

John Gilmore

Dear Mr. Redstone,

We are writing to express our dismay and disgust at comments that were made by Adam Jasinski during the broadcast of "Big Brother 8" program. In episode 2, Jasinski describes his plans to open a hair styling business catering to people with autism who he refers to as "retards."

Just as we are confident that CBS would not tolerate the use derogatory epithets regarding race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation we hope that the use of derogatory terms for people with disabilities is also unacceptable in your programming.

We believe Jasinski's should be terminated immediately, and we believe that the show should be cancelled. Further, we expect an apology to people with autism, developmental disabilities and their families from Jasinski, Big Brother, CBS and National Amusements. While Jasinski's displayed gross ignorance, the producers of the show chose to use his comments to forward the show's storyline. This displays a conscious choice on their part to demean and hurt a large group of people to further their own commercial goals.

While a large number of people with autism do have mental retardation, a very large portion do not and they are perfectly capable of understanding that they have been denigrated in an extremely demeaning way by a program broadcast for profit by CBS.

Family members of people with autism, especially parents, are constantly challenged by the great deal of misinformation surrounding autism. Broadcasts such as Big Brother makes caring for a family member with autism all that more difficult

It is appropriate I believe to note that the Holocaust began with the extermination of developmental disabled children in a secret program called Aktion T-4. The techniques, organization and personnel for Aktion T-4 went directly to run the extermination camps at Treblinka, Sobibor and others. All extermination campaigns begin with the de-humanization of the target group. And referring to developmental disabled people and people with autism as "retards" indeed fails to recognize the humanity of people with these disorders.

We have also contacted advertisers on Big Brother, including Saturn, Pfizer, Geico, Bertoli, Lowe's, Theraflu, and Taco Bell and have asked them if they want their products associated with language that demeans the people with autism and other disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

John Gilmore
Executive Director / Autism United