

KATHY GRIFFIN CROSSED THE LINE ON CNN

By Bill Donohue

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On CNN's New Year's Eve broadcast, comedian Kathy Griffin bent down and kissed Anderson Cooper's crotch. She was so happy with her act that on New Year's Day she told CBS host David Letterman that "If you think this is the part where I'm gonna apologize for trying to go down on Anderson Cooper, you are sorely mistaken."

Perhaps the biggest story related to Griffin's stunt was the almost deadening silence it engendered from any quarter. Aside from Newsbusters and the Parents Television Council (thank God for Brent Bozell), and a story in the *Baltimore Sun* and the New York *Daily News*, there wasn't much in the way of criticism (predictably, Perez Hilton took offense at the Parents Television Council for having the audacity to call out Griffin).

Does it matter what Griffin did? Would it matter if next year she actually puts her mouth on Cooper's penis? To put it more generally, does what we see and hear have any effect on our behavior, particularly the behavior of young people?

Hollywood obviously thinks that what we see and hear matters, otherwise it wouldn't intentionally ban actors from smoking on television. The movies are no different. There are, of course, a few exceptions. But those exceptions do not go unanswered. Remember when Julia Roberts smoked incessantly in "My Best Friend's Wedding"? Hillary Clinton went ballistic. Now anyone is free to disagree with Clinton's reaction, but no one can maintain that her concern was baseless. She wants to see less

smoking on the screen so less people will be induced to smoke.

Lately there has been much discussion about the prevalence of violent video games and their impact on disturbed young men. While such commentary gets Hollywood nervous, no one there is prepared to say that extended exposure to these sick games is without effect.

After the killings at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin last year, liberal groups such as the ADL and the Southern Law Poverty Center called attention to the lyrics of hate-rock bands. The ADL even went so far as to see a direct cause and effect. "Hate music does sometimes create direct effects," wrote Lonnie Nasatir. "Incidents of hate crimes being committed by people who had just been at a hate music event have been reported."

In 2009, investigators at the University of Pittsburgh concluded that those young people who listened the most to sexually degrading lyrics were far more likely to have sex at an early age than those who did not. From a 2008 study published in *Pediatrics*, we know that "Teens who were exposed to high levels of television sexual content were twice as likely to experience a pregnancy in the subsequent three years, compared to those with lower levels of exposure."

Of course, we are not just talking about kids having sex at an early age: We are talking about the *consequences* of young people having sex.

The evidence is overwhelming that sex at a young age is tied to poverty, dropping out of school, abortion, out-of-wedlock births, infant mortality, crime, infertility, depression, and disease.

What does this have to do with Kathy Griffin? No one thinks that all by herself Griffin will induce young people to have sex, or to suffer the ineluctable consequences. But she is not all by herself. That's the problem—Hollywood is hell-bent on

degrading our culture. To the extent, however, that Griffin seeks to glorify recreational oral sex—she seems intent on being its poster girl—then she must be held accountable for her behavior.

Here are a few facts. In 1950, it is estimated that 7 percent of white American girls were sexually active by age 16. In 1982, the figure jumped to 44 percent; the greatest increase occurred in the 1970s. In 2005, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that among teens aged 15 to 19, 55 percent said they had experienced oral sex. In 2012, the same agency said that 66 percent of females and 65 percent of males between the ages of 15 and 24 had had oral sex.

Does it matter? According to the Centers for Disease Control, “Even though the risk of transmitting HIV through oral sex is much lower than that of anal or vaginal sex, **numerous studies have demonstrated that oral sex can result in the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).**” (The bold type is in the original.)

In other words, people can get chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, genital human papillomavirus, syphilis, and other STDs by having oral sex. This is important because numerous studies have shown that many young people still think they cannot get an STD this way.

Again, Kathy Griffin is not *causing* any of this. But she is clearly contributing to an increasingly coarse and debased culture. And that’s not good for anyone, especially boys and girls. If I’m wrong, then bring back the smokers to TV and film and stop all the negative chatter about hate-rock bands.