

Doubly dumb

by *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

Some people say the dumbest things, including some that are racially charged.

For those who are uncomfortable talking about race, there is a tendency to play down the racial component to such comments. That misses the point. These types of remarks may be offensive on their face, but they are doubly so when they play on racial stereotypes, reopen wounds or trivialize dark chapters in history. Often, the remarks are harmless, and the people who say them are probably not racist at all. But that doesn't mean the rest of us shouldn't call them on it.

Take the case of Kelly Tilghman, anchorwoman on the Golf Channel, who said the only way for young golfers to stop Tiger Woods is to "lynch him in a back alley." Tilghman apologized to Woods, who didn't take offense. The Golf Channel suspended her, calling the comments "hurtful and grossly inappropriate."

They were certainly that. The Golf Channel did the right thing. Comments like these make light of a reprehensible chapter in American history, and they are never acceptable.

Neither are remarks such as those of New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, who suggested Hillary Clinton beat Barack Obama in New Hampshire with retail politics and that, to be successful, candidates can't just "shuck and jive at a press conference." Cuomo said he meant no offense and that he has great respect for Obama. In fact, he said he was actually trying to say "bob and weave."

So, why didn't he? Cuomo's comments are out of bounds, and they played on stereotypes. One wonders if he would have said the same thing in referencing a white candidate like John Edwards. Words mean something. And those who use them have to do so responsibly or bear the consequences. That is especially true where race is concerned.

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