

CHRISTIANS STIFFED BY NYC AGENCY

Yesterday, Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote the following e-mail to New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) spokesman Seth Solomonow:

"I understand that a nativity scene was removed from St. George Ferry Terminal, but it is unclear why. If there is a policy censoring crèches, I would like to see a copy of it. The menorah, which is a religious symbol (as determined by the U.S. Supreme Court), was recently on display at this site, so it is important that equal treatment be afforded Christian symbols.

"In the mid-1990s, I had a dispute with the Long Island Rail Road about this very same issue. I am happy to report that in 1996, Thomas Prendergast, the president of the LIRR, permitted a nativity scene in the waiting room, next to the menorah. Since the MTA has no problem with displaying nativity scenes, it would seem logical that the DOT would have no problem.

"On Thursday, Dec. 16, the Catholic League will erect a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, right near the recent display of a menorah. The City's Parks Department issues us a permit every year.

"I look forward to hearing from you."

Donohue speaks to this issue today:

We know Solomonow got the e-mail—we contacted him yesterday about it and spoke to someone in his office today. But there has been no response. Could it be that the DOT has no principled reason to stiff Christians? Could it be that they cannot justify giving preferential treatment to Jews? Could it be that they cannot defend the indefensible?

Contact Solomonow: ssolomonow@dot.nyc.gov

WARHOL FOUNDATION SCOLDS SMITHSONIAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to a letter written yesterday by Joel Wachs, president of the Andy Warhol Foundation, to Smithsonian Secretary Wayne Clough:

The Warhol Foundation is threatening to cut funding to the Smithsonian unless the vile video of ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross is restored. Its president, Joel Wachs, shows nothing but contempt for Christians, justifying this outrageous exhibition by branding its critics “bigots.” Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.

This is all so typical: every time some so-called artist offends Christians—dunking a crucifix in a jar of urine or throwing elephant dung and porn pictures on Our Blessed Mother—the artistic community rushes to the defense of this trash, never once indicating that just perhaps Christians might be offended.

Wachs calls the “Hide/Seek” exhibition “brilliant, revelatory and educational.” It’s not certain what part of the exhibition he was referring to. The ant crawlers? The S&M boys with their bullwhips? No matter, he sounds downright silly when he vents that critics of these masterpieces have “trivialized” the exhibition. No, sir, we couldn’t do a better job of trivializing the “art” that you funded.

In 1959, *New York Times* art critic John Canaday stunned the artsy crowd when he wrote that “freaks, charlatans and the misled” had surrounded the truly creative, thereby giving legitimacy to phonies. “We’ve been had,” he concluded. And so has the Andy Warhol Foundation and the Smithsonian.

Contact The Warhol Foundation: info@warholfoundation.org

BROOKLYN D.A. OFFERS HONEST RESPONSE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an e-mail he received from Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes regarding an earlier news release on the edict by a rabbinical court in Brooklyn instructing its members not to report crimes to the police:

I am happy to report that Brooklyn D.A. Charles Hynes responded quickly and honestly to my news release on the Beth Din of Crown Heights controversy. He said, in part, "In the 21 years I've served as Brooklyn's District Attorney I have never been deterred by anyone including the various Beth Dins in Brooklyn from fulfilling my responsibilities as the Chief Law Enforcement Official of Kings County." He went on to say that "nothing can interfere with my authority to investigate and prosecute any allegation of crime in my County."

This is reassuring. I want to make it clear that D.A. Hynes has the support of the Catholic League—we very much appreciate his forthrightness.

Feel free to convey your thanks, as well.

Contact: hynesc@brooklynda.org

CATHOLICS, JEWS, BLACKS AND MUSLIMS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue offers the latest evidence of duplicity on the part of the media and civil libertarians:

A nun is accused of embezzling \$1.2 million from Iona College, a Catholic institution outside New York City. A rabbinical court in Brooklyn orders its members not to report crimes to the police. Two New York stories: one about Sister Marie Thornton, the alleged thief; the other about the Beth Din of Crown Heights. Which one interests the media?

The story on the nun is being carried on the front page of Google's "New York" section, and has been picked up by Yahoo!, the AP, UPI, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Post*, *USA Today*, Huffington Post, and dozens of other media outlets. The story on the rabbinical court has been picked up by the *New York Daily News* and Gothamist.com. That's it. The story about the Jewish court is a week old; the one on the nun broke today.

In an edict to its 10,000 members, the Beth Din of Crown Heights warned against creating bad relations with the police. Fine. But it also said [[click here](#) and see #4] that "No one shall bring to any media outlet, information about any resident that could, if publicized, lead to an investigation or intensified prosecution by any law-enforcement agency." In other words, if a rabbi rapes a kid, no one is to report it to the cops.

