

A WORTHY NATIONAL DEBATE TO END DOUBLE STANDARDS

Don Imus has suffered severe consequences for his unfortunate remarks about the Rutgers University Women's Basketball Team.

We hope that the national debate on this issue will help eradicate the regrettable double standard of tolerance found in the U.S. media and entertainment industries.

Included in this double standard is the manner in which Italian Americans are negatively stereotyped with impunity. A prime example, ironically, involved Don Imus and his producer, Bernard McGuirk shortly after President Bush nominated Sam Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court.

During the show's Nov. 2, 2005 broadcast, McGuirk called Alito a "meat-ball sucking wop," adding "First Scalia, now Alito. What is [President Bush] doing? Interpreting the Constitution or mixing concrete?" He ended, wishing Alito luck "And to hell with those who don't like the fact that he's a God-fearing Guido."

Such ethnic epithets are as abhorrent as racial and religious insults and need to be dealt with just as severely. However, no journalist, columnist or talk show host criticized Imus and McGuirk for using such offensive language directed at a respected jurist who now sits on the highest court in the nation.

We hope that as a result of this latest episode, such slurs against a person's race, religion or ethnic heritage, including that of Italian Americans, will become culturally and socially unacceptable in this great nation of ours.

The First Amendment is not a license to offend.

***The Columbus Citizens Foundation
The Sons of Italy Commission for Social Justice
The National Italian American Foundation***