

Buddy is the New Nigger

(written by Whoopi Goldberg)

Have you noticed how rarely we have a conversation about race in this country? I think the whole race thing hits a raw nerve.

BUT... Get out the Advil, because we're going to have one now.

Racial to me in my age group, and racial to other people, may mean two different things. Like people under the age of thirty. They don't get what you're talking about when you're saying, "That's racist." They say, "Well...what's racist?"

The word "nigger," to my granddaughter, does not mean what it means to my grandmother. That word does not have the same connotation. Know what's happened? The kids were smart. They took it out the realm of insult and made it...familial.

If you're not black, how many times have you been waiting in a line, or in a coffee shop, or hanging around near black people and were surprised to hear them call each other nigger? Come on, sure you were. And I'm betting it wasn't just once. Not even just once in a sentence. It's like, "...And so I said, 'Nigger, what's going on...'" "Come on, nigger, I'm not going to do that..." "Nigger, you crack me up."

The word may not mean to him what it means to other people. It's a term of endearment to him. It's familial. Fraternal. He was using it like saying, "Hey, buddy."

Buddy is the new nigger.

I told a joke on a Bravo special because they had just buried the word "nigger." And I said, "Well, I want you to tell me if this joke is funny. And if it's funny because the word 'nigger' is in it...or if it's just a funny joke. So I will tell you the joke."

A little black cherub is up in heaven and is kind of cruising around and God comes walking by, and the cherub flies over and says, “Hi, God!”

God says, “Hey, how are you doing?”

The cherub says, “Fine. God, can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” says God.

“Am I an angel?”

God says, “No, nigger, you a bat.”

Now, do you think that’s funny?...OK, but what makes it funny? Is it the word “nigger” that makes it funny, or is it the idea that God is walking around heaven and some little cherub wants to know if he’s really an angel, and God, in His infinite wisdom, says, “No, idiot, you’re a bat.”

So what makes the joke funny?

The right word...and you can’t pretend you don’t know it is.

It’s like “Take my wife--please.” You kill the joke if it’s “Take my wife.” See, to me, the “take my wife” is not funny. It’s the “please” that gets me. So it is the word. It is the right word.

But see, now, this is what I’d say to you. There are times when racial jokes are funny. I know it’s bad to say that, but it’s true, and I hate, hate, hate to laugh . . . but I do.

And people freak themselves out over the angel joke because it *is* funny. It’s a funny joke. But on that special they freaked out because they didn’t know *why* they were laughing. They didn’t know whether they were laughing because I said “nigger” in the joke, or because it’s an angel. They didn’t know. And so, if you were watching when I told it, you saw people go HA! And then recoil and cover their mouths.

But, come on, it’s funny.

Am I right, buddy?