

UNSEEMLY TWINS: OBAMA AND HOLLYWOOD

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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On September 11, 2001, around 8:50 a.m., I looked out my 34th floor-window and saw a blazing hole near the top of one of the Twin Towers. I thought some jerk on drugs had flown a small plane into the building, so I quickly went back to typing. Then I heard a member of our staff scream. This time I saw a tremendous burst of flames coming from a hole in the other Twin Tower. I knew we were at war. I also knew who did it.

As a veteran, I am particularly sickened by what happened. But I am also sickened by what happened last month on 9/11, this time in the Middle East. Not only did young Muslim men once again act like barbarians, their mob behavior was greeted with empathy by team Obama.

Whether an anti-Muslim film triggered the mad reaction, or whether it functioned as a pretext, is not relevant to my concern: what interests me is the disturbing response initially shown by our own government. The U.S. Embassy's statement sounded more like something penned by Oprah than American diplomats. It said it "condemns efforts to offend individuals to hurt the religious *feelings* of Muslims." (My *italic.*)

In the same week that this took place, I had written two news releases on Catholic-bashing films and TV shows. The first sought to explain why a special jury award was given to a movie at the Venice Film Festival: it showed a woman masturbating with a crucifix. The second discussed an upcoming series on FX that portrays a sadistic nun who beats mentally insane patients in a Catholic institution.

This is what we do at the Catholic League: we are constantly drawing attention to the Catholic bashing that takes place in the arts, the entertainment industry, the media, and elsewhere. Yet no one in the Obama administration has ever expressed the slightest interest in condemning anti-Catholic fare.

Imagine the Obama administration saying this about an anti-Catholic movie or piece of artwork: "Respect for religious beliefs is a cornerstone of American democracy. We firmly reject the actions by those who abuse the universal right of free speech to hurt the religious beliefs of others." This is exactly what the U.S. Embassy said in the wake of the Muslim uprising in Egypt.

If this statement had been tied to a strong denunciation of Muslim violence, it would have been fine. After all it is wrong to insult people of faith. Moreover, having a legal right to freedom of speech does not morally justify everything said in its name. Here's the issue: Is it too much to ask that we Catholics be extended the same degree of sensitivity?

To be more specific, why doesn't the Obama administration show as much empathy to Catholics when their sensibilities are being trashed? Don't Catholic "feelings" count? Maybe it's because the president has so many Hollywood friends.

In August, Harvey Weinstein, who has produced more anti-Catholic movies than anyone, held a \$35,000-per-person dinner in his home for the president. In March, Bill Maher, who is the supreme Catholic basher, wrote a check to Obama's superPAC for \$1 million. How much Barbra Streisand, Susan Sarandon, and Rob Reiner have forked up is not known, but we do know that DreamWorks creator Jeffrey Katzenberg has shelled out millions. Hollywood loves Obama.

It's not just Hollywood that has double vision—seeing anti-Muslim movies for what they are while turning a blind eye to

anti-Catholic flicks—it's true of many movie critics. Take Lou Lumenick. He called the film that drove Muslims mad a "hate 'movie' that provoked protests [that] should never have been made." Indeed, he branded it "the most offensive" movie he had "the misfortune to watch in 30 years of reviewing films."

We've been reading Lumenick's reviews in the *New York Post* for years. There hasn't been an anti-Catholic movie that he hasn't liked. He gave "The Da Vinci Code" four stars; he loved a documentary that put the worst possible face on the Catholic Church, "Deliver Us From Evil"; he also lauded another documentary bashing the Church, "Twist of Fate"; he condemned the "misogynous and homophobic" aspects of "Saving Silverman", but said nothing about its anti-Catholic elements.

People like Lumenick are the same ones who tell the Catholic League every time we get upset about Catholic-bashing films, "don't go see it." If we criticize anti-Catholic TV shows, we're told, "turn the dial." If we see obscene art on a sidewalk, we're instructed, "avert your eyes." The burden is always on us to avoid being bashed, never on the basher.

We know why Muslims are protected by the Obama administration and Hollywood: the unseemly twins are scared of Muslim retaliation. That they don't worry about Catholics taking to the streets explains a lot (perhaps we should hit the streets more, albeit non-violently), but it also says something pathetic about their moral compass: it takes the prospect of violence to make them act ethically.