

November 24, 2006

**An Open Letter to Mr. Michael “Seinfeld” Richards
by James H. Buford**

Recently, we were all taken aback by the salacious nature of the racially-laced tirade spewed forth by former Seinfeld regular Kramer through his real life persona of Michael Richards. For those that missed the replays of the incident on CNN, Mr. Richards took it upon himself to inform the largely Black and Hispanic audience that fifty years ago they would be held upside down with a fork in their posteriors for speaking back to a white man. This was after repeatedly reminding the Black audience members of the racial epithet favored by skinheads and members of the KKK when referring to African Americans. His use of the infamous N word, shocked, disturbed, and thoroughly humiliated the young people that came to the comedy club simply to laugh and enjoy the onstage antics of the popular comedian. After all, until his tirade, they were his fans. Little did they know of the racist fury that rests just beneath the surface of his comedy routines. It would have stayed there, as it apparently has done during his years on Seinfeld, except his rage at an alleged heckler caused him to drop his stand up persona and introduce the previously private thoughts of Michael Richards. At times like this, society at large should ask, what are the lessons to be learned from this painful episode?

The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis believes that racism hurts both the perpetrator and the victim. We believe that people of different races, religions, and sexual orientations can come together to work, play, and build a better community through understanding and education about our differences. We hope that Mr. Richards seeks immediate help for his anger management issues, as well as his inability to tolerate people of different skin colors. Throughout American history, racism has been a consistent cancer which has eaten away at this country’s conscious. In order for America to come to grips with its ugly racist past, discrimination must be condemned at every level, including the public arena. The time has come for everyone to stop tolerating racist attitudes in every area of our lives because it is insufferable and it hinders our country’s growth on so many levels. The Michael Richards of the world should not be allowed to discriminate without consequences.

