



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 12, 2015

## Justin Bieber in Obama's Ear: Is Pop Star America's Most Powerful Man?

Is Canadian pop star Justin Bieber the most powerful man in America? Yes — if music mogul Russell Simmons is to be believed. According to Simmons, celebrities in general have a lot of clout with the Obama White House — but he says, “Bieber is who makes it pop.”

To support his incredible assertion, Simmons cites one 2013 tweet from Bieber that inspired a call from then-Attorney General Eric Holder “within two hours” and the introduction of a bill in Congress within two weeks.



At issue was Simmons' 2013 celebrity-driven effort to alter “War on Drugs” policy. The campaign included a letter signed by hundreds of clergy and community activists, such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton; the NAACP and Urban League; and celebrities such as Cameron Diaz, Brad Pitt, and Scarlett Johansson. The signatories wanted Obama to assess drug cases for clemency and sign legislation empowering judges to dispense with mandatory narcotics sentences they deemed too harsh. The White House supported the campaign, says Simmons, but was dragging its feet and wanted the letter to remain private. As the *New York Post* [reports](#):

Obama senior adviser “Valerie Jarrett was calling saying, ‘Don’t release the letter. We’re not ready to move on this legislation,’” Simmons recalled. “We had ... Eric Holder, the White House calling us, calling my office, saying that they’d do something — but to hold off on the letter, hold off, period.”

“That changed when Justin Bieber got involved,” Simmons said.

On April 9, 2013, the pop idol “tweeted out about the letter that we wrote,” including a shout-out to Simmons. Bieber urged his 69.2 million followers to “show that we the youth have a voice. hashtag and support the cause.”

The White House — thinking Simmons had recruited Bieber to the cause — finally got the message.

“Holder called us within two hours and said, ‘Don’t worry, we’re getting it done right now,’” Simmons told *The Post*.

The result? The “Justice Safety Valve Act” was introduced in the House two weeks later by Representative Bobby Scott (D-Va.) and was passed a few months afterwards.

It should be noted that essentially the same bill had already been introduced in the Senate by Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) *more than a year earlier* — apparently without pop-star prodding. Yet the celebrity support certainly seemed to influence the Democrats, well known for being the entertainment community’s bedfellows.



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So is Barack Obama a belieber? Consider that Bieber's tweet made public a letter the White House wanted kept secret and that this, as much as or more than the pop-star's support, could have sparked the action. Yet while Simmons' estimation of Bieber's pull is likely an exaggeration, it's unlikely a complete fabrication.

Our society's three culture-shaping entities — academia, the media, and entertainment — are in the Democrats' camp, but they're not all equally reliable happy campers. Academia and the media are more circumspect in their pronouncements and more patient; they're more likely to accept the inertia and compromises dictated by realpolitik. But celebrities, so often flighty or even drug-addled, can be loose cannons. Upset them and you never know what they may bleat or tweet.

Add to this that we live in a celebrity culture. While the ancient Romans placed actors down closer to the level of prostitutes, and early America also didn't estimate them too highly, today "celebrity is a powerful thing," as Simmons noted. Many more people read gossip columns and celebrity magazines than imbibe news and commentary. And what of the professoriate? You won't find an academic journal on the rack behind a supermarket checkout counter.

Mind you, this partially explains Donald Trump's success. Whatever one may think of his relative merits — and his raising of the immigration issue and anti-establishment credentials are legitimate — his celebrity status helps capture the low-information voters one can't win an election without. Hey, he's the guy on *The Apprentice*!

Celebrity influence is especially significant among the young, and especially when the celebrities are young. Note here that Bieber once had the most followed Twitter account *on the planet*; even today, his 67-plus million followers [place him second](#) only to singer *Katy Perry*. So, yeah, the pop-star is followed more than the pope, more than Obama.

And given that the young vote heavily Democrat — and are credited with helping Obama win his first term — it's perhaps not surprising that leftist politicians wouldn't want a Bieber going ballistic on them. Best to keep the entertainers happy.

And they're apparently happy to help their political handmaidens. This is perhaps why Simmons said, reports the *Post*, "Every single time there's an issue that involves minority causes or something that's supposed to help minorities, the White House, the politicians call. Every time."

But of all the celebrities, "Bieber is who makes it pop." And Simmons isn't the only one to speak of the pop star's influence. TMZ [asked](#) earlier this year if he was "the most powerful man in the NBA" after revealing that his pal Kyle Lowry had been voted to be a starter in the NBA All-Star game after "[Bieber tweeted to his 60 MILLION followers to vote for the Toronto Raptors star.](#)"

Influence in sports is one thing; however, having an impact on national policy affecting 320 million people is quite another. And what would this influence be? There was a time when, shockingly, Bieber would actually say something such as, "I really don't believe in abortion. It's like killing a baby," as *Rolling Stone* [reported](#) in 2011. But that was the pre-tattooed, pre-body-pierced, pre-bad-boy Bieber, before a series of scandals, thug-like behavior, and multiple run-ins with the law and arrests. So, it seems, he has taken the Anakin Skywalker trip to the dark side.

Unfortunately, some might say the same about a nation that elects politicians who care more for George Clooney than George Washington.



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