

Case Study: Tragic Kingdom? The Southern Baptist Convention Boycott of Walt Disney¹

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ABSTRACT: In July 1998 the Walt Disney Company found itself embroiled in the midst of a consumer boycott spearheaded by the 16 million-member Southern Baptist Convention and supported by dozens of other organizations. With hard questions being asked regarding some elements of company performance, CEO Michael Eisner had to determine if the organization's minimalist response to the boycott was effective or whether a new strategy was required. The narrative seeks to examine the impact of stakeholder opinion and action on the performance of a large publicly held corporation, and specifically tactical responses to the threat (and initiation) of consumer boycott activity.

LITTLE BLACK RAIN CLOUD: DARKER DAYS AT DISNEY?

In July 1998 the venerable and much admired Walt Disney Company found itself in uncharted territory. Slumping share values and a struggling venture into network television were seemingly being eclipsed by protest. The organization, once renowned for family entertainment, now found itself on the receiving end of a burgeoning consumer boycott and accused of contributing to the destruction of family values and the moral decay of America's youth. Chairman Michael Eisner and his executives were faced with the challenging prospect of navigating the situation.

TALE AS OLD AS TIME: THE HISTORY OF THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

When cartoonist Walter Elias Disney first arrived in California in 1923, he had little more than dreams, deter-

mination, and a love of making people smile. Jumping into the relatively new genre of animation, his first film, *Alice's Wonderland*, served to launch his career. When M.J. Winkler, a New York film distributor, contracted the cartoon series, a star was born. Working with his brother, Roy, Walt established The Disney Brothers Cartoon Series, soon to be renamed Walt Disney Studios in October 1923. Upon completion of his *Alice Comedies* series, Walt began to work on his second masterpiece, *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*. When Walt approached his distributor for increased funding, however, he discovered that Winkler had used Oswald, as well as all of the other cartoons Walt had developed to form his own studio. Given that the distributor owned the rights to all of Walt's designs, there was little the fledgling animation studio could do. After that, Walt made sure that he owned everything he created.

Walt took the next few years to develop his next creation — *Mortimer the Mouse*. Walt's wife, Lily, preferred the name Mickey, and so Mickey Mouse the Jazz Singer came

to life in November 1928. Walt decided that his studio would be the first to produce fully synchronized sound in an animated feature film and thus when *Steamboat Willie* opened at the Colony Theatre in New York, it became an instant success.

By 1937 Walt had created the world's first animation blockbuster — *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The film grossed significant revenue at the box office and was deemed to be an enormous achievement, considering its production and release during the Great Depression. Buoyed by success Disney began producing other feature animated films that would cement the firm's reputation as a leader in the entertainment industry. By the 1950s, Walt Disney Studios was both growing and diversifying. Live action films like *Treasure Island* would serve to change the way in which filmmakers produced motion pictures. The popular animated feature *Cinderella* continued Disney's growing reputation as a re-teller of beloved fairy tales. The company also leapt into a new medium — television — with a host of family programming, including the extraordinarily popular *Mickey Mouse Club* in 1955.²

While he enjoyed the success of his animated films and television series, Walt longed for a new challenge and found himself with a growing interest in amusement parks. Over the years, he had taken his family to a variety of parks and zoos but found that he was never able to truly enjoy himself. His idea that both children and parents should be able to have fun at these venues led him to begin planning one of his own; as a result Disneyland opened its doors on July 17, 1955, in Anaheim, California. Building on the park's immediate success, Disney purchased 28,000 acres in Orlando, Florida, for the purpose of constructing not only an amusement park but also a vacation resort filled with hotels, golf courses, campgrounds, and shopping villas — Walt Disney World. Unfortunately, Walt would never see the Florida project completed as he died in 1966 after a long battle with lung cancer. His brother, Roy, Disney passed away just two months later.

The fate of the Walt Disney Company was left to three men — Card Walker, Donn Tatum, and Ron Miller — all of whom were originally trained by Walt and Roy. The new management team had a vision for the future of the Disney empire that was built around not only keeping the memory of Walt and Roy alive in day-to-day operations but also a philosophy of aggressive expansion both in the U.S. and abroad. The company defined three overriding strategic objectives: “to sustain Disney as the world's premier entertainment company; to protect and build upon the Disney name and franchise; and to preserve and foster quality, imagination and guest service” (Walt Disney, 1995). While the organization's

theatrical releases struggled in the 1970s, the early 1980s found the company experiencing record attendance numbers at its theme parks and steadily increasing revenues. In response to a perception that Disney stock was undervalued, a hostile takeover was attempted in 1984, but it was thwarted quickly by newly elected CEO Michael Eisner.

A STAR IS BORN: MICHAEL EISNER JOINS THE DISNEY FAMILY

When Michael Eisner left Paramount to join the Walt Disney Company in 1984, many looked at his past achievements as an indicator of his potential for future success. As an executive at Paramount, Eisner had earned a reputation for bringing in millions at the box office for productions filmed at industry-low costs. Many shareholders considered Disney to be suffering from a lack of direction and in need of a transformation — and transformation was exactly what Eisner planned to bring to his new company. Within a few years, Disney had regained its title as an industry leader in animated features with the release of theatrical successes like *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*. Aside from achieving success at the box office, the company diversified by establishing subsidiary corporations. In 1986, Disney created Touchstone Television, which would produce popular shows like the *Golden Girls*, *Dinosaurs*, *Home Improvement*, *Empty Nest*, and *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee*. As Disney's stock began to rise, some described Eisner as “the prince who awakened Sleeping Beauty and revived the Magic Kingdom” (Academy of Achievement, 2014).

A WHOLE NEW WORLD: DISNEY'S EXPANSION HIGHLIGHTS

As the final decade of the twentieth century opened, it became clear that Eisner desired to not only capitalize on a reputable brand but also branch off into new territory by creating an even more diversified company (see Exhibit 1). In 1993, Disney purchased a team in the National Hockey League — the Anaheim Mighty Ducks.³ It also founded its own publishing house — Hyperion Books/Disney Press — which published both Disney and non-Disney books and leapt into the world of Broadway theatre productions with its musical *Beauty and the Beast*, based on 1991's extremely successful theatrical release.⁴

Disney became an even fiercer competitor in the film industry, merging Buena Vista International and Buena Vista Home Entertainment to create the number one

international distributor of motion pictures in the world. Further, the company's 1993 acquisition of Miramax Films opened new markets, enabling the company to delