

# governmentattic.org

"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



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).

Sincerel

Nicole M. McGinnis 'Deputy Bureau Chief

Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

**Enclosures** 

**Control ID**: CIMS00000032903

Consumer's Name:

Consumer's Phone Number:

Email:

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 somthing that should be aired on such a "SAFE" channel at such a time. Thank you for your help.

**Control ID**: CIMS00000035580

Consumer's Name:

**Consumer's Phone Number**: (000) 000 - 0000

Email:

Submission Method: Émail

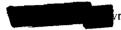
Problem Submitted Time: 4/11/2006 1:38:30AM

### **Problem Description**

5/12/2006 9:31:37 AM ---



--- Classifed Inquiry as a Complaint.



vrote 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,



4/3/2007

Page 2

Control ID: PROBLEM01373869

Consumer's Name:

Consumer's Phone Number: (000) 000 0000

Email:

Submission Method: Email

Problem Submitted Time: 5/25/2005 8:07:53PM

**Problem Description** 

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 'Cattholic 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.

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

<FONT face=Courier size=3>Wednesday, May

25, 2005 4:45 p.m. EDT

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FOIA: 2007-234

Control ID: PROBLEM00902880

Consumer's Name: UNKNOWN UNKNOWN

Consumer's Phone Number: (000) 000 0000

Email:

Submission Method: Email

Problem Submitted Time: 12/9/2004 5:47:40PM

**Problem Description** 

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.

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

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nar comment

FOIA: 2007-234

Control ID: PROBLEM01374

Consumer's Name: UNKNOWN UNKNOWN

**Consumer's Phone Number:** (000)000 - 0000

**Submission Method:** 

Email

**Problem Submitted Time:** 5/26/2005 1:16:15PM

Problem Description

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 coome 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,

California

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

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Thank You,

California

FOIA: 2007-234

Control ID: PROBLEM00445

Consumer's Name: UNKNOWN UNKNOWN

Consumer's Phone Number: (000)000 - 0000

Email:

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)

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Date you spoke with company representative:

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

August 22, 2005

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

Attn: Enforcement Bureau-Investigation & Hearing Division

Dear sirs:

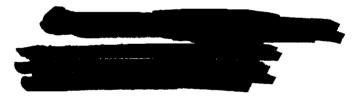
Are there any regulations against hate speech on TV?

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 programming.

Sincerely,



August 19, 2005

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

Dear Mr. Moonves:

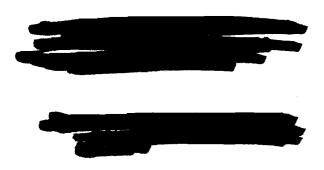
What do you plan to do about the scurrilous attack on Mother Teresa by Penn and Teller in the episode, "Holier Than Thou"? This nasty, lying attack is hate speech at its very worse.

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,



## EB-05-1H-1054 NOT AVAILABLE (SHOWTIME)

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| Yes << Check! Yes << Check! Problem Number Tide: Norse Contact Name: Contact Number; TTY Number; Emeil Address; PO Booc   | First Name   | Middle tritlet  Best Time to Coll:  Fox Number:  Internal Address:  | Lost Name:   |
| Yes << Check! Yes << Check! Problem Number Tide: Norw Contact Name: Contact Number; TTY Number; Emeil Address; PO Base Cay:   | First Name   | Middle teitlet.  Best Time to Coll: Fex Number.   |  |
| Yes ( Check) Yes ( Check) Problem Number Tide: None Contact Name: Contact Number; Email Address: PO Base Cay: On Behalf Of:   | First Name   | Middle tritlet  Best Time to Coll:  Fox Number:  Internal Address:  | Lost Name:   |
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If yes, harne of company, name and number of company representative you spoke with:

Name. Phone: Ext.

Date you spoke with company representative:

| number(s) of company(ies')   |  | t please list additional company(ies')<br>ake to those representatives here:   | neme(s), neme(s) and   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Name: Phone: Ext   |  | •  |  |
| Have you spoke with the di   | econd company representative   | <b>F</b>   |  |
|  |  | me or all of the disputed charges?   |  |
| • • •  | of the <b>acquetonant</b> or returns?  | the or on a makeus a mides.  |  |
|  | ten st <b>alements f</b> or use of th <b>e FCC</b>   | ar other agencies in enforcement acti  | ons ageinst companies?   |
| Other Certiers Listed:   |  |  |  |
| Subject Code:  |  |  | ,  |
| AVALYSIS SECTION   |  | A CONTRACTOR OF THE STATE OF TH | A STATE OF THE STA |
| Correspondence Type:   | Complaint 'L' Inq  | ury Sounie Code:   | Postol Mail  |
| Apparent Corrier(s):   |  | Re-Sarve Corrier(s):   |  |
| Responding Corner(s):  |  | Assigned Subject Code:   | Programming issues   |
| Activity Code:   | Direct   | Assigned Code Acronym:   | PROG   |
| Final Respondide Party:  |  | Sub-Calegory:  | ladecapi (NOE)   |
| Copy of Response Sent to Consumer by Carrier?:   | O Yes O No   | Call Sign: Showlime  | Statu: SC  |
| Medialian with<br>Carrier/Complainant?:  | C! Yes C! Na   | Response Type:   | Final Case Clase-eut   |
| Referred Information   |  |  |  |
| Onto Referred:   |  |  | Control of Transport (1984) and he part the first terms.   |
| Referred Tax   | Agency Name(s):  | Company Name(s):   | Creme COA Lener DAGETOR  |
| Determent Information  |  |  |  |
| Date Deferred:   |  | Reason: None   | Total Contract of the Contract |
| Date UnDeferred:   |  |  |  |
| Diseasion Information  | and the state of t |  |  |
| All and a summary and and an arrangement of the same o | O Yes  No  |  |  |
| Extension Gramed:  | C! Yes • No  |  |  |
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| SERVE INFORMATION  |  |  | *  |

Comment History:

#### 09/20/2005-Lucille Denjume Seed the complaint to EB

4.

| Cremet by      | roc_sorteser   | Delle | 08 12/2025 <b>08/85 PM</b> |   |
|----------------|----------------|-------|----------------------------|---|
| Land Edited by | Lucile Carpura | Dele  | 02 50 <b>502 05 00 U</b> M |   |
|                |                |       |                            |   |
|                |                |       |                            | * |

RECEIVED & INSPECTED

AUG 1 5 2005

FCC - MAIL ROOM

August 3, 2005

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

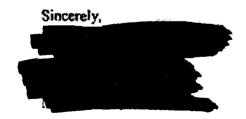
Dear Mr. Redstone.

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

 I am a Catholic and I am very offended by Showtime's 'Holier Than Thou's 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.



Cc. Mr. Kevin Martin Chairman Federal Communications Commission