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"Rummaging in the government's attic"

Description of document: **Complaints to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) about the Showtime TV series, Penn & Teller Bullshit**

Requested date: 27-October-2007

Released date: 16-November-2007

Posted date: 30-November-2007

Date/date range of document: 13-April-2004 – 26-May-2006

Source of document: Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W., Room 1-A836
Washington, D.C. 20554
Phone: 202-418-0440 or 202-418-0212
Fax: 202-418-2826 or 202-418-0521
E-mail: FOIA@fcc.gov
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov/foia/>

Notes: This request was assigned to FCC Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau ("CGB") and the Enforcement Bureau ("Enforcement") by the Commission's FOIA Office for processing.

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Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20554

CGB

November 16, 2007

FOIA No. 2008-052

This letter is in response to your recent Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") request that you filed with the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC" or "Commission") on October 27, 2007. Your request was assigned to the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau ("CGB") and the Enforcement Bureau ("Enforcement") by the Commission's FOIA Office for processing. Your request sought complaints about the Showtime TV series, Penn & Teller Bullshit.

CGB and Enforcement have coordinated to provide a response to your request. CGB conducted a search of the database in which we maintain the records of informal complaints filed by, or on behalf of, consumers. Our search identified six complaints responsive to your request. Enforcement has informed CGB that a search of its records identified five responsive complaints. The responsive documents are enclosed. All personal, identifying information relating to the individuals who submitted, or are named in, the complaints has been redacted pursuant to FOIA Exemption 6 and Commission rule Section 0.457(f), 47 C.F.R. § 0.457(f). A release of this information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy under the Privacy Act." In addition, certain FCC employee names have been redacted pursuant to FOIA Exemption 2 and Commission rule Section 0.457(b), 47 C.F.R. § 0.457(b).

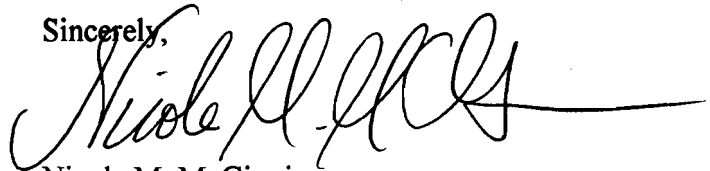
Please be advised that the Commission receives many complaints and comments that do not involve violations of the Communications Act or any FCC rule or order. Thus the existence of a complaint against a particular carrier does not necessarily indicate wrongdoing by the entity involved.

We are required by the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A), and Section 0.470 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 0.470, to charge FOIA requesters certain fees,

depending on the classification of requesters into one of three categories defined in Section 0.466 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 0.466. The categories are (1) commercial use requesters; (2) educational and noncommercial scientific institution requesters and requesters who are representatives of the news media; and (3) all other requesters. You have been classified as an "all other requester" by the FOIA office. Section 0.466(a)(3) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 0.470(a)(3), provides that all other requesters are not charged for the first 100 pages of reproduction and two hours of search time. Because your request falls within the above guidelines, there are no charges associated with processing it.

If you consider this response to be a denial of your FOIA request, you may file an application for review of this decision with the Commission's Office of General Counsel within 30 days, in accordance with Section 0.461(j) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 0.461(j).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole M. McGinnis", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nicole M. McGinnis
Deputy Bureau Chief
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

Enclosures

Control ID : CIMS00000032903

Consumer's Name : [REDACTED]

Consumer's Phone Number : [REDACTED]

Email : [REDACTED]

Submission Method : Web

Problem Submitted Time : 5/6/2006 6:00:00PM

Problem Description

At 1:50 PM an ad for Mediacom (the cable provider) aired promoting Showtime on demand. One of the movies advertised on this spot was "Bullshit!" with Penn & Teller. They flashed the full title up on screen. This ad contained the spoken word Mediacom as well as printed. Indicating they had the final say in its play. I do not feel that this is something that should be aired on such a "SAFE" channel at such a time. Thank you for your help.

Control ID : CIMS00000035580
Consumer's Name : [REDACTED]
Consumer's Phone Number : (000) 000 - 0000
Email : [REDACTED]
Submission Method : Email
Problem Submitted Time : 4/11/2006 1:38:30AM

Problem Description

5/12/2006 9:31:37 AM --- [REDACTED] --- Classified Inquiry as a Complaint.

