

# Cultural Daily

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## Incognito – the Best Defense is a Good Offense

Kathleen Antonia Tarr · Wednesday, November 13th, 2013

It is only because my husband watches the occasional episode of *The Daily Show* on Hulu that I ever see the show anymore. I have avoided it since I visited the studio many years ago and was called out in the audience by the warm up comedian who instructed, “Black woman on the aisle say, ‘Yeah!’” After my reluctant compliance, he stated, “That’s 400 years of oppression, y’all.” If only we were allowed to leave after seating. The scripted exchanges during the taping poked fun at the lack of diversity among correspondents, observations met by raucous audience laughter. *The Daily Show* and unfortunately its host Jon Stewart have since always provoked in me a mild bit of nausea.

Then there was *The Washington Post* opinion piece by Jordan Carlos in 2007. Carlos played Stephen Colbert’s black friend “Alan,” a purported member of *The Colbert Report* staff. Production apparently “had to hire an actor to play a black person who works on the show.” Still, the role connected Carlos to that corner of political comedy, and he took the opportunity to approach a writer from *The Daily Show* hoping for an acting/writing gig. “We broached the subject of black correspondents. He told me that they ‘tried a black guy once, but it didn’t work out.’”

So I couldn’t help feeling a little bit like yelling “hypocrite” at [Jon Stewart as he commented about the recent Richie Incognito hullabaloo](#) in which the Miami Dolphins offensive lineman is accused of bullying teammate Jonathan Martin, including calling Martin a “half nigger piece of shit.” Stewart reprimanded Incognito with a reminder to all players that regardless of what they defend as NFL culture, “you are still subject to United States law and workplace regulations,” all said without a peep about similar conduct rampant in the entertainment industry.

Writers of the show *Friends*, for example, created what seemed to be a blatantly hostile environment by openly discussing oral and anal sex, rape fantasies, missed opportunities to “fuck” actors Courtney Cox and Jennifer Aniston, and about Cox’s fertility, commenting that her “pussy was full of dried up twigs” and that “if her husband put his dick in her she’d break in two.” Instead of rallying to protect workers from such environments, the behavior was defended – with the backing of the Writers Guild of America – as *creative necessity*, an argument supported in one of the California Supreme Court’s most ignorant decisions, *Lyle v. Warner Brothers*.

In this way, today’s entertainment industry has telegraphed Incognito’s best defense: he should couch his behavior in terms of *necessity*. No one can play good ol’ American football without epithets, death threats, and forecasted assaults on family members, just as no one can produce comedy without discriminating in hiring and denigrating others in the name of creativity.

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That's entertainment.

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