

# WHO CARES ABOUT STORMY DANIELS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on public reaction to the relationship between Stormy Daniels and President Trump:

Who cares about Stormy Daniels? The media care. Indeed, they are obsessed with the story. They are also angry: they are angry that the public doesn't care. Nor does the public care about the tapes that President Trump's former lawyer has about Trump's alleged sexual encounter with a former Playboy model.

How to account for this disparate reaction?

The elite media, as Stanley Rothman, S. Robert Lichter and Linda S. Lichter demonstrated, are much more liberal than most Americans. The Smith College political scientist and the Columbia University researchers co-authored the 1986 book, *The Media Elite*, showing how little the media titans have in common with the average person. The book laid the groundwork for future scholarship on this subject. Every study done on the media since that time has confirmed their conclusion.

The media elite take a particularly more liberal perspective on sexual matters than is true nationwide. Which begs the question: Why are they the ones exercised about Stormy, and not the public?

The media elite's fixation on Stormy, led by CNN, is easy to understand: they hate Trump. Anything he does well, they either underreport or seek to discredit. When he screws up, they highlight it. What is less easy to understand is the nonchalant attitude that the public has for Stormy and Trump.

It is not as though the American people don't like a sexy story. After all, 22 million tuned in to see the "60 Minutes"

interview with Stormy in early April. The problem for the media is that this issue never caught. Indeed, the show was more like a one-night stand. Proof: Two weeks after the interview, a Quinnipiac poll showed that the alleged affair was considered an important issue by 23% of American voters; 73% didn't care.

The media keep trying, but the results are the same. For example, the *New York Times Magazine* recently ran a big spread on Stormy's lawyer, Michael Avenatti. According to Brent Bozell and Tim Graham of the Media Research Center, Avenatti has appeared on over 200 TV news shows and late-night talk shows. Again, this is a shot in the arm for voyeur-like entertainment, but the story still has no legs.

Why the public yawn? Ironically, the very ones who are going ballistic over this story—the media elite—helped to create the culture that accounts for the public's indifference.

Beginning in the 1960s, many institutions embraced the tenets of moral relativism. The elementary and secondary schools adopted situation ethics. The colleges and universities promoted the moral equivalence ethos of multiculturalism—all cultures are equal. The mainline Protestant denominations abandoned traditional teachings on sexuality, and the Catholic Church let its guard down as well.

The media went from "My Three Sons" to "Three's Company" to "Will and Grace" and "Modern Family." Movies that once received an "R" rating for salacious fare now merit a PG or PG-13 score. Groping while dancing was never seen on Dick Clark's "American Bandstand," now it is boldly featured on MTV and BET.

No one ever used foul language on TV—now it is commonplace. From the Oscars to White House Correspondents' dinners, obscenities are the rule. Feminist comedians invoke the "c-word" against women they loathe, and those who object are

scolded for doing so. A man who thinks he is a woman is seen as a hero, while those who think he's nuts are branded bigots.

If there was one cultural vehicle that softened up the public to accept what had only yesterday been seen as taboo, it was the Phil Donahue show. For more than a quarter century nationwide, beginning in 1970, he introduced America to one sexual deviant after another, always maintaining that his guests were very much like the rest of us. Those who objected were told how close-minded, moralistic, and judgmental they were. Over time, with the help of many other cultural elites, it seeped in.

The result? The only moral judgment the dominant culture allows is when an act is nonconsensual. This amoral conception of liberty—what may be called the BDSM approach to morality—is now part of our collective conscience, firmly rooted in the public's mind. It explains our moral passivity.

After working so hard to craft this culture of moral indifference, the media elite are now angry at the public for not sharing their angst over Stormy and Trump. They need to check their notes.

Was Stormy a victim? No. End of story. Be careful what you wish for.