[REDACTED] wrote on 4/11/2006 1:38:30 AM :

Hello,

I am writing today because of an offensive commercial I have seen on several television channels lately. Showtime's commercial for their current programming includes a short clip for Penn and Teller's newest show which is titled "Bullshit". Is this proper for a non-movie channel? I can't imagine it being considered proper following the Super Bowl fiasco from a couple years ago and CBS being fined so heavily for a teen sex orgy on one of their shows. Please check into this as quickly as possible.

A concerned citizen,

[REDACTED]

4/3/2007

Page 1

Control ID : PROBLEM01373869
 Consumer's Name : [REDACTED]
 Consumer's Phone Number : (000) 000 0000
 Email : [REDACTED]
 Submission Method : Email
 Problem Submitted Time : 5/25/2005 8:07:53PM

Problem Description

[REDACTED] wrote on 5/25/2005 8:07:53 PM :

Wednesday, May 25, 2005 4:45 p.m. EDT
 Viacom's Showtime Slanders Mother Teresa

When shareholders of media conglomerate Viacom show up for their annual meeting tomorrow, they'll face the wrath of Catholic League President Dr. William Donahue over a shocking Showtime episode that slandered the late Mother Teresa and her order of nuns in the vilest of terms.

According to Donahue, who plans a press conference in front of the hotel in New York City where the Viacom meeting is being held, an episode of Showtime's Penn and Teller show "Holier Than Thou" was a "Nazi-like assault on Catholicism, and on the person the show calls "Mother F***ing Teresa." Showtime is owned by Viacom.

Stormed Donahue, "In the 12 years that I have been president of the Catholic League, I have never witnessed a more vicious attack on Catholicism than what appeared this week on the Showtime program, 'Penn and Teller.' The episode, 'Holier Than Thou,' was a frontal assault on Mother Teresa and her order of nuns, Missionaries of Charity (as well as Gandhi and the Dali Lama).

"Like most Americans, I like parodies and have no problem, per se, with irreverent humor. But when humor becomes insult, that is a different story. And that is what happens here: comedy quickly morphs to vitriol. Indeed, as the show progresses, the level of anger becomes palpable and the degree of distortion becomes mindboggling. This is no comedy—it is Nazi propaganda right out of the Leni Riefenstahl school of filmmaking.

"The Mother Teresa that the world has come to love and revere is made to look like a cruel, exploitative, self-serving nun who ripped off the poor. We are told that Mother Teresa intentionally let the poor suffer, providing neither beds nor bathroom facilities. 'She had the f***ing coin and pissed it away on nunneries,' says Penn. As for the nuns who worked with Mother Teresa, they are referred to as 'f***ing c***s.'

"It does not bother me when they call me 'Catholic Boy' on the show (though the term 'Jew Boy' would never cross their lips), nor does it concern me when they talk about 'f**ers like Bill Donohue [who] only see good in her.' But when they mock the Catholic Church's teaching on the meaning of suffering, and when they say of the poor that 'They had to suffer so that Mother F***ing Teresa could be enlightened,' then they are behaving like monsters.

"We will mail a tape of select portions of this broadcast to many interested parties, including the bishops. And we will hold a press conference tomorrow outside the hotel where Viacom is holding its annual stockholders meeting. They haven't heard the end of this yet."

Donohue, who will be joined by some Catholic League staff members, said he will answer any questions following a few remarks. He promised that copies the Catholic League news release on this subject, "Mother F***ing Teresa—Courtesy of

Viacom," will be distributed to Viacom shareholders as they enter the hotel.

<META http-equiv=Content-Type content="text/html; charset=windows-1252">
<META content="MSHTML 6.00.2800.1106" name=GENERATOR>

<DIV style="FONT: 10pt arial">

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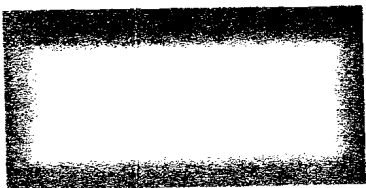
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Control ID : PROBLEM00902880
Consumer's Name : UNKNOWN UNKNOWN
Consumer's Phone Number : (000) 000 0000
Email : [REDACTED]
Submission Method : Email
Problem Submitted Time : 12/9/2004 5:47:40PM

Problem Description

[REDACTED] wrote on 12/9/2004 5:47:40 PM :

Referencing Penn and Teller burning the flag on the West Wing. The Supreme Court also says that burning the flag has a tendency to incite violence, thus justifying the use of violence against those who burn the flag. Burning the flag is an act of violence. They have no idea the pain they inflict on America's veterans when they burn the flag. If I ever meet Penn and Teller I am going to obscenely smash their heads in. Some say violence is obscene, actions that provoke obscenity are obscene. This is the second obscene act I have witnessed on NBC, the first was ER's depiction of little girls leaping to their death out of windows.

