



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 9, 2018

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Out With the Oscars

From the print edition of The New American

On March 4, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences held their 90th annual awards show, widely known as the Oscars. For nearly four hours on an early March Sunday night, anyone interested could watch extremely well-dressed celebrities, adorned with expensive jewelry, lecture a worldwide television audience about the social and political issues of their choice. Not surprisingly, a lot of folks passed on that honor. The 2018 Oscars broadcast was the lowest-watched in history, down a stunning 19 percent from 2017. The 26.5 million viewers in 2018 trailed the next lowest year, 2008, by more than five million viewers. The annual program, which used to rival the Super Bowl in viewership, has tumbled in importance to the viewing public.



The Oscar-nominated movies suffer from the same public apathy. Only two of the films nominated for Best Picture, *Dunkirk* (Warner Bros.) and *Get Out* (Universal Pictures), even netted \$100 million at the box office. The last true box-office smash to win the Oscar was 2003's *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (New Line), which earned over \$377 million. It's almost as if Hollywood doesn't care what audiences want anymore. It's as if the motion-picture industry's subjective sense of what is good and worthy of recognition trumps what the public wants.

"The Oscars lost their way back in 1989," according to academy voter Dr. Ted Baehr. Baehr, who once financed films for the Cannon Group, Inc., explained the history of the Oscars. "The major studios decided they needed an awards show to promote their big movies like *Ben Hur*, *The Ten Commandments*, et cetera. And they decided to start the Oscars. The trouble was that they set up a system where you have categories for directors, producers, writers, editors, but the *actors* were the ones influencing the industry," Baehr explained. "It went south in the eighties because in the seventies ... you had tax shelter financing. So you had a lot of people doing a lot of financing on a lot of second-rate films. And all an actor has to do is be in one film and get two recommendations and, suddenly, that actor is a voting member of the academy. So the voting members of the academy are now actors that have played in little smarmy independent films or some actors that just want to be part of the crowd."

So at some point in the 1980s, the inmates started running the asylum, so to speak. The actors, those virtue-signaling narcissists who insist on telling us what they think about social and political issues, consist of the largest group of voters for the awards. The result is that the Oscars, once meant to showcase films the public wanted to see, have become a self-congratulatory art house show.

Politics and personal causes used to be *persona non grata* at the Oscars, but that changed in 1973 when



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Marlon Brando, who was nominated for Best Actor for his performance in *The Godfather*, boycotted the event, sending Native American activist Sacheen Littlefeather in his place. When Brando won the Oscar, Littlefeather refused the award on Brando's behalf in protest against how Native Americans were portrayed in films. The reaction of that 1973 crowd was mixed, with some applauding and some booing.

Five years later, Vanessa Redgrave, who had produced a pro-PLO documentary called *The Palestinian*, won a Best Supporting Actress award and used the occasion to decry the Jewish Defense League, whom she termed "Zionist hoodlums." Again, the crowd reaction was mixed, but the die had been cast. The Oscars, and by extension other awards shows, were now a place in which celebrities could vocally support whatever cause they chose — all it took was winning an award.

Despite what you might think of the politics attached, at least Brando's stunt and Redgrave's speech required some courage. In both of those occasions, neither actor knew what to expect in response to their statements. The actors and actresses of today want to be seen as brave speakers of their own truth. In actuality, they are just parrots in a liberal echo chamber. Whatever the current leftist cause *du jour*, you can be certain that a monolithic theater of like-minded celebrities will be wearing like-colored ribbons or black clothing to symbolize their own morality regarding that cause. Whether it is gun control, global warming, or the #MeToo movement, the acting glitterati will be there letting you know which way you should think.

This year's virtue-signaling crown was taken by Oprah Winfrey at the Golden Globes in January, as she accepted the Cecil B. de Mille Award. In a speech hailed nearly unanimously in the mainstream media as "rousing," "show-stopping," and "powerful," Winfrey articulated her oh-so-important feelings on the #MeToo movement.