I am writing to Brooklyn D.A. Charles Hynes asking him if he would have any objections if the Diocese of Brooklyn adopted the same policy.

Moreover, since it is okay during election years for African-American ministers to endorse politicians in their churches, and it is okay to spend public funds for prayer rugs and foot

baths for Muslims, the time has come for Catholic bishops to a) order their priests not to report crimes to the police b) endorse politicians at Mass and c) demand public monies for kneelers and holy water receptacles.

Contact the Brooklyn D.A.: hynesc@brooklynda.org

MENORAH IS A RELIGIOUS SYMBOL

The *Sun-Sentinel*, a south Florida newspaper, has an editorial today criticizing the Catholic League for its claim that Christians are being discriminated against in Boca Raton: the City allows a menorah in public buildings, but not manger scenes. The editorial says, “local governments have been fairly consistent that nativity scenes are religious symbols that violate the separation of church and state when on public property, but that secular symbols like menorahs and Christmas trees do not.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds:

This is the most remarkably ignorant editorial I have ever read on this subject. If what the *Sun-Sentinel* said were true, then there would be no nativity scenes on public property anywhere in the United States. In fact, they appear in State Capitols, Governors’ Mansions, outside municipal buildings, and in public parks. They even allow nativity scenes in Boca Raton’s Sanborn Square Park! On December 16, the Catholic League will display a life-size nativity scene on public property—it’s called Central Park—just as we have since the mid-1990s; Jews displayed the world’s largest menorah there over Hanukkah.

If the *Sun-Sentinel* were correct, then all of these crèches

are illegal. I have a wager for them: tell those who share your ignorance to sue the Catholic League once we put our manger scene up in Central Park. And remind them to sue the New York City Parks Department as well—they granted us the permit.

Someone at the *Sun-Sentinel* needs to tell an Orthodox rabbi that a menorah is a secular symbol. They also need to educate the public: they should explain why a symbol that represents a *miracle* is considered secular in nature. And then they need to inform all federal judges that the Second Circuit erred when it said, in its 2006 ruling, *Skoros v. City of New York*, that “The Supreme Court and our sister circuits agree that the menorah is a *religious* symbol.” (My italic.)

Contact the paper’s editorial page editor, Antonio Fins: afins@sun-sentinel.com

BOCA RATON DISCRIMINATES AGAINST CHRISTIANS

2009, some Florida Christians petitioned the City of Boca Raton to include a crèche in the City’s holiday displays, but were rebuffed. Now they are being told to display the manger scene in the center of the downtown area in the City’s Sanborn Square Park. It admits to displaying in the lobbies of public buildings “City-owned decorations,” which include the menorah.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on this today:

The City of Boca Raton is effectively discriminating against Christians by allowing one religious symbol, namely the

menorah, to be displayed in public buildings, while censoring nativity scenes. The City is factually, and legally, wrong to consider the menorah a secular symbol. In its 2006 ruling, *Skoros v. City of New York*, the Second Circuit ruled the following: “In *Kaplan v. City of Burlington*, this court specifically identified the menorah as ‘a religious symbol of the Jewish faith, recognized as such by the general public.’ The Supreme Court and our sister circuits agree that the menorah is a religious symbol.” Moreover, the menorah symbolizes a miracle that is recognized in Judaism as the religious symbol of Hanukkah.

The City of Boca Raton, then, is under no constitutional prohibition from placing a nativity scene alongside the menorah. Indeed, the Catholic League recently mailed a crèche to every governor, and at least half of them acknowledged they are displaying it in a public spot. Moreover, we will display our privately bought crèche in Central Park on Dec. 16.

What the City of Boca Raton should never have done was to purchase, with public funds, a religious symbol; it should have been donated. No matter, the Catholic League is prepared to mail officials a one-piece crèche to be displayed alongside their city-bought menorah. We await a response.

Contact Michael Woika, Asst. City Manager, Boca Raton:
MWoika@ci.boca-raton.fl.us

PETA EXPLOITS POPE IN AD

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has embarked on a campaign encouraging the spaying and neutering of animals. The leaflet that it is distributing, “Pope Condom,” shows an obviously doctored picture of Pope Benedict

XVI throwing a condom to a crowd [[click here](#)].

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on it today:

There are two problems with this campaign: the leaflet exploits the pope; and it demonstrates an incredible hypocrisy on the part of PETA.

Regarding the former issue, it is hardly news that PETA likes to hijack Christian figures and symbols to pander its message, but to do this to the pope shows how remarkably unethical this allegedly ethical organization really is.

