

Comedian Dave Chappelle's *The Closer*: A racist tirade disguised as stand-up comedy

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On October 5, veteran US comedian David Chappelle premiered his latest stand-up comedy special *The Closer* on Netflix.

Chappelle's 72-minute special, however, is not comedy so much as it is a racist rant. No other major American entertainment figure in recent memory has openly advocated anti-Semitism and gloated over racist violence directed against Asians, whom he foully chooses to identify with the COVID-19 pandemic, in this manner.

He recalls being ill with COVID-19 and watching videos of black people assaulting Asian Americans, asserting, "I couldn't help but feel like, when I saw these brothers beating these Asians up, that's probably what's happening inside of my body."

Amid a ferocious campaign by the fascist right to demonize China, anti-Asian hate crimes have surged in the United States. In many instances, those engaging in violence against Asian Americans invoked the libel that China was responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immediately following his anti-Asian comments, Chappelle likened Jewish people to an invasive alien species: "*So they come back to Earth, and they decide they want to claim the Earth for their very own. Pretty good plot line, huh? I call it 'Space Jews.'*"

Chappelle roots these remarks in his advocacy of racial identity politics. As he says, "Gay people are minorities, until they need to be White again." Chappelle holds a view of the world in which racial and sexual identities are locked in a zero-sum game, so that an advance in gay rights or women's rights is a defeat for black rights.

The *New York Times*'s columnist Roxane Gay, a race and gender zealot, condemns Chappelle's special as a "joyless tirade of incoherent and seething rage, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia." However,

she goes on to claim that Chappelle "delivers five or six lucid moments of brilliance." She praises his "interesting and accurate observation about the white gay community conveniently being able to claim whiteness at will. There's a compelling observation about the relatively significant progress the L.G.B.T.Q. community has made, while progress toward racial equity has been much slower." That is, Gay agrees with Chappelle's premises but perhaps not all his conclusions. It is worth noting that she says nothing about Chappelle's anti-Asian and anti-Semitic observations.

In 2017, Gay gave proof of her anti-democratic outlook when, in the face of criticisms about the destruction of careers and lives in the #MeToo witch-hunt on the basis of unnamed, unsubstantiated accusations, she complained about "a lot of hand-wringing about libel and the ethics of anonymous disclosure."

It is not an accident that Chappelle finds himself squarely in the anti-Semitic camp. Practitioners of black nationalist ideology have frequently made common cause with white supremacists and other political filth, as have proponents of Zionism and Jewish nationalism, for that matter. The Nation of Islam, which notoriously conducted meetings with the Ku Klux Klan in the Jim Crow South and praised American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell in the late 1950s and early 1960s, is also known for its violent anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and anti-gay rhetoric.

In an earlier day, Chappelle established himself as a commentator with an acerbic wit who could choose deserving targets and developed a youth following in particular as a result. He is best known for his hit three-season run of *Chappelle's Show* (2003-2006) on

Comedy Central. Chappelle famously abandoned the series and a lucrative contract with the television station due to his criticism of the show. While many of the show's segments were vulgar and backward, his skits lampooning former-President George W. Bush's efforts to sell the war in Iraq did capture an element of the criminality and gangsterism of the administration.

Chappelle's personal and political background is worth a comment. Born on August 24, 1973 in Washington D.C. to parents William David Chappelle III and Yvonne Seon, David Khari Webber Chappelle has lived firmly ensconced within an upper middle class African and African American milieu. His father, William, attended Ivy League colleges and taught music while serving as dean of students at Antioch College in the town of Yellow Springs, Ohio, where Chappelle himself owns large amounts of property.

The elder Chappelle was involved in civil rights and protest groups, including Help Us Make a Nation (H.U.M.A.N.), which sought to "address institutional racism and discrimination," according to the *365 Project*. Chappelle's mother, Yvonne, worked for a time in the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo's bourgeois nationalist government of Patrice Lumumba. Notably, she later worked in the United States Department of State. She then founded a Black Studies Center at Wright State University.

Chappelle (net worth \$50 million) introduces *The Closer* by declaring, "I'm rich and famous," followed by the explanation that the "last 17 months were hell and I cannot imagine what everyone went through." While this elementary acknowledgement of the socially disparate impact of coronavirus may be honest, the pandemic has had an accelerating impact on society, sharpening class conflict.

Whereas the working population has responded to the pandemic with a still-growing strike wave against the profits-before-lives policy of the capitalist leaders, the ruling class and its well-to-do hangers-on have responded by whipping up fascistic and racist demagoguery to divide and confuse the working class. This has gone hand in hand with the homicidal drive to force teachers, students, workers and parents into unsafe workplaces and schools to resume production amid record COVID-19 infections and deaths.

The movement of the working class, which has revolutionary implications, is attracting the most

thoughtful and progressive layers of the middle classes to its side and repelling the more selfish and degenerate affluent elements. It is the responsibility of the former to reject the racist garbage that bourgeois society is secreting from its pores and to fight for the international unity of the working class of all nations and backgrounds.

One does not know which is more disgusting, Chappelle's gloating about violence against Asian Americans or the declaration by the *New York Times*, which claims to be America's "newspaper of record" that such a tirade contains moments of "brilliance."



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