"So, I want all the girls watching here, now, to know that a new day is on the horizon!" Winfrey exclaimed. "And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women, many of whom are right here in this room tonight, and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure that they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say 'Me too' again."

It causes one to wonder just what Cecil B. de Mille, a life-long conservative activist, would think about how an award given in his name was used for liberal propaganda.

Winfrey didn't mention her extremely cozy relationship with accused serial sexual abuser Harvey Weinstein in the speech. Perhaps, simply because she loudly signaled her virtue to a fawning crowd and was given outlandish praise in the mainstream media, Oprah believes that her seedy relationship with the Hollywood predator will be overlooked when the 2020 presidential election season begins.

Photo: AP Images

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Good luck with that, Oprah.

The 2018 Oscars had many such virtue-signaling moments:

- In presenting one award, immigrant actors Kumail Nanjiani and Lupita Nyong'o told America's illegal immigrants, "We stand with you," a not-so-subtle dig at President Trump's immigration policies.



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- Several celebrities wore orange lapel pins in support of Everytown for Gun Safety, a Michael Bloomberg gun-control group. Of course, they did this while being protected by more than 500 armed security officers.
- Someone named Common gave a quasi-musical performance referencing the DACA program and the #MeToo movement and demeaning the National Rifle Association. "Immigrants get the benefits; we put up monuments for feminists. Tell the NRA they in God's way."
- In an especially weird moment, Best Actress winner Frances McDormand asked all of the female nominees to stand up and bid the audience to "Look around ladies and gentlemen, because we all have stories to tell and projects we need financed." McDormand ended the bizarre scene by saying, "I have two words to leave you with tonight, ladies and gentlemen: inclusion rider." An inclusion rider is a clause in a contract that ensures diversity in a film.

This year's event was hosted by Jimmy Kimmel. On his late-night show *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, Kimmel has become a voice in favor of ObamaCare and authoritarian gun-control measures. He has also decried tax cuts and, pretty much, takes the opposite position of President Trump and the GOP on every issue. Though somewhat muted on this year's Oscars, Kimmel couldn't resist a few digs at the White House.

"None other than President Trump called *Get Out* the best first three-quarters of a movie he's seen this year," Kimmel joked. Later in the ceremony, Kimmel engaged in a rare moment of honesty as he clowning, "We don't make films like *Call Me by Your Name* to make money. We make them to upset Mike Pence." *Call Me by Your Name* is a film that celebrates the homosexual relationship between an adult and a 17-year-old boy.

Nowhere is Hollywood's attitude toward the movie-going public more apparent than in the movies themselves. This year's Best Picture winner, *The Shape of Water*, is a film about a mute cleaning woman who meets, befriends, and has a sexual relationship with a man-like amphibian creature. In other words, a movie applauding bestiality is what Hollywood considers its best work this year. For those of us who love the movies, this is extremely disconcerting.

The one truly awesome moment of the Oscar ceremony was when Gary Oldman won the Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in the film *Darkest Hour*. Oldman used a portion of his acceptance speech to thank his adopted country of America. "I've lived in America for the longest time and I'm deeply grateful to her for the loves and the friendships I have made and the many wonderful gifts it has given me: my home, my livelihood, my family and now Oscar," Oldman said. But what should have been a moment for huge applause was met with stony silence by the attendees of the event. It's almost enough to make you not want to go to movies anymore. It's definitely enough to make you tune out the Oscars.

But a wise man once said, "He who controls the media controls the culture." That man was none other than the aforementioned Dr. Ted Baehr who, in 1985, founded Movieguide, a ministry that reviews movies and television from a Christian perspective. Baehr refuses to yield the battlefield of culture to left-wing ideologues. Movieguide's mission is to "redeem the values of the entertainment industry, according to biblical principles, by influencing industry executives and artists."

Although he is one of the voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Dr. Baehr doesn't feel the Oscars are a true representation of the industry. "Nobody goes to see these films," Baehr said. "The *LA Times* does an article on how much money a movie *loses* if it wins the Oscar."



