

What happened to ‘inclusivity’?

You know, I’m starting to think those #BeKind folk aren’t half as kind as they make themselves out to be. How else to explain this meltdown over a man with Tourette’s being invited to the Baftas? It has exposed the limits of the ‘inclusivity’ preached by the virtue-signalling set.

It should have been one of the best nights of John Davidson’s life. The 54-year-old Scot and Tourette’s activist was at the Baftas¹ with the crew of *I Swear*, a film inspired by his life growing up in the 80s and 90s. It lays bare the rough reality of living with the condition, with the lack of understanding of Davidson’s outbursts leading to bullying, beatings and trouble with the law.

Instead, the night ended in another unnecessary humiliation for him. Early on in the show, Davidson’s tics got the better of him. He began shouting and swearing. As Michael B. Jordan and Delroy Lindo, the black stars of horror flick *Sinners*, presented a prize, he blared out the n-word. Davidson stepped out, not wanting to cause any more of a fuss.

Davidson is prone to something called coprolalia –involuntarily saying obscene or taboo or socially-thermonuclear things, often at the worst possible moments. The audience had been warned in advance about Davidson’s tics. After the incident, host Alan Cummin apologised if any offence was caused, while stressing Davidson had ‘no control’ over his language. That really should have been the end of it.

But of course it wasn’t. The BBC has come under fire for failing to cut the slur from the broadcast, which went out two hours after the show. Labour MP Dawn Butler has demanded an explanation. Executives from Warner Bros, distributor of *Sinners*, reportedly confronted Bafta CEO Jane Millichip at the after-show dinner. A Bafta judge has resigned over the ‘utterly unforgivable’ handling of the situation, accusing Bafta of a ‘long history of systemic racism’. This is now an international media scandal, which Davidson has said has left him “deeply mortified”.

While Davidson’s shouting was audible on the tape, ‘many viewers would have struggled to make out the word’, notes BBC news. The producers were also, according to the corporation, ‘working from a truck outside the venue and ‘failed to hear’ the slur themselves.

I’m also struggling to understand what more Bafta could have conceivably done to make amends. What should he have done? Booked Davidson into a white-privilege workshop? Taken the knee? Promised never to let another Tourette’s sufferer in again?

I’m not sure even the critics know. Few of them have been horrid enough to have a pop at Davidson directly, –with the ignoble exceptions of Hollywood star Jamie Foxx, who said Davidson ‘meant that shit’. Michael B. Jordan was reportedly left ‘repulsed by the outburst’. According to a source close to him, ‘it has been a horrible 48 hours’ for his family and he has gone back to ‘spend time with his parents as he recovers.’

But the upshot of all this outrage is that a man who has had to struggle his entire life with humiliation due to his condition has been humiliated due to his condition, all in the glare of the world’s media, and on what should have been a night of celebration for him. *I Swear* went on to win a string of awards, including best actor and best casting.

No doubt, hearing that most toxic of words flung at him will have been upsetting. But context and intent matters. Davidson was not racially abusing those men. He was displaying symptoms of a condition he cannot control; a condition that has caused him more than one, fleeting moment of embarrassment and discomfort.

By Tom Slater, The Spectator, 25 February 2026

¹ Bafta (British Academy of Film and Television Arts- equivalent of the Césars)