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Daily OPINION

Misogyny is not a joke, Shane



The host of this past week's SNL episode, Shane Gillis, with musical guest Rosalía and cast member Kenan Thompson. Shane Gillis' opening monologue has become a topic of controversy.

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"Women just dress like whores now."

That is a real quote from Shane Gillis's opening monologue on "Saturday Night Live" this weekend. The stand-up comedian kept going, stating that the shorts women wear to the gym are an "artificial bait color," that the wrinkles "go around the cheeks and all combine at the butthole" and that men are "not allowed to look." Later in the monologue, Gillis refers to his two older sisters as his "big, fat bitch sisters." This comes just three weeks after The Cornell Sun editorial board broke the story of the alleged drugging and gang rape of one woman by seven Chi Phi fraternity brothers in 2024.

I have one simple question for Shane Gillis and "Saturday Night Live": How is this funny?

No, really, I want someone to break down to me exactly how "jokes" like these are anything but harmful. Sexist comments — I won't even call them jokes — like his on Saturday night directly desensitize us to the harmful ideals that perpetuate rape culture and allow cases like the one at Cornell to happen.

Gillis' "jokes" were sexist. There is no room for doubt. His usage of misogynistic language such as "bitch" and "whore" and sexualization of women's gym clothing support that. According to Gillis, women simply going to the gym is an invitation to look (though he is apparently "not allowed").

Comments like Gillis's take an active role in the normalization of rape culture — a culture where sexual violence is not challenged and often minimized or belittled. A study on the effect of sexist humor on men's rape proclivity has shown that sexist jokes increase the self-reported male proclivity to rape. Furthermore, increased exposure to sexist humor initiates the emergence of a phenomenon known as the prejudiced norm — an expansion of the bounds of normal conduct, leading to the normalization and tolerance of discrimination through jokes. A man in a group of men using sexist humor may feel more comfortable expressing his actual hostility towards women, reinforcing the cycle of hate that gives rise to rape culture.

Shane Gillis's choice to write, edit, and perform this monologue on national television amid a global outrage caused by the Cornell rape case is not lost on me. Messages in the Chi Phi Snapchat group in relation to the alleged rape such as "free pussy upstairs" or "Shop still open?" reduce Jane Doe to nothing more than an object — a sex doll for these men to abuse. Similar misogynistic language like "bitch" or "whore," words that Shane Gillis used in his opening monologue, serve the same purpose: to strip women of their identity and personhood and make men feel justified in their sexualization and objectification of women. Fifty-seven men were in that group chat. Fifty-seven men saw those messages and ignored them when Jane Doe was going through hell. Fifty-seven men worked to minimize Jane Doe's sexual assault at the hands of their brothers by doing absolutely nothing.

"Saturday Night Live" has no problem taking shots at big targets, such as Donald Trump, for their allegations of sexual misconduct, as is their right. But when a guest takes the stage and uses the opening monologue to make women the butt of the joke, nothing happens. Gillis actually apologized for his accidental use of the F-bomb on the show (which the FCC prohibits as "profane content") on Saturday but has not made a statement about his overtly sexist comments, nor has NBC or the "Saturday Night Live" production team.

To NBC and "Saturday Night Live": In letting comments like this air on your show and saying nothing, you are complicit in the normalization and perpetuation of rape culture.

To those who are rightfully angry over the Cornell gang rape case: Don't just brush this issue aside. Be a voice against the misogyny that infects all aspects of our society.

To Shane Gillis, and those who see comments like his as harmless "jokes": Sexism affects the lives of your mother, your sister, and your girlfriend. If you love the women in your life, do not let "jokes" like this slide. Do better.