

# [***Opinion: Shane Gillis' turn on 'SNL' shows that all too often, bigotry sells***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BDP-V8B1-JBSS-S44Y-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; **Editor's Note:** Dean Obeidallah, a former attorney, is the host of SiriusXM radio's daily program "The Dean Obeidallah Show." Follow him on [*Threads*](http://www.threads.net/@deanobeidallah). The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own. Read [*more opinion*](https://www.cnn.com/opinions) at CNN.

Comedian Shane Gillis hosted "Saturday Night Live" this weekend, leading some to [*criticize*](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2024-02-21/shane-gillis-snl) the famed TV sketch show for giving a platform to the controversial comedian, who has a [*well-documented*](https://www.vox.com/culture/24081214/shane-gillis-snl-saturday-night-live-hosting-controversy-racism) history of making racist comments.

The 36-year-old comic has been known to spew offensive jokes and off-base remarks about Blacks, Asians, Jews, the LGBTQ community and other groups. In fact, [*Gillis was hired by "SNL"*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/17/entertainment/shane-gillis-reaction/index.html) in 2019 to be a member of the cast, but was [*fired before his first show*](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/shane-gillis-saturday-night-live-fired-now-hosting-rcna137161) over racist comments about Asians he'd made on his podcast the previous year.

So, what's changed since 2019? Gillis certainly doesn't appear to have.

In 2021, when asked about the [*ethnic slurs*](https://www.vox.com/culture/24081214/shane-gillis-snl-saturday-night-live-hosting-controversy-racism) that got him fired before his planned debut on "SNL," the comedian didn't even attempt to dial back his offensive remarks. "I definitely wouldn't have changed what we did, our podcast," [*he told fellow podcaster Theo Von*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRIbT5ouYYs&t=151s). "That's how I got to New York."

Since losing the "SNL" gig, Gillis has only leaned into what some call "[*cringe humor*](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/shane-gillis-mixed-bag-laughs-cringe-snl-return-1235835268/)" and others rightly slam as bigotry. As Vox recently [*wrote*](https://www.vox.com/culture/24081214/shane-gillis-snl-saturday-night-live-hosting-controversy-racism), Gillis has "continued to use his comedy to be openly bigoted toward marginalized groups, continuing to engage in [*racist*](https://youtu.be/qcPg0ZvYB4k?si=KVewIB2gLEB8WPCC&t=4098), [*anti-trans*](https://youtube.com/watch?v=mOehZ5MGsy0), [*anti-gay*](https://youtu.be/P4hJIuVYJk8?t=3385), [*antisemitic*](https://rumble.com/vudoe6-live-from-the-stand-w-rone.html?start=393), and [*arguably white supremacist*](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2024-02-21/shane-gillis-snl) statements."

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times in an [*article*](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2024-02-21/shane-gillis-snl) last week catalogued offensive comments made by Gillis between 2018 and 2019 on his podcast. Examples included Gillis's tasteless quip purporting to bat down a stereotype about homophobic people, but instead using it to attack other minorities.

After the announcement that Gillis had been tapped to host "SNL," [*TMZ*](https://www.tmz.com/2024/02/06/comedian-shane-gillis-host-snl-racial-ethnic-homophobic-slurs-resurface-podcast/) released even more examples of the comedian's past podcast bigotry including times when "he unloaded the N-word, the homophobic f-word, and a particular Jewish slur, too."

Years ago, that type of offensive commentary likely would have sunk a comedian or at least triggered a media firestorm. But that's no longer the case. Even among the cast members of "SNL," we didn't see any public outrage or protest over Gillis hosting. (By contrast, in 2022 some "SNL" cast members and writers boycotted the episode [*hosted by Dave Chappelle*](https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2024-02-21/shane-gillis-snl) in protest over his repeated jokes about transgender people.)

Far from being canceled, Gillis's style of comedy and comments on his podcast have made him beloved in certain circles. His podcast now has more than [*80,000*](https://graphtreon.com/monthly-ranking/podcasts) Patreon subscribers, which [*earns*](https://www.vox.com/culture/24081214/shane-gillis-snl-saturday-night-live-hosting-controversy-racism) him about $180,000 a month, and his podcast is the most-subscribed show on the Patreon platform, according to Vox.

Gillis's first stand-up special in 2021 posted to YouTube had more than [*24 million*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/23/arts/television/shane-gillis-snl-host.html) views. That led to a Netflix special in 2023, "Beautiful Dogs," that [*was one of the streaming*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/23/arts/television/shane-gillis-snl-host.html) platform's top 10 most popular shows. The slurs from his podcast, though, are not part of his comedy although the [*homophobia*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/23/arts/television/shane-gillis-snl-host.html) is evident, one New York Times culture reporter noted.

And just a few weeks ago, [*Bud Light hired*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/23/arts/television/shane-gillis-snl-host.html) him to be part of its team to peddle the beer. Perhaps Bud Light hopes Gillis can help it regain [*consumers who dropped the beer brand*](https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/trans-influencer-dylan-mulvaney-responds-bud-light-backlash-rcna91899) after the firestorm last year when the company teamed up withtransgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney, a movie that led to [*plummeting sales.*](https://fortune.com/2023/10/31/bud-light-earnings-dylan-mulvaney-transgender-promotion-backlash/)

One has to wonder if the [*coarsening of our social and cultural norms*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/from-hell-to-lynching-trump-presides-over-a-coarsening-of-american-politics/2019/10/23/fb749aee-f02f-11e9-b2da-606ba1ef30e3_story.html) is, at least in part, because of Donald Trump. He has, after all, replaced coded racial dog whistles with [*no-holds-barred bigotry*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/20/us/politics/trump-haley-racially-charged-attacks.html) and has made a habit of [*uttering remarks over the years*](https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/immigrants-shithole-countries-trump/index.html) that have proved [*deeply offensive*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/22/politics/lynching-donald-trump-impeachment/index.html) to Blacks, Latinos, [*Muslims*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/09/politics/donald-trump-islam-hates-us/index.html) and other groups. As a result, even outside of the realm of ***politics***, when a comedian like Gillis spews these types of comments, members of the public seem less easily offended than they might have been in the past. They've simply become desensitized to it all.

I believe that, to some degree, there is a lack of widespread outrage over Gillis hosting the show because he and his views are relatively unknown to the nation. The comic even addressed that in his opening monologue on "SNL," [*telling*](https://www.npr.org/2024/02/25/1233584316/shane-gillis-struggles-in-a-saturday-night-live-monologue-which-avoids-the-obvio) the audience, "Most of you probably have no idea who I am." He added, "If you don't know who I am, please don't Google that."

Comedians should never be held to the same standard as politicians who wield real power. But comedians are not immune from criticism, either. And to be clear, famous comedians using their platform to ridicule vulnerable communities is despicable.

At the end of the day, it's the marketplace that decides if a comedian is "canceled" or thrives. If you don't like a comedian's material, don't attend their shows.

In the case of Gillis, despite what he said with the joke in his opening monologue on "SNL," he might actually want you to Google his name. Based on what we're seeing, there's a lucrative market for views like his in the world of bigotry.

Opinion by Dean Obeidallah

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