



Media Reality ✓ Check

QUICK TAKE

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JUST LAST WEEK, MAHER MOUTHED OFF ON MSNBC: "RELIGION STOPS PEOPLE FROM THINKING....RELIGION IS A NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER."

CNN ANCHOR HELPS PROMOTE HBO'S OFFENSIVE ANTI-FAITH "COMEDIAN"

Offending people is Bill Maher's schtick, as he showed again just last week when he denounced religion — all religion — during a February 15 appearance on MSNBC: "We are a nation that is unenlightened because of religion. I do believe that. I think religion stops people from thinking. I think it justified crazies. I think flying planes into a building was a faith-based initiative. I think religion is a neurological disorder."

Operating under the pretense that he offers brave, "politically incorrect" insights, Maher has been a fount of mean-spiritedness for years, such as during the 2000 election recount when he cheered the idea of murdering Katherine Harris. Liberal journalists would never tolerate such venom if it came from the lips of a conservative talk show host.

But Maher didn't face a single hardball when he showed up on CNN's *NewsNight* on Tuesday to promote the return of his weekly HBO show. Instead, anchor Aaron Brown applauded the offensive comedian ("We're glad you're back at work") and commiserated with him about how hard it is to speak freely in today's supposedly intolerant climate.

"He is a political comedian at a time when the culture itself seems to have a fair amount of trouble laughing at itself," Brown asserted. He told Maher: "Someone suggested the other day that the only people in the country who really get to speak their minds are comedians and talk show hosts; everyone else gets trampled. That seem to make sense to you?" Does Aaron Brown feel trampled?

Maher touted his uniqueness: "I don't think all comedians and talk show hosts speak their mind. I think it's an even smaller club than that. We do live in much more politically correct times." He blamed Christians: "The country has become much more conservative, partly because it's been taken over by the religious right."

For someone who complains about a stifling political environment, Maher has no problem attracting publicity. He's been on *NewsNight* at least three other times, which puts him one ahead of another of Aaron Brown's favorite guests: Air America radio's Al Franken, another mean-spirited liberal.