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Dear Colleague:

In 1965, John Osborne's play, A Patriot for Me, was performed in defiance of the censorship of Britain's Lord Chamberlain. As a commentary on changing values in society in the last twenty years, I would like to draw your attention to what the Lord Chamberlain had ordered cut and what had escaped his eyes.

The following speech was censored. "I tell you this: you'll never know that body like I know it. The lines beneath his eyes. Do you know how many there are, do you know one has less than the other? And the scar behind his ear, and the hairs in his nostrils, which has the most, what colour they are in what light? The mole on where? Where, Sophia?" (Act III, scene 1). Where is the obscenity in this? you will say. It has the eloquence of a love poem, fit if not for babies then for PG 13. But to the Lord Chamberlain and other right-thinking people of a darker age, it was obscene and deeply subversive because--well, it was spoken by a man.

The speech that the censor found quite acceptable was the following piece of ethnic slur. "Those damned Spaniards...They really are the worst. They stink of death, I mean. It's in their clothes and their armpits, quite stained with it, and the worst is they're so proud of it, insufferably. Like people with stinking breath always puff and blow and bellow an inch away from your face. No, the Spaniards are, you must admit, a musty lot, the entire nation from top to bottom smells of old clothes in the bottom of trunks" (Act III, scene 7).

I hope one day ethnic slur will be wiped off the face of the earth--to be replaced by ethnic humor and jokes, the practice of which is a sign of cultural vitality and diversity--of self-confidence both in the wisecracker and in the person to whom the affectionate barb is directed. I hope one day alcoholism will disappear too. I hope Prohibition works. I hope that the ethnic slur, driven underground, will not there fester to become a more intractable kind of ethnic prejudice--prejudice with a polite face. How easy it is to show disdain with a smile! The Chinese, Bertrand Russell says, are especially good at it. White bigots are so unsubtle; all they can come up with is an obvious slur.

Best wishes,

*Ji-Fu*