

Actor Robert De Niro censored in a revealing episode: US ruling elite “fears superstitiously” every critical word

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Lifting the lid on a small but revealing episode, veteran actor Robert De Niro has denounced Apple and the organizers of the Gotham Film and Media Institute awards November 27 for censoring his remarks and removing criticism of Donald Trump and the film industry.

The Gotham, founded in 1979 as the Independent Filmmaker Project (IFP), is a not-for-profit organization devoted to independent film. At its annual awards ceremony Monday *Killers of the Flower Moon*, directed by Martin Scorsese, in which De Niro plays a leading role, received a special award, in a “Historical Icon and Creator Tribute.”

Scorsese’s film treats the wave of killings and other crimes committed against Native Americans in Oklahoma in the 1920s. The Osage Nation had unexpectedly found themselves sitting on top of great oil wealth.

Among the sponsors of the Gotham Awards are *Vanity Fair* magazine, Cadillac, Fiji Water and JetBlue airline. Unsurprisingly, in its coverage of the event, *Vanity Fair* gushed, “The first notable ceremony of the Oscar season got underway last night, with a bevy of A-list attendees coming out in full force. Returning to Cipriani Wall Street, this year’s Gotham Awards, which honors outstanding voices in film and television, had it all: breakthrough winners, standing ovations, political speeches, and emotional tributes.”

In fact, De Niro came on stage Monday night and, according to the *Guardian*, “after reading out some remarks about the film, said that the first part of his speech had been removed from the prompter.” He pulled out his phone to read the original speech, explaining, “I just want to say one thing. The beginning

of my speech was edited, cut out, and I didn’t know about it.”

The 80-year-old then read out the excised portion of this comments: “History isn’t history anymore. Truth is not truth. Even facts are being replaced by alternative facts and driven by conspiracy theories and ugliness. In Florida, young students are taught that slaves developed skills which can be applied for their personal benefit.”

De Niro proceeded to castigate the film industry for its treatment of Native Americans, citing a reactionary comment by actor John Wayne.

He continued: “Lying has become just another tool in the charlatan’s arsenal. The former president lied to us more than 30,000 times during his four years in office, and he’s keeping up the pace in his current campaign of retribution. But with all his lies, he can’t hide his soul. He attacks the weak, destroys the gifts of nature, and shows disrespect, for example, by using ‘Pocahontas’ as a slur.”

At the end of his remarks, De Niro indicated that he had planned to thank Apple, the producers of *Killers of the Full Moon*, and the Gotham Film and Media Institute prior to seeing his mutilated speech on the teleprompter. “But I don’t feel like thanking them *at all* for what they did,” he said. “How *dare* they do that, actually.”

According to Slashdot, Apple was indeed responsible for the censorship: “The company was responding to feedback from the filmmaking team that wanted the actor’s remarks to be centered on the movie, according to a source. ... A revised version of the speech was delivered to the teleprompter less than ten minutes before the event started, according to sources with

knowledge of the show. A woman who told the teleprompter operator to upload a new speech was overheard identifying herself as an Apple employee.”

A remarkable incident!

This act of censoring one of the country’s best-known film actors, whose much honored career has now lasted more than five decades, is noteworthy and telling. Not so much for what Apple or the Gotham Film and Media Institute censored, but for the *extreme sensitivity and nervousness* the action reveals.

De Niro’s comments, frankly, were relatively innocuous. That Donald Trump is a serial, pathological liar is hardly a secret, even to many of his supporters. Nor are the performer’s references—creditable as they may be—to the fate of Native Americans, including at the hands of Hollywood, ground-breaking material.

One has to see the episode in the general political and social context. The US and European media is in the midst of a campaign of barefaced lying about Israel’s genocidal operation in Gaza, whose Nazi-like character has resulted in 20,000 Palestinian deaths, mostly women and children, in less than two months. Likewise, the governments and the media have done their best to conceal the horrified global response to the Gaza war crimes, ignoring protests everywhere and slandering them as “antisemitic.” No one is allowed to condemn war crimes of a world-historical character. This is where the De Niro incident comes in. To offer public criticism of political and social life now, even mildly, is to threaten the unstable and tenuous political and cultural status quo.

From official sources there are nothing but lies, more lies and bigger lies.

The American ruling elite, like its counterparts elsewhere, feels itself besieged, largely despised, isolated. Despite the terrible effectiveness of its weaponry at mass killing, it feels its days may be numbered.

To paraphrase Leon Trotsky, a “declining capitalism ... fears superstitiously” every critical word, “for it is no longer a matter of corrections and reforms for capitalism but of life and death.”



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