

Stern's remarks indefensible



**ED
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Life probably won't be business as usual for Howard Stern or KEGF-FM (97.1), following his insensitive radio commentary about popular recording artist Selena.

Last week, Howard Stern unwisely used the singer's death to denigrate Hispanics with ghoulish comments about starving Mexican mourners nibbling away at her fingers. Hispanics understandably responded with outrage.

Selena was more than just a popular artist. She was talented, bright, attractive and a source of inspiration to Hispanics of all ages. At only 23, she had received much recognition and was making inroads into mainstream America.

Unfortunately, her life and her promising recording career were brought to an abrupt stop by a gunshot, leaving the entire national and international Hispanic community in a state of shock and mourning for this rising star.

In short, Selena symbolized the dreams of many Hispanics who aspired for success and cultural expression. Howard Stern seriously erred in selecting the young singer's death to promote his message of hate to KEGF listeners.

The "shock jock," as he is commonly known, owes his popularity to the fact that he offends every conceivable group, suggesting, in a sordid manner, that he really doesn't discriminate against anyone in particular.

Giving new meaning to the notion of social responsibility, KEGF has added insult to injury by saying it wouldn't respond to demands by Hispanics to cancel the program as long as the audience ratings remained high.

Despite efforts by Howard Stern to diffuse the controversy by way of an ill-conceived and poorly executed apology in Spanish, Hispanics are determined to campaign aggressively for the program's cancellation for several reasons.

First, Selena was a significant Hispanic cultural symbol who wasn't deserving of such disrespect.

Second, the grotesque comments made by Howard Stern were made deliberately and without remorse.

Third, KEGF was equally insensitive in indicating that its decision to continue the program rested on audience ratings. The station, however, may want to reconsider its immunity from an enraged Hispanic community.

Various Hispanic leaders are planning to launch boycotts against the advertisers on the Howard Stern show and are likely to call on other companies to join in persuading KEGF to be a more responsible corporate citizen.

Also, the League of United Latin American Citizens is asking the Federal Communications Commission to investigate. And protests outside KEGF could generate unwanted publicity and inconvenience employees and visitors.

The station's insensitivity presents a black eye to the "international" image that Dallas' business and civic leaders are trying to project as they work to attract corporations and special events to the area.

Won't it seem incongruous for visitors to learn that racism is a popular form of entertainment in Dallas?

Hispanics will continue to enjoy the musical talent and memory of Selena for years to come, while also remembering the disrespect and insensitivity shown by Howard Stern and KEGF.

The broader Dallas community should join Hispanics in condemning KEGF and the various advertisers on the Howard Stern show for supporting a program that reinforces the daily appetite for hatred and racism.

Who will be Howard Stern's next target? Just tune in to KEGF for the latest in trash, hatred and multilingual apologies.

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