

## Controversy Surrounds 'D.L. Hughley Breaks the News'

Contributed by Sierra Henderson -- Black College Wire  
Tuesday, 11 November 2008

Critics cite offensive images such as Freddie Mac, a pimp.

A new show starring comedian D.L. Hughley is already stirring controversy in black media.

Talk show hosts and radio personalities Reverend Al Sharpton and Michael Baisden have blasted the show for its use of what some would call irreverent themes and images.

On Oct. 25, "D.L. Hughley Breaks the News" premiered on CNN. This was a point of contention for many critics who believed that the show might be better suited for a network like Comedy Central.

While the pilot episode was easily comparable to Jon Stewart's "Daily Show" or "The Colbert Report," promoters said they wanted Hughley's show to stay away from "faking the news." Jonathan Klein, president of CNN/U.S., said the show was intended to be more like "The Tonight Show."

Black scholar and regular CNN guest Boyce Watkins gave the show a scathing review in an Internet broadcast of "The Boiler Room." He also admonished the network. "CNN a few days before one of the most significant and sacred events in American history should not be airing this kind of commentary. It's not to say that this kind of comedy can't be funny in certain contexts, but you don't bring a gun to baby shower, you don't put a liquor store inside a church," he said.

Watkins then compared D.L.'s performance to the television appearances of former rapper, Flavor Flav while advising that there are some lines Black people do not need to cross. "That show was full of a lot of bad stereotypes."

The most memorable segment for many viewers featured comedian and actor, Donnell Rawlings, who is widely known for his roles on the "Dave Chappelle Show." Rawlings, dressed in a fur coat and a bowler hat, played the role of Freddie Mac. He made derogatory comments about his "sister" Fannie Mae and used the coined phrase "pimps up, hoes down."

The pilot also featured a less comical interview with former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan, who announced he would vote for Barack Obama during the broadcast.

The show's first production revealed some kinks. Hughley, who made a name as one of the "Kings of Comedy" and the star of his own sitcom, appeared uneasy reading from the teleprompter during his monologue.

Murdell McFarlin, the station manager for CAU-TV at Clark Atlanta University, said she stopped watching after about 25 minutes. "His content was bland. It was neither funny nor insightful. Boring would be the word. I thought it was valueless, and left a lot to be desired," she said.

While the show is the first recurring CNN program to be hosted by an African-American, many believe that a better show could have been hosted by CNN's African-American pundit Roland Martin. Still, some bloggers have expressed appreciation for a comedic show to liven up CNN's scheduled programming.

Deona Stanford, a senior public relations major, admitted she had not seen the show, but thinks the concept is a good idea. "I heard about it. I think it is a stepping stone even though he might not be on a prime time, but at least he's getting exposure. For a comedian that's a big step. Comedians can have political views too," she said.

{moshaloscan}Sierra Henderson writes for the CAU Panther, the Clark Atlanta University student newspaper, which originally published this article.