Regarding the latter, the statement accompanying this campaign says, "It's sinful that millions of dogs and cats are killed every year in animal shelters simply because there aren't enough homes for all of them..." What is truly sinful is how PETA lies. In 2008, it was disclosed by the Center for Consumer Freedom that PETA kills 95 percent of the adoptable pets in its care. Indeed, PETA delivered the death sentence to 21,339 cats and dogs between 1998 and 2008 at its headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia.

There is something perverse about an organization that has to rip off the pope while violating its own mission on a daily basis, just to stay in business.

Contact PETA VP Bruce Friedrich: BruceF@peta.org

FUNDING MUSEUMS IS CLASS DISCRIMINATION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a December 3 statement by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)

on the video that was pulled from the Smithsonian last week:

AAMD calls it “extremely regrettable” that the Smithsonian pulled the vile video. Nowhere does it even imply that Christians might rightly be offended by the sight of large ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross. As such, AAMD has made the case for withdrawing all public support for the arts. If this is what they call art—never mind the pornographic images of gay men—and if this is how they treat Christians, then let them find private sources for their work.

AAMD is also guilty of rank hypocrisy. In 2006, it released a report on sacred objects, maintaining that “art museums should strive to accord equal treatment and respect to all religions in the interpretation of religious works of art.” Does AAMD not regard a crucifix as a “sacred object”? Christians would love to know. Or is their interest in “sacred objects” limited to those found in “indigenous societies,” as their policy seems to indicate?

In a large survey of museum-going households released in April, it was found that they are significantly better educated and affluent than the U.S. population; they are also overwhelmingly white. The time has come, then, to stop funding the leisure of rich white people: all public monies for the arts should cease. Quite frankly, to make the working class pay for the leisure of the rich amounts to class discrimination. In the spirit of social justice, a better case could be made to fund professional wrestling—it’s what the working class enjoy.

Contact Janet Landay at the AAMD: jlanday@aamd.org

DUPLICITY MARKS WASHINGTON POST

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on today's editorial in the *Washington Post*:

On November 30, I issued a news release objecting to a vile video that showed large ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross. What mattered more than the video was its venue: it was part of a Smithsonian exhibition, an institution that would collapse absent federal funding. My central objection is this: if it is wrong for the government to use public monies to promote religion, it should be equally wrong for the government to bash religion. Accordingly, I asked that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees "reconsider future funding."

I did not ask for the cops to storm the Smithsonian and confiscate the video. I did not ask to ban the exhibition. I did not even ask for the video to be pulled. I simply raised a question regarding the propriety of using public monies to fund an institution that assaults the sensibilities of Christians. And for this, I am labeled a "censor" by the *Washington Post*.

On December 1, the newspaper's art critic said I missed the point of the video: it was really a statement about the suffering of a guy dying of AIDS. He's right—I missed that point completely. Now in today's editorial, the *Post* backs their critic's interpretation, saying that the ants on the crucifix "could be understood as an expression of the 'hideous, heart-rending loss of a loved one...'" I have news for them: it could also be seen as hate speech.

What is really astonishing is that on October 10, the *Washington Post* censored a cartoon because it "might offend

and provoke some Post readers, especially Muslims.” And what was it? Some ants eating Muhammad? No. In fact, Muhammad was never even shown. The cartoon merely showed kids and animals frolicking about, asking, “Where’s Muhammad?” Their hypocrisy is sickening.

Contact Fred Hiatt, the editorial page chief:
hiattf@washpost.com

OBAMA SPEECHWRITER’S IDEA OF COMEDY

The winner at last night’s “Funniest Celebrity” competition in Washington D.C. was White House speechwriter Jon Lovett. In a quip he made about the TSA’s pat downs, he said, “it’s giving a way for, you know, defrocked priests to get their lives back together, giving back to the community, lend a...Well, not lend a hand, but you know.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds as follows:

Had this been some flunky entertainer appearing in an urban comedy club, no one would blink an eye. But it is at least an interesting window into the mind of one of the speechwriters for the president of the United States: Jon Lovett could have chosen a million examples to poke fun at the TSA, so it is revealing that what he settled on was a former priest guilty of sexual molestation.

This is an administration that has bent over backwards not to offend Muslims. Even in a comedic forum, it would never countenance a joke of this sort that targeted an imam. But for Catholic priests, the White House obviously has a different

standard.

At the very least, Lovett should never be given an assignment ever again that touches on matters Catholic. And quite frankly, a statement by President Obama on this issue is entirely warranted. We can't have one standard for Muslims and another for Catholics.