

# BIGOT NOMINATED TO NJ HALL OF FAME

When Catholics found out recently that Thomas Nast was among the 50 nominated for the New Jersey Hall of Fame's (NJHF) class of 2012, they were justifiably outraged. The NJHF includes luminaries as diverse as Albert Einstein and Shaquille O'Neal and should not be dishonored by including bigots. Nast is not only the most bigoted cartoonist in American history, the 19th-century artist consistently inflamed hatred against the Irish and Catholics alike.

Amazingly, the NJHF's website omitted any mention of Nast's anti-Catholic legacy. No one denied his many talents as a creative cartoonist, but to discuss his work without mentioning his virulent anti-Catholicism was on a par with discussing filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's contributions without citing her role in generating anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Nast and Riefenstahl belong in a Bigots Hall of Shame, not in any honorary club.

Nast's cartoons show a long and pernicious pattern of bigotry born of nativism. He encouraged the mixing of racism and anti-Catholic bigotry in his depictions of the Irish as a race of inferior gorillas; he demonized the Church as a nefarious institution threatening America's public schools; he depicted an attack on Fort Sumter by priests and bishops; he demonized bishops by portraying them as crocodiles with miters for jaws; and he also depicted them as emerging from slime while prowling towards children.

Bill Donohue wrote to NJHF's Executive Director Don Jay Smith asking him to withdraw Nast's nomination. The NJHF bills itself as "a source of learning, inspiration and hope for children." Nast was not a "significant and powerful" role model for children in the 19th century, and he sure is not a

role model for anyone today.

Largely due to the work of the Catholic League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, when the votes were cast, Nast's ballot came up way short.