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Lowell Student Speaker Series
February 17, 2011
"They Never Kill the Court Jester"

"Let's make a law that gay people can have birthdays, but straight people get more cake - you know, to send the right message to kids."

That was comedian Bill Maher. And while the right of gay people to their cake is not the subject of my speech, it is important. However, I will be speaking over how comedians can say things that others cannot, because, they never kill the court jester.

"The press can hold its magnifying glass up to our problems, bringing them into focus, illuminating issues heretofore unseen. Or they can use that magnifying glass to light ants on fire. And then, perhaps, host a week of shows on the sudden, unexpected, dangerous flaming ant epidemic."

So says Jon Stewart, comedian and host of the satirical news show, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.

And what he says is true. The news media often makes its own news whether based on human interest stories, (a.k.a. Find Out What Common Household Product will Kill You Immediately tonight at 10), natural disasters (Ten people die in freak yachting accident) or just blatant fear-mongering (hide your kids, gentleman, and hide your wife).

However, something I've noticed is the amount of sheer change comedians are able to enact despite being the 'court jesters' of the world. For example, when the 9/11 Responders Bill was in danger of not passing in Congress, a bill that would provide \$4.3 billion in health care services to those who worked to clear the debris from the attacks, Jon Stewart took up the mantle of the fight.

"Apparently the party that turned 9/11 into a catchphrase are now moving suspiciously into a convenient, pre-9/11 mentality when it comes to this bill," he said. "What's more, none of the three broadcast networks has mentioned any of this on their evening newscasts for 2 1/2 months."

And that's also true.

However, why is Stewart the one who is saying this? Stewart, whose banter usually centers around making fun of prejudice and various puns, i.e. "More than 150 heads of state attended the UN Summit, giving New Yorkers a chance to get in touch with prejudices they didn't even know they had." Why is it that comedians function as critics of policy?

"I do think the patriotic thing to do is to critique my country. How else do you make a country better but by pointing out its flaws?" the aforementioned Bill Maher.

However, there is a difference between cracking a joke and being one.

For example, the esteemed ex-Governor of the most sparsely inhabited part of the American periphery, said when asked about hostilities between the Koreans,

"But obviously, we've got to stand with our North Korean allies."

But it's not only those with Communications degrees that sometimes get it wrong. Our Vice-President Joe Biden pointed out what was needed from a commander-in-chief during an economic crisis with these choice words.

"When the stock market crashed, Franklin D. Roosevelt got on the television and didn't just talk about the, you know, the princes of greed. He said, 'Look, here's what happened.'" –Mr. Biden was apparently not only under the impression that President Roosevelt was indeed President in 1929, but also that televisions had been invented.

Gaffes aside, and not to completely demean our elected officials, but all I want to do is tell all of y'all that sometimes those who make us laugh can also make us think. And those who are supposed to make us think, make us laugh.