

Carl Rowan's Commentary

by Carl Rowan
Syndicated Columnist

Attorney General Janet Reno warned that if movie producers and TV brass don't get right with God, the government will have to impose restraints.

Hillary Rodham Clinton told TV Guide that she is "really appalled by the steady diet of violence and impulsive sexuality that we see all the time" on television.

What bothers me is that the bluenose and the political blue bloods seem to have movie makers and TV producers running scared, and that's very bad for this or any free society.

I know gratuitous, money-grubbing violence and sex when I see it. I saw on TV, in a few hours of inescapable insomnia, a preposterously implausible Steven Seagal movie, "Under Siege," about a hijacked U.S. naval vessel. This film oozed with wanton violence, as do "Marked for Death," "Hard to Kill," "Above the Law" and other skull-busting, bone-crackling Seagal films. Let Hollywood abandon this meaningless carnage.

I felt that Sharon Stone didn't have to bare her crotch in "Basic Instinct," become so lustily involved in the sex acts during which she knifed her lovers to death. But these are the unimpassioned judgements of one columnist who has absolutely no right to impose them on others.

Alfred Hitchcock produced some of the most violent movies of this century. But we would be

poorer if we had not seen "Psycho" and its Bates Motel shower murder scene, or had not experienced cinematically the grotesque horror of "The Birds."

In 1971, Gene Hackman starred in "The French Connection," a movie of much violence, but of great socially redeeming value. It alerted you and me to the reality that drug lords were not only poisoning our children, but corrupting the lawmen sworn to protect us.

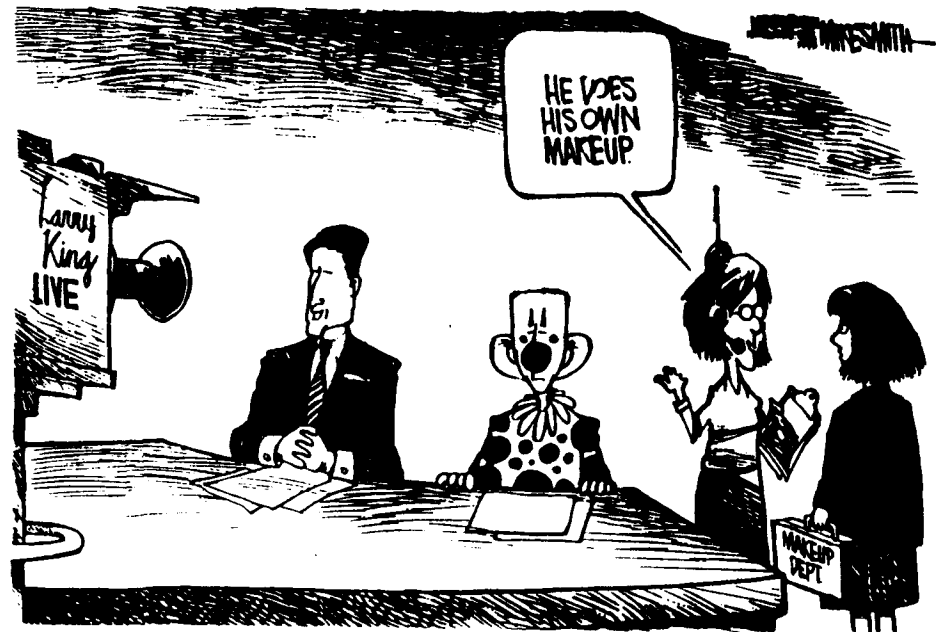
In 1961, we overlooked the violence in "West Side Story" because it froze into our psyches the existence of urban gangs - a sad phenomenon that now casts a grim pall over our great cities.

Would I be a better human being if I had not seen any of the movies listed above? No.

Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, said recently that in Hollywood "the creative community already is trying to do something about violence."

Let all of us remember, though, that movies and TV shows are not the primary teachers of violence and mayhem. The real-life environments of millions of American kids produce more bloody shootings and stabbings, more rapes and acts of sodomy and incest, more abuse of women and children, in a month than Hollywood, TV, Broadway and the other media can produce in a year.

We must not become so overwhelmed by the would-be censors that we cease trying to change those environments of grotesque abuse - and death.



Editorial cartoons



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