

Hi Bert! Do you mind flipping back to comedy central? I think South Park is on.

What's South Park Ernie?

Are you kidding Bert? It's probably one of the funniest TV shows I have ever watched. Just go to channel 41.

Ernie! This is a cartoon, you expect me to watch a cartoon? It's not even real; you know cartoons are for children.

Oh c'mon Bert, it's hardly for children. The show deals with a lot of adult subject matter in a humorous, no holds barred kind of way.

Oh my, Ernie, did that little boy just say red haired people have no souls? How can he say something like that?

Ha ha ha

You actually find this funny? That little boy is discriminating against people with red hair and freckles. For Pete's sake Ernie you have red skin! You would be considered a ginger. I don't understand how you are laughing at this. I cannot watch this show anymore!!

Where are you going? Why are you so upset Bert?

Ernie, it's not right to watch a show that depicts little boys engaging in discriminating behavior - it blurs the line.

Relax Bert; it's just a TV show which uses humor to highlight social stigmas in Western culture. They use children to questions societal norms and values which otherwise could not be asked in a traditional setting, that's funny.

I don't think discrimination is funny Ernie. Don't you see how they are blurring the line between right and wrong? Cross the line enough, and the line disappears.

Sometimes you need a little humor when looking at certain issues in a new way. What makes South Park funny is how they address the hypocrisy with which our society deals with sensitive topics in the media.

I think they go too far. When we single out a group of people, apply epithets like Gingers to them, and then say, "Ginger's have no souls" we are dehumanizing a group of people; in the past this has led to a holocaust or genocides!

The creators of South Park presented an issue in a controversial way which forced you out of your comfort zone, and to consider where lines are drawn in society, and whether we need to change those lines. Pedagogically speaking, that's good learning!

I think there are more appropriate venues for this kind of discussion - it's the role of teachers and schools to teach ethics, not rude little cartoon characters on TV! I think people will just become desensitized to what's funny and what's not... Our lives are not cartoons Ernie!

Well Bert, maybe you are right... Maybe schools are doing a good enough job of teaching young adults ethical distinctions. But Bert, what happens when teachers don't know where the lines are drawn? What if they are drawing the wrong lines?

Bert! Listen to this: 13 kids have been expelled at St Francis High School following a national "Kick a Ginger Day"!

I told you South Park was dangerously blurring the lines!

Bert, if those kids had been receiving a good education then this would never have happened! The very fact that South Park was able to influence the kid highlights the fragility of our educational system and the need for innovative teaching methods which question unspoken societal norms and values!

We have to do something Ernie - we cannot just sit by and passively accept discrimination - we need to let the skeletons out of the closet and challenge people's views.

Come on Bert - let's go!