlier this year, the critics were silent. In fact, the

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insensitive? You bet (but we must remember he represented New Yorkers, after all). Is D'Amato a buffoon? Yes (Who can forget his awful rendition of Old McDonald on the Senate floor?) Is he a racist? Not unless one's description of a racist includes the telling of ethnic jokes. D'Amato cracked an inappropriate joke, not a racist obloquy.

Compare the media's reaction to D'Amato's comments with the treatment leftist racists receive. The critics in the media sanctimoniously condemned D'Amato's comments as a direct slur against all Asians. But when Louis Farrakahn called Asians "bloodsuckers," the critics were silent. When multi-plati-

Daily Sun didn't feel that that comment was newsworthy enough to print it; only the *Review* quoted Mr. Jeffries' vile words. If a Republican ever accused Koreans of an "invasion," one can only imagine the outrage.

When Asians were being defamed by racists on the Left, where were all the critics? Most people should know the result of such unmitigated and vitriolic rhetoric. In 1992 during the LA riots, nearly 2,000 Korean stores were burned to the ground as predicted (threatened?) by Ice Cube. Half of all the stores burned were Korean-owned, clearly showing that Asians were targeted by arsonists.

These small merchants were devastated because most did not have any insurance; all their years of hard work disappeared in flames in a few minutes. Had the critics (who now so vehemently denounce D'Amato) censured the racists on the Left, maybe 2,000 stores did not have to be destroyed.

Some may try to defend their silence by saying that people like Leonard Jeffries and Farrakahn are out of the mainstream, and thus not worthy of condemnation. Such excuses are spurious. The entire floor of Robert Purcell Union was filled when Leonard Jeffries spoke. Farrakahn fills large auditoriums whenever he delivers one of his loathsome diatribes. Mainstream or not, racists on the Left have a huge following and not to counter their racism would be a folly.

Furthermore, it seems unlikely Senator D'Amato could generate as large of an audience as Jeffries or Farrakahn at Cornell. And whereas audience members during Jeffries' lecture lavishly clapped him and fawningly imbibed every odious word, it again seems unlikely that most Cornellians would listen so attentively to a Senator.

Yet somehow the critics cast a blind eye to the unmitigated racism of the Left, while they harp on conservatives over the most innocuous statements. Such double-standards cannot be tolerated.

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