

# NETFLIX, PLEASE DO BETTER:

## Thoughts on Dave Chappelle's Controversial Stand Up Special

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### CONTENT WARNING: SUICIDE, TRANSPHOBIA

Netflix has a history of producing controversial content. It's been accused of influencing copycat suicides that had similarities to scenes on "13 Reasons Why" and sexualizing young girls in the movie "Cuties". And while it's hard to please all viewers, it's not hard to screen harmful content before producing it. The latest volume in the long history of Netflix's production of problematic content is comedian Dave Chappelle's special, "The Closer", which came out in early October.

A 15-minute YouTube video posted by ControversyRadio highlights the worst of Chappelle's comments in the special. One example is when Chappelle talks about receiving criticism after making jokes about the LGBTQ+ community. During this ordeal, Chappelle's friend Daphne Dorman, a trans woman, stood up for him and hence faced online criticism. Shortly after, Dorman died by suicide. About her death, Chappelle said, "I was very angry at her...I felt like Daphne lied to me. She always said she identified as a woman. ... Clearly...only a man would do some gangster s--- like that." While it should be obvious that making jokes about someone's identity and about suicide in general are never acceptable, Chappelle justifies his jokes on both

topics by saying that Dorman would have loved it.

It feels like Chappelle is arguing that he's not transphobic simply because he has a trans friend, all the while he is still making jokes about trans people. In a country where, according to a UCLA Williams Institute study, trans people are more than four times as likely to be victims of violent crime than cisgender people, these jokes are unacceptable. Words have power.

Besides harmful suicide jokes, Chappelle also stood up for Kevin Hart and DaBaby, both of whom have been under fire for homophobic comments recently. "It's over. LGBTQ L-M-N-O-P-Q-Y-Z--it is over. I'm not telling another joke about you until we are both sure that we are laughing together. ... All I ask from your community, with all humility, will you please stop punching down on my people?" Chappelle asked, referring to how the comedians were getting "cancelled" for their homophobic jokes. Chappelle positions those that made the jokes/harmful comments as the victims, rather than the people who are suffering from the effects of homophobia in their everyday lives. Historically, how many people have gotten beat up as a result of

being homophobic? How many times has being homophobic gotten someone kicked out of their own home? In contrast, how many times has someone gotten beat up on the street for being queer? (Hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people numbered 1,300 in 2018, according to the FBI). How many times have queer children gotten kicked out of their homes? (Lesley University estimates that 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+). How many people have been killed for not conforming to gender and romantic norms?

The frustration towards Netflix culminated on October 20, when hundreds of Netflix employees participated in a walkout, advocating for more intersectional content and pushing for a content warning to be placed on Chapelle's show. Netflix, I encourage you to support your trans employees and the trans community as a whole—and do better. Make sure you have diverse perspectives represented in leadership. Make sure your content isn't harmful to communities before publishing it. Make sure that your employees feel supported. And lastly, make sure that you are on the right side of history.

