

# MICHAEL HOCHMAN

## WHO'S EMBARRASSING PHILLY THIS WEEK: BILL COSBY

Philadelphia Magazine

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Philadelphia has always had an identity crisis. That's not news.

Philly is the 59<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area in the world, bigger than Toronto (*eh?*), bigger than Rome, bigger than Sydney. Sixth largest in the US, ninth on the continent, 15<sup>th</sup> in the hemisphere.

That's nothing to shake a cheesesteak at.

Yet all six million of us carry around that weight of insecurity that comes from being America's 'forgotten city'. Shoved in 90 miles from the self-proclaimed Capital of the World to the north and 130 from pretty much the *actual* Capital of the World to the south, it's not rare that a concert tour forsakes Philly for other pastures, or a map on network news doesn't have room for our dozen-letter moniker in the graphic. We don't carry a 'national' reputation. We're scoffed at for considering an Olympic bid. Our sports franchises – even the one that's 130 years old – don't qualify as 'iconic' nor have a nationwide following (Phillies Nation? More like Phillies Enclave, *amirite?* Hello?). They don't write songs about us, unless they're about HIV or Billie Jean King. We're not the city of The Met or The Golden Gate or Hollywood or The Magnificent Mile. Ask your out-of-town friends what they think of when – and if – they think of Philly. It's sliced meat on a roll with liquid cheese. Or an old bell with a crack in it. Or throwing snowballs at Santa.

We deserve better.

But what we do do, is carry that insecurity like a badge. I've lived away from Philly for parts of about half of my life. More than people from most locales – especially of our size – we embrace 'Philly' as much as important part of our personality, our constitution, as we would our occupation or our parenting status. It's a Tinder profile description "nice guy, keeps active, never married, Philly". And we see this in the real world through some of our most well-known home-town celebrities. Every chance they get, they sell themselves as Philly people. You may or may not know where George Clooney or Bryce Harper or Amy Schumer are from. But those in the spotlight who have roots in Philly will damned well make sure you know where *they're* from.

Will Smith. Patty LaBelle. Kevin Hart. Kobe Bryant. Boys II Men. Kevin Bacon. Tina Fey. Bob Saget. Pink. Mike Trout. Everyone knows from whence they hailed.

David Boreanaz has more Flyers memorabilia in his fake *Bones* office than I do in my real office. Hall & Oates spent the bulk of their Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction speech railing against the Hall's omission of Philly artists. Their Independence Hall & Oates Address.

Chris Matthews and The Roots mention Philly on their respective shows at least 27 times a night. Pretty sure that Eagles hat is permanently affixed to the top of Bradley Cooper's head.

If M. Night Shyamalan wrote a sci-fi action film (with a twist ending!) about a space station in another galaxy, he'd still find a way to set the movie in Philly.

We love ourselves, and we want to further than brand every chance we get. Philly people brand themselves as Philly.

So outside of the disgusting violence towards women (yes, that's violence) human garbage can Bill Cosby has wrought over many decades, that's one of the biggest things I'm pissed at him over.

Bill was our guy.

Our Philly guy.

Our Brand Ambassador. The Temple guy. The Fat Albert guy. *All those sweatshirts.*

The world knew Bill Cosby, the comedian, was from Philly and Philly was damned proud of it.

Now the world knows that Bill Cosby, (alleged) rapist, is from Philly, and it makes me ill. Being the home of the World's Most Famous Pervert is now part of our brand.

But we survived Pukemon. We survived JD Drew. We survived Rocky V. We survived Vince Fumo. We survived Philly Jesus. We survived the Ed Snider Bracelet game. We'll survive whoever embarrasses us in the national news next week. And we'll survive Cosby.

But goddamnit, Bill. We're quite good at embarrassing ourselves. You don't have to embarrass every single one of us by association.