[REDACTED]

<META content="MSHTML 6.00.2900.2523" name=GENERATOR>

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[REDACTED]

nar comment

Control ID : PROBLEM01374
 Consumer's Name : UNKNOWN UNKNOWN
 Consumer's Phone Number : (000) 000 - 0000
 Email : [REDACTED]
 Submission Method : Email
 Problem Submitted Time : 5/26/2005 1:16:15PM

Problem Description

[REDACTED] wrote on 5/26/2005 1:16:15 PM :

Dear Chairman Martin,

Viacom is a prime example of why it is vile to allow nearly sole-ownership of multi-media services.

Chairman and CEO Sumner Redstone needs to be held accountable for the scandalous assault and portrayal of Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity during Showtime's recent episode of "Penn and Teller."

This horrendous, vicious attack was meant to ridicule each and every Catholic in the U.S. as well as the Catholic Church.

The question needs to be asked: Can we expect Viacom to next put on a skit concerning the dumping of the Koran in the toilet for laughs followed by the shredding of the Torah? I think not! This kind of thing would never be allowed nor would any sponsor put their name and money behind such a program.

Catholics deserve the same respect, and as a Roman Catholic - I am asking you to convene a Hearing on the conduct of Viacom and its obvious discrimination against Catholics. Maybe - the time has come to "pull the plug" on freedom of the press. Viacom's disgusting lack of judgment in presenting Mother Teresa in such a hateful manner shows very clearly they need to be reined in before they do more damage.

Thank You,

[REDACTED]
California

<META content="MSHTML 6.00.2900.2627" name=GENERATOR>

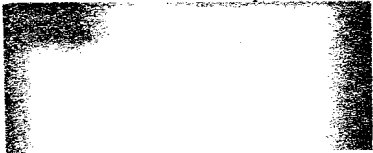
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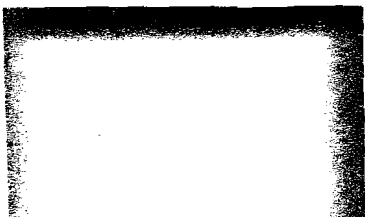
Thank You,


California

Control ID : PROBLEM00445
Consumer's Name : UNKNOWN UNKNOWN
Consumer's Phone Number : (000) 000 - 0000
Email : [REDACTED]
Submission Method : Email
Problem Submitted Time : 4/13/2004 12:04:17PM

Problem Description

I just went on <<tvguide.com>> to check listing and a highly objectionable commercial for Penn & Teller came out of my speakers. How do I investigate this?



EB-05-IH-1054
NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)
INQUIRY FOR [REDACTED]

Complaint Type: **Broadcast**

Account Type: **Residential**

Congressional Complaint I

IC Number:	05-10193971	Case Type:	Inquiry
Date Received:	08/22/2005	Complainant:	[REDACTED]
Date Entered:	09/15/2005	Date Assigned:	09/15/2005
Entered By:	PORTALSVI	Date Reassigned:	
Assigned To:	[REDACTED]	Service Date:	
Date Closed:	09/22/2005	Response Date:	
Closed By:	Mayasa Telfar	Original Analyst:	
Close Later Needed?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Purged By:	Purged Date:
		Removed By:	Removed Date:

Current Status: Closed

[View Complaint](#)

Associated Case:

Complaint Summary:

Apparent Complaint(s): [REDACTED]

Yes No Check here if you wish to serve both a Wireline and Wireless carrier.