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Moviegoers suddenly see the Oscar as being a symbol that this is the type of movie that they don't want to see."

In addition to being a service that shows parents which films are family friendly, Dr. Baehr sees Movieguide as market research for the entertainment industry. Each year, the organization issues an annual report to the entertainment industry detailing trends in viewership and what types of movies make the most money. This year's report observed that films deemed more family friendly by Movieguide averaged \$51.70 million in profit per movie, while the least family-friendly films averaged \$11.67 million.

"We do all the economic analysis, and we give it to the studios," Baehr said. "G rated films do about five times better than R rated films, PG films do about three times better, PG13 do about four times better."

Someone in Hollywood is listening. When Movieguide began in 1985, more than 80 percent of movies in the box office were rated R. Today, only 34 percent of movies released have an R rating. "What we call Hollywood is two groups: There are major studios that release 40 percent of the movies ... and there's the independents that produce 60 percent of the movies," Baehr explained. "The good news is that among the independents the whole world has changed. It used to be just sleazy sex films done by Harvey Weinstein. Now, the independents (include) a lot of Christian films. This month we've got terrific films from *Samson* to *Paul, Apostle of Christ*.... There's a flood of them right now. So, the independents are moving in the right direction."

Each year, in connection with the release of its annual report to the entertainment industry, Movieguide hosts its own award show, honoring the best films and performances of the past year, a sort of anti-Oscars, if you will. These awards honor not only quality in motion pictures and television, but they also value faith and inspiration, things in short supply in the rest of the entertainment media.

This year's Movieguide awards were held in Los Angeles on February 2. One of the movies honored was Dreamworks' *The Boss Baby*, a film described by Dr. Baehr as "the most pro-life film I've seen." The plot of the film doesn't seem the stuff of current-day Hollywood. "Babies are created in Heaven. God is concerned about people not having babies, so He sends a little angel down," Baehr described. "When the angel is discovered he says he's on a mission from God and he acknowledges that Jesus is the boss."

"So, Hollywood is doing some good," Baehr acknowledged.

In America's culture war, it's tempting to cede ground that we feel is already lost. To many Americans, Hollywood is synonymous with Sodom and Gomorrah, a place better left for the Almighty to sort out with fire and brimstone. In the culture war, the battle for Hollywood seems one-sided. One side is extremely well-armed, with a cacophonous media machine, a vast misinformation weapon designed to demoralize its opponent. The other side is armed with a moral compass and an unshakeable faith in a just God. Shots are fired via television shows, movie theaters, and even award shows. Casualties are measured in tweets, Facebook posts, and box-office receipts.

People such as Dr. Baehr and the good folks at Movieguide remind us that not everyone in the movie business is lost. And for the sake of that remnant, the battle must go on, regardless if one side, mainstream Hollywood, is the giant Goliath and the other side, we the movie-going public, is a puny boy named David. Fortunately, David came out pretty well in that confrontation.



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Movieguide is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization making a real difference in Hollywood. If you wish to assist Dr. Baehr, please go to www.movieguide.org to learn how you can help.

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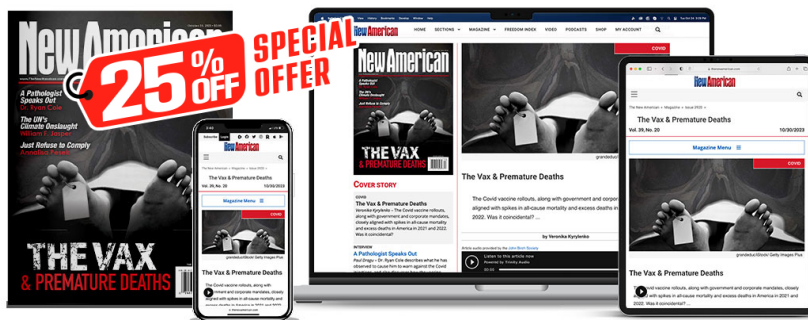
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