

WHY OBAMA GAVE HOLLYWOOD A PASS

By Bill Donohue

This article was originally published at Newsmax.com on January 18, 2013.

In his Jan. 16 remarks on gun violence, President Obama said, "As soon as I'm finished speaking here I will sit at that desk and I will sign a directive giving law enforcement, schools, mental health professionals and the public health community some of the tools they need to help reduce gun violence."

In doing so, the president addressed two of the three key issues – guns and mental health – but said nothing about Hollywood's role. Indeed, he never mentioned TV or the movies, limiting himself to a throw-away line on how "Congress should fund research into the effects that violent video games have on young minds."

Every honest social scientist who has looked at this issue already knows the answer to the proposed research: violent video games have little effect on girls, and little effect on most boys; however, young men from dysfunctional backgrounds are more likely to engage in violence. So after the study is done, and we learn what we already know, who is going to do what about it?

When Vice President Biden met with Hollywood leaders on Jan. 10, he correctly said there were many "stakeholders" involved in the issue of gun violence. He also made sense when he concluded, "There is no single answer." Looks like his boss agrees, in part: Obama gave us 27 answers (23 Executive Orders and four legislative proposals), but not one touched on Hollywood's responsibility. Whatever happened to their "stakeholder" role?

Hollywood was not given a pass because of the delicacy of the Constitution: there are First Amendment considerations in trimming the rights of the mentally ill, and there are Second Amendment rights involved in gun control. Hollywood was given a pass because it greases Obama.

To be specific, Hollywood dumped millions into Obama's coffers in both elections. In return, Obama's stimulus package included a \$246 million tax break for Hollywood movie investors in big budget projects.

Christopher Dodd, head of the Motion Picture Association of America, picked up another \$430 million in tax breaks for Hollywood studios in the recent fiscal cliff deal. Not surprisingly, Dodd said he would not yield a bit in getting Hollywood to curb violent fare. Why should he? There are no penalties for not cooperating.

It's not just Dodd who is obstinate. Nina Kessler, president of CBS Entertainment, says of TV programming, "nothing that is on the air is inappropriate." It appears there is nothing inappropriate on the big screen, either. When Quentin Tarantino of "Django Unchained" fame was recently asked, "Do you ever go through a period when you lose your taste for movie violence," he blithely answered, "Not for me."

Anyone who is truly interested in maintaining free speech protections is bound to be sensitive to the issue of censorship. But it would be wrong to say that Hollywood's refusal to curb violence is a function of its fidelity to the First Amendment. Quite frankly, it can be bought.

Hollywood is so desperate to crack the Chinese market that it is willing to do whatever the communists tell it to do. On January 15, *The New York Times* ran a detailed front-page story on how Hollywood prostitutes itself by bowing to the dictates of its communist Chinese bosses. Not only are Hollywood producers summoned to appear before the tyrants in their

offices, communist agents jam movie sets offering instructions. Does Hollywood complain? Not on your life.

It's even sicker than this. Two subjects that the Hollywood free-lovers regularly agree to cut and splice are sexuality and religion. Yet if a Catholic or evangelical leader in the U.S. speaks out against Hollywood for its irresponsible sexual depictions, or its Christian-bashing scripts, he is called a fascist. When Communist government officials order them to make cuts, they supinely oblige. The communists do not approve of films that harm "social morality" or suggest that "religion is darkness."

Billions are at stake, which is why Hollywood shuts its mouth. Indeed, it does more – it cheers censorship! For example, filmmaker Steven Soderbergh said he was delighted that Chinese censors took interest in his work.

"I'm not morally offended or outraged. It's fascinating to listen to people's interpretations of your story," Soderbergh said. Of course, those "people" are agents of the state, communist employees who come not to offer their "interpretations" – they come to dictate content.

If President Obama were sincere, he would hold a press conference in Hollywood asking his friends to be at least as obsequious to his recommendations as they are to Chinese edicts. But that will never happen: Obama is more concerned about dreaming up his 24th Executive Order on gun control.

Dr. William Donohue is the president of and CEO of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. The publisher of the Catholic League journal, Catalyst, Bill is a former Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation and served for two decades on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars. The author of five books, two on the ACLU, and the winner of several teaching awards and many

awards from the Catholic community, Donohue has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows speaking on civil liberties and social issues.