Problem Number: [REDACTED]

Title: None	First Name: [REDACTED]	Middle Initial: [REDACTED]
Contact Name: [REDACTED]	Best Time to Call: [REDACTED]	
Contact Number: Ext. [REDACTED]	Fax Number: [REDACTED]	
TTY Number: [REDACTED]	Internal Address: [REDACTED]	
Email Address: [REDACTED]		
PO Box: [REDACTED]		
City: New Orleans		

On Behalf Of	
Company Name:	
Party's Name:	Relationship with the Party:
Party's Contact Number: Ext.	PO Box:
	Address:
	City, State, Zip:
Other Party that can be contacted?	
Name:	Relationship:
Contact Number: Ext.	Address:
	City, State, Zip:
**Amount of credit FCC effort generated:	
Duplicate Credit Checked: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	

Contacted the companies to resolve complaint?

If yes, name of company, name and number of company representative you spoke with:

Name: Phone: Ext.

Date you spoke with company representative:

If you contacted more than one company to resolve complaint, please list additional company(ies) name(s), name(s) and number(s) of company(ies) representatives and date you spoke to those representatives here.

Name: Phone: Ext:

Date you spoke with the second company representative:

Have you paid any of the disputed charges?

Did the company billing for these charges adjust or refund some or all of the disputed charges?

If yes, what was the amount of the adjustment or refund?

Willing to provide further written statements for use of the FCC or other agencies in enforcement actions against companies?

Indicate the responsible carrier(s):

Other Carriers Listed:

Subject Code:

ANALYSIS SECTION

Correspondence Type:

Complaint Inquiry

Source Code:

Postal Mail

Apparent Carrier(s):

Re-Serve Carrier(s):

Responding Carrier(s):

Assigned Subject Code:

Programming Issues

Activity Code:

Direct

Assigned Code Acronym:

PROG

Final Responsible Party:

Sub-Category:

Content Criticism (PCCR)

Copy of Response Sent to Consumer by Carrier?:

Yes No

Mediation with Carrier/Complainant?:

Yes No

Response Type:

Referral Information

Date Referred:

Referred To:

Agency Name(s):

Company Name(s):

Deferral Information

Date Deferred:

Reason:

None

Date Undeferred:

Extension Information:

Extension Requested:

Yes No

Extension Granted:

Yes No

SERVE INFORMATION

COMMENTS

Comment History:

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Created by PCC_MOTUS03
Last Edited by Wayne Tolari

Date 08/15/2005 09:01 PM
Date 05/22/2005 02:58 PM

Closed by [REDACTED]

EB-05-IH-1054

NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)

August 22, 2005

FCC
445 12th St SW Room 3-B443
Washington DC 20554

Attn: Enforcement Bureau-
Investigation & Hearing
Division

Dear sirs:

Are there any regulations against hate speech on TV?
How about calling a saintly person, or any person filthy names?
Showtime's Penn and Teller in the episode, "Holier Than
Thou" that aired May 23, 24 and 27 called Mother Teresa "Mother
F--king Teresa". They portrayed her as plundering the poor (an
obvious lie!).

Enclosed is a copy of the letter I wrote to CBS. Please
let me know if the FCC can do anything about this kind of pro-
gramming.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction covers the signature and address area of the letter.

EB-05-IH-1054
NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)

August 19, 2005

Mr. Leslie Moonves, CEO
CBS TV Network
7800 Beverly Blvd. Room 23
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Dear Mr. Moonves:

What do you plan to do about the scurrilous attack on Mother Teresa by Penn and Teller in the episode, "Holier Than Thou"? This nasty, lying attack is hate speech at its very worst.

Though this horrible attack, portraying her as plundering the poor and calling her filthy names was made against Mother Teresa, I believe it to be also a hate-filled attack on all Catholics.

Perhaps you do not wish to have Catholics watching CBS?

I would like to know what course of action you intend to take. Please let me hear from you.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

EB-05-IH-1054

NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)

COMPLAINT FOR [REDACTED]

Complaint Type: Cable

Account Type: Residential

Congressional Complaint

IC Number:	05-10193316	Case Type:	Complaint
Date Received:	08/15/2005 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complainant:	[REDACTED]
Date Entered:	09/12/2005	Date Assigned:	09/12/2005
Entered By:	PORTALSV1	Date Reassigned:	
Assigned To:	[REDACTED]	Service Date:	
Date Closed:	09/20/2005	Response Date:	
Closed By:	[REDACTED]	Original Analyst:	
Close Letter Needed?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Purged By:	Purged Date:
		Removed By:	Removed Date:

Current Status: Closed

[View Complaint](#)

Associated Case:

Complaint Summary:

Applicant Contact(s):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check here if you wish to serve both a Wireline and Wireless carrier.			
Problem Number:			
Title: None	First Name: [REDACTED]	Middle Initial:	Last Name: [REDACTED]
Contact Name:	Ext:	Best Time to Call:	
Contact Number:		Fax Number:	
TTY Number:		Internet Address:	[REDACTED]
Email Address:			
PO Box:		State:	Zip: [REDACTED]
City:	[REDACTED]		

On Behalf Of:	
Company Name:	
Party's Name:	Relationship with the Party:
Party's Contact Number: Ext:	PO Box:
	Address:
	City State Zip:
Other Party that can be contacted?	
Name:	Relationship:
Contact Number: Ext:	Address:
	City State Zip:
**Amount of credit FCC effort generated:	Duplicate Credit Checked: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Contacted the companies to resolve complaint?

If yes, name of company, name and number of company representative you spoke with:

Name: Phone: Ext:

Date you spoke with company representative:

If you contacted more than one company to resolve complaint, please list additional company(ies) name(s), name(s) and number(s) of company(ies) representatives and date you spoke to those representatives here.

Name: Phone: Ext:

Date you spoke with the second company representative:

Have you paid any of the disputed charges?

Did the company billing for these charges adjust or refund some or all of the disputed charges?

If yes, what was the amount of the adjustment or refund?

Willing to provide further written statements for use of the FCC or other agencies in enforcement actions against companies?

Indicate the responsible carrier(s):

Other Carriers Listed:

Subject Code:

ANALYSIS SECTION

Correspondence Type:

Complaint Inquiry

Source Code:

Postal Mail

Apparent Carrier(s):

Re-Serve Carrier(s):



Responding Carrier(s):

Assigned Subject Code:

Programming Issues

Activity Code:

Direct

Assigned Code Acronym:

PROG

Final Responsible Party:

Sub-Category:



Indexcat (INDE)

Copy of Response Sent to Consumer by Carrier?:

Yes No

Call Sign: Showtime

State: SC

Mediation with Carrier/Complainant?:

Yes No

Response Type:

Final Case Close-out

Referral Information

Date Referred:

Referred To:

Agency Name(s):

Company Name(s):

Consumer Referral Unit | US Postal Service | Federal |
 District of Columbia |
 District of Columbia



Deferral Information

Date Deferred:

Reason:

None

Date Undeferred:

Extension Information

Extension Requested:

Yes No

Extension Granted:

Yes No

SERVE INFORMATION

COMMENTS

Comment History:

09/20/2005-Lucille Danjuma Send the complaint to EB

DOCUMENT HISTORY

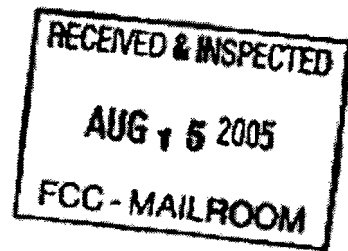
Created by
FOO_NOTES01

Last Edited by
Lucille Danjuma

Date
08/12/2005 06:03 PM

Date
09/20/2005 02:08 PM





August 3, 2005

Mr. Sumner Redstone
CEO, Viacom
1515 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10036-5794

EB-05-IH-1054
NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)

Dear Mr. Redstone,

- ~~I am a Catholic and I am very offended by Showtime's 'Holier Than Thou'~~ which was shown at the end of May 2005. The deceased Mother Teresa who I admire was viciously trashed in the show.

The show promoted divisiveness among people and promoted hate for Catholicism. At the risk of being offensive or insensitive, I ask the following only to make a point. Would you allow someone to put on a show with the content 'Old black Martin Luther King loves watermelon and red ripple'? Or would you allow a show with the content 'Greedy Rabbi Gold steals his brother's money and copulates with his brother's wife'? I don't think so and if you did you should be censored and punished.

Why is it that Showtime promotes its own brand of political correctness in matters that relate to blacks, gays, Jews, Muslims etc. but you appear to relish bashing Catholics. 'Holier Than Thou' should not have been aired and the people responsible for the show should be censored. Please stop producing programs that are bigoted and divisive.

Sincerely,

Cc. Mr. Kevin Martin Chairman
Federal Communications Commission