



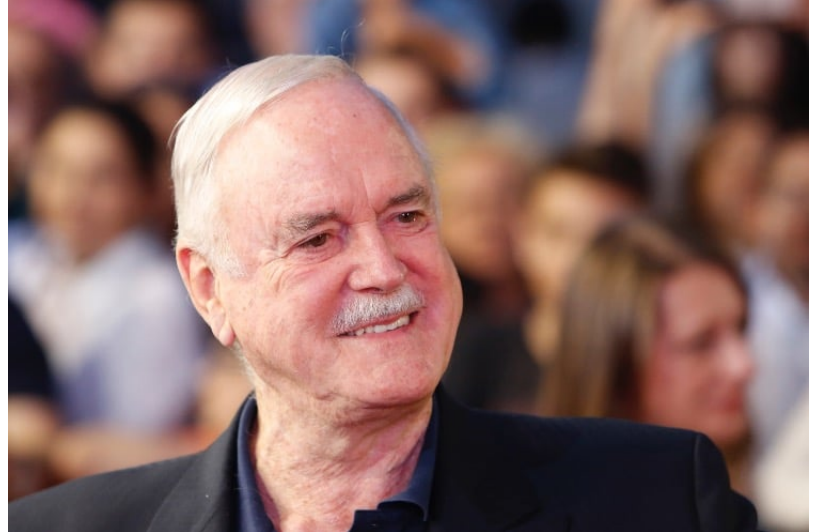
Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 16, 2022

Politically Incorrect Cleese Jokes About Reparations. Wokesters Don't Get It

The apparent squabble between British comedian John Cleese and other comics about reparations for slavery, colonization, and other putative wrongdoing against minorities was nothing of the kind.

But you wouldn't have known it from *The Hollywood Reporter's* account of March 12 that went viral a day or so ago.

The Monty Python star's crack about reparations — that Britain deserved them from Italy and France because of the Roman and Norman occupations — were a joke, he tweeted, which means claims that the comedians were angry about it are false.



AP Images
John Cleese

The contretemps, though, prove a point: Cancel culture is wrecking comedy, and it's one reason Cleese is making a documentary about it, "Cancel Me."

A raucous panel honoring John Cleese took an awkward turn at [#SXSW](#) when the subject of colonization came up <https://t.co/vPYT3Rlt8v>

— The Hollywood Reporter (@THR) [March 12, 2022](#)

You Owe Me

"It took about an hour for John Cleese to say something that turned a panel toward cringey awkwardness," the *Hollywood Reporter* said of "John Cleese in Conversation," a 90-minute chin wag in Austin, Texas.

Fellow comedians Jim Gaffigan, Dulcé Sloan, and Ricky Velez joined him, but the conversation "appeared to segue from comedy to cringe to offense," [THR continued](#):

But it began with Sloan, a stand-up comic and Daily Show correspondent, who is Black, making a joke about colonization.

To which Cleese defensively said people "forget the British Empire was the basic political unit of organization for 6,000 years — the British didn't start [colonizing]."

"We know, but ya'll did it so well!" Sloan shot back, drawing laughs. "It's the reason I'm here! I'm not supposed to be here!"

"We gave you free passage, too," Cleese replied.

Uh-oh. The crowd replied with "shocked groans," but "because Cleese was clearly joking, everybody was still, seemingly, on board."



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But Cleese got going on something of a monologue.

“History is a history of crime,” he said:

It’s a history of people who were stronger beating up people who were weaker, and it’s always been that. It’s deeply, deeply distasteful. But to pretend that one lot were worse than another — you do know the British have been slaves twice, right?

“[People] get competitive about this business of being oppressed,” Cleese continued. “We were oppressed, the English, by the Romans for 400 [years], from about 0 to 400.”

Then he delivered what *THR* says were the bad words.

“I want reparations from Italy,” Cleese continued, “Because the Romans conquered Brittannia in 43 A.D.” “The Normans came over in 1066.... they were horrible people from France, and they came and colonized us for 30 years — we need reparations there too, I’m afraid.”

[THR continued:](#)

Pasternack repeatedly told the audience, “This is why your phones are locked up,” and made a joke about “playing the Jew card,” which, in turn, prompted Cleese to start to set up a, “Do you know why Jews...” joke about a stereotypical physical trait.

At that point, Sloan stood up and confiscated Cleese’s microphone (temporarily, at least). Many were laughing and applauding, some weren’t, and it was hard to know how exactly to take it.

“And now you saved the colonizer,” Pasternack said.

“I saved a comic whose career I respect,” Sloan replied....

“Well, the thing is, I’m going to be dead soon,” Cleese said. “That’s why I’m in favor of global warming — I don’t want to be cold ever again.”

“Where you’re going, you won’t be!” cracked Pasternack.

It Was a Joke

Cleese claims what he said was a joke, and Pasternack backed him up.

“Next time the Editor of the Hollywood Reporter sends someone to review a Comedy Festival he would do well to send a reporter with a sense of humour,” Cleese tweeted. “Otherwise it’s like sending someone deaf to review a concert.”

Next time the Editor of the Hollywood Reporter sends someone to review a Comedy Festival he would do well to send a reporter with a sense of humour

Otherwise it's like sending someone deaf to review a concert

— John Cleese (@JohnCleese) [March 15, 2022](#)

Pasternack tweeted a photo of Sloan after she confiscated all the microphones from the white men.



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“Ironically there was someone there interpreting the event in sign language for the hearing impaired,” Pasternack wrote:

To the best of my knowledge, none of them, nor anyone else in attendance took any offense. But the moment when Dulce snatched all the mics was inspired and hilarious.

Ironically there was someone there interpreting the event in sign language for the hearing impaired. To the best of my knowledge, none of them, nor anyone else in attendance took any offense. But the moment when Dulce snatched all the mics was inspired and hilarious.

pic.twitter.com/xDwnmzsunr

— Dan Pasternack (@DanPasternack) [March 15, 2022](#)

“Mockingly comparing getting reparations for things that happened 1000 years ago, to things that happened less than a generation ago is a flawed comparison,” one of Cleese’s followers wrote.

“Quite right,” the 82-year-old comedian replied:

But that was the joke

The ridiculousness of the comparison was the joke

But if you lack a sense of irony, you might not realise that. But that’s not a good reason to deprive people who do understand irony of a good laugh

Quite right, Sajid. But that was the joke

The ridiculousness of the comparison was the joke

But if you lack a sense of irony, you might not realise that. But that's not a good reason to deprive people who do understand irony of a good laugh <https://t.co/zRXi4hpaHZ>

— John Cleese (@JohnCleese) [March 15, 2022](#)

That conversation isn’t the first time Cleese has cracked wise about reparations. “[The Romans] enslaved us for over three centuries and they owe us reparations,” he tweeted last year.

They enslaved us for for over three centuries and they owe us reparations
<https://t.co/LS4u7gWJ6I>

— John Cleese (@JohnCleese) [April 13, 2021](#)

Documentary

In August, Cleese announced *Cancel Me*.

“The series will find Cleese in conversation with a range of famous faces, including some comedians who claim to have been ‘cancelled’ by activists,” the [Independent reported](#).



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Cleese hopes “to find out, on camera, about all the aspects of so-called political correctness. There’s so much I really don’t understand, like: how the impeccable idea of ‘Let’s all be kind to people’ has been developed in some cases ad absurdum.”

When he discussed the program with BBC, he said people must toughen up and learn not to be offended. His lady interlocutor called that “old fashioned,” which Cleese dismissed.

Leftists caterwaul so loudly when offended that comedians [are refusing](#) to appear on college campuses.



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