

Onion's apology is not accepted

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
Tuesday, 12 March 2013 11:49



In the midst of the Academy Awards drama on Sunday, February 24, one of the Onion's writers (we don't know who he is – I doubt a "she" would have stooped so low), described the lovely and talented child Quvenzhané Wallace with a filthy word that took her all the way out of her name. Using a very crude word for female genitalia, the Onion writer observed that she was a c***. Excuse me! Blessedly hundreds of people shared their outrage in the electronic media so forcefully that the Onion's CEO, Steve Hannah, apologized. But somehow sorry doesn't always make it right. In my letter to the Onion, I've asked for reparations, or an effort to repair the harm that was done. I'm sharing my statement and hope you, too, will share it with the "leaders" of The Onion. Until officials of The Onion respond, I think it wholly appropriate to withhold support from them. As Dr. King once said, "to cooperate with evil is to be evil." To besmirch a child, whether you are a satirical publication or not, is nothing but evil.

My letter:

Dear Mr. Hannah:

While your apology for the vile statement made by your staff regarding the wonderful and talented Quvenzhané Wallis is duly noted, it is an insufficient response to the heinous insult lobbed at a 9-year-old girl; additionally, the community of women and African American women in particular. Your apology is received, but not accepted. You must mitigate the damage that your comments caused, not only for Quvenzhané, but also for the women who, reveling in her success, were damaged by the sucker punch we experienced when your writer found it

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acceptable to describe a 9-year-old girl in a crude term for genitalia, a term that most adult women would

Your apology might be more readily received if,

1- The disciple, though the offensive writer, was detailed and their name revealed so that they can be monitored for their gendered racism in the future.

2- Your company made amends to both Quvenzhané and the community that supports her by;

3-

1. Offering the organizations that monitor gender and racial discrimination a financial contribution. My suggestion is that you direct at least \$50,000 each to The Black Women's Roundtable, The National Organization for Women, and the National Council of Negro Women. Additionally, I would suggest that you offer \$50,000 to the charity of Quvenzhané's choice.

1. Meeting with representatives of African American and women's organizations in Washington DC on a date that is mutually agreeable, but no later than March 31, 2013 to discuss the thought process behind this insult and the ways that future occurrences will be prevented.

1. Share information on the number of women and people of color on your staff, and share the ways that they impact editorial decisions.

4- Your company provides scholarship opportunities to African American women students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to indicate that you do not see young women in the disparaging ways, but as scholars. There are two HBCUs that are women's institutions, Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. At least one scholarship for each of these institutions would be an effective way to apologize.

5- Your company provides speakers to the colleges that will have you to, at no fee to the colleges, explain the difference between satire and offense. To notify interested colleges, it is my suggestion that your company take out a full page advertisement in Diverse Issues in Higher Education to both reprint your apology and offer the opportunity for your staff to meet on colleges.

Please note that, as a former president of an HBCU focused on women, I was repelled by your writer's comments. Taking them down and then apologizing is the simple way out for this offense. I call upon you to take proactive action to redress this wrong.

Let me also note that I have no invested interest in any of the organizations I have mentioned here (except that I am President Emerita of Bennett College for Women, and my association with young women makes this all the more offensive).

I am asking friends and colleagues to withdraw any support to The Onion until your apology is

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enhanced by action. I am also asking all women's and African American organizations to join my insistence that your apology is insufficient.

I do look forward to your response.

If you agree with me, please forward this column or your own letter to Chairman David Schafer (davidkschafer@gmail.com); President and CEO Steve Hannah (shannah@theonion.com)

COO Mike McAvoy (mmcavoy@theonion.com)

publicfeedback@theonion.com

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#200, 212 Superior St, Chicago, IL – 60611

If anyone from Chicago is reading, perhaps you could organize a picket outside their office!
Sorry doesn't always make it right.

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.