

IRANIAN THUG WELCOMED AT COLUMBIA

Columbia University in New York City hosted Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a September 24 forum. The Catholic League wasted no time criticizing Columbia's decision to offer the tyrant a platform of legitimacy, citing his persecution of religious minorities. Bill Donohue debated both the Columbia dean and the Columbia professor who invited Ahmadinejad on the "Today" show. He said they should both resign.

Donohue took issue with the propriety of a university hosting the Iranian president. "A university does believe in freedom of speech," he said, "but freedom of speech is a means toward an end. The end of a university is the pursuit of truth." Donohue said that "Ahmadinejad belongs in the Beacon Theatre, Central Park, Madison Square Garden. A university stands for something different."

Anyone who supports terror, pledges to destroy a sovereign nation (Israel), punishes by death anyone who "insults" religion (Article 513 of the Iranian Constitution), and thumbs his nose at the international community has no legitimate place at a university. And by denying the Holocaust, Donohue told Matt Lauer, Ahmadinejad is "spitting in the face of every Jew in New York City."

Donohue noted that Columbia president Lee Bollinger called off an appearance by Ahmadinejad at the campus last year, and wondered why he was welcomed this year: "[Bollinger] said the reason [Ahmadinejad] is not coming to the university is because he doesn't represent the values of the academy. Now, either something has happened at Columbia and they've dissolved their values or Ahmadinejad has cleaned up his act."

Donohue also took issue with Columbia's phony free speech

argument. “If Columbia believes that freedom of speech is the highest virtue,” he argued, “why did they not allow the founder of the Minutemen [Jim Gilchrist] to speak there two weeks ago? That’s because they found his speech objectionable.”

We are grateful to the “Today” show for inviting Donohue to speak about this issue.

DOES “THE VIEW” WANT ANOTHER FIGHT?

After a spate of anti-Catholic comments on ABC’s “The View” from last fall to this summer, the show’s panelists mended their ways after we placed a *New York Times* ad on June 12 criticizing their treatment of our faith. Since the ad ran, we noted in September’s *Catalyst*, “the gals have been good.” But on October 4, the panelists were at it again.

Whoopi Goldberg began by commenting on St. Louis Arch-bishop Raymond Burke’s remarks about pro-abortion politicians receiving Communion. Goldberg said that because of Rudy Giuliani’s position on abortion, Burke “cannot give him Communion.” To our knowledge, Giuliani has never been refused Communion by any priest (though Burke could deny him if he wanted to do so). Moreover, it is not likely that Giuliani will be faced with this issue anyway: he knows he cannot present himself for Communion because his previous marriage was not annulled.

Elisabeth Hasselbeck put her arrogance on display by exclaiming, “I always have an issue with a priest denying Communion.” Denying someone Communion rarely occurs—but in any

event, what business was it of Hasselbeck, who is no longer a Catholic, to offer her two cents about Catholic teachings? Compounding her foolishness, she asserted that a divorced member of her family could not receive Communion until obtaining an annulment. This is ludicrous: a divorced Catholic who has not remarried is never denied Communion.

Joy Behar and Hasselbeck then opined how annulments can be bought. This is one of the great smears that often goes unchallenged. Certainly there are old allegations regarding a few prominent Catholics, but it was simply wrong for Behar and Hasselbeck to make sweeping generalizations. There is a modest administrative fee for annulments, but it can be waived if the cost is deemed prohibitive.

Perhaps the most brilliant line was when Behar said, “Rudy Giuliani hasn’t necessarily had an abortion himself.” We particularly liked the qualifier, “necessarily.” And, of course, all of the panelists chimed in about the sex abuse scandal, thus dragging gays through the mud.

Write to co-producer Bill Geddie, ABC, 320 W. 66th St., New York, NY 10023 (email: bill.geddie@abc.com). Have him buy these ex-Catholics a copy of the Catechism.

MEDIA HYPE OVER POPE’S DEATH

On September 21, *Time* ran a provocative article, “Was John Paul II Euthanized?” The piece quoted Italian intensive care specialist Dr. Lina Pavanelli, who charged that Pope John Paul II violated Catholic teaching by refusing medical care that would have prolonged his life. Pavanelli’s allegations were as nonsensical as *Time*’s understanding of Catholic teaching was ignorant.

According to an Associated Press story that ran five days later, Pavanelli “acknowledged she didn’t have access to John Paul’s medical records.” In addition, other errors in her argument were quickly countered by the Vatican. For instance, Pavanelli charged that the pope should have been given a nasal feeding tube earlier than March 30, three days before his death. But this was done, the Vatican noted, only after John Paul could no longer ingest food or liquids; he was never without sustenance before getting the feeding tube. Father Jonathan Morris, on the Fox News website, asked why Pavanelli believed the pope would have initially rejected a feeding tube, only to accept it shortly before dying, if he was trying to deliberately hasten his own death. Despite all of this, Pavanelli stood by her allegation that the pontiff’s death was the result of assisted suicide.

Time acted irresponsibly not only in casting suspicion on the pope’s passing, but also in misrepresenting the Church’s teachings on end-of-life issues. It claimed that “Catholics are enjoined to pursue *all means to prolong life*.” (Our emphasis)

Not true—the Catechism of the Catholic Church says this about end-of life care: “Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of ‘over-zealous’ treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one’s inability to impede it is merely accepted” (no. 2278). Thus, *Time* was clearly off the mark.

SITCOM AVOIDS ALIENATING MUSLIMS

The CW television network premiered a new sitcom, “Aliens in America,” on October 1. The show is about a family called the Tolchucks that takes in a Pakistani Muslim foreign exchange student. While the Tolchucks are portrayed as slightly dysfunctional, the Muslim boy is friendly, helpful and devout—a real joy to be around. The contrast between the foreign Muslim boy and the American family is integral to the plot. As television producer David Guarascio told *The Times Union*, “We wanted to bring a character who had a sense of his own faith, and who had a strong relationship with God into this family that really doesn’t have one.”

According to *USA Today*, the pilot “includes scenes that satirize perceptions about terrorism” and was screened by the Islamic Center of Southern California. Additionally, the Hollywood bureau of the Muslim Public Affairs Council provided advice to the producers about the show’s religious and cultural content.

It is admirable that “Aliens in America” includes a positive character who is devoted to God—something that is pretty hard to find in today’s TV lineup. Christians are hoping they too will see a positive reflection of their faith in the upcoming TV season, though we won’t hold our breath waiting for the networks to screen any shows with Catholic or Protestant organizations.

COP-KILLER LINKED TO “ARABIC” SCHOOL

Bill Donohue wrote to every New York City Council member on September 19 asking for an investigation into a coalition backing the Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA), a New York City public school billed as an “Arabic-themed” institution. The coalition, “Communities in Support of KGIA,” formed following the August 10 resignation of the school’s first principal, Debbie Almontaser. She was pressured to quit following her refusal to condemn a T-shirt that read “Intifada NYC.” The term “intifada” is widely understood today to mean a terrorist “uprising.”

Donohue called for the probe due to a link on the coalition’s website, kgia.wordpress.com. The “Pages” section links to “Mumia on KGIA,” which runs an endorsing statement by Mumia Abu-Jamal (along with a link to his FreeMumia.org website). Abu-Jamal is the convicted cop-killer and hero to anti-American left-wing extremists, who still rally to his side even though his appeals have been heard and rejected by over a dozen judges.

As we expected, extremists have been backing this so-called Arab school. What perked our interest initially was the stonewalling we got this past summer when we asked routine questions regarding the KGIA. Where was the curriculum? What textbooks would be used? Why were imams serving on an advisory board—some of whom are militants—if this wasn’t an Islamist school? Why is the Association of Muslim American Lawyers playing an integral role in the school? Why have the Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media, who made the “Intifada NYC” T-shirt, been a sponsor to the coalition supporting the KGIA? Most important, why has this coalition embraced a cop-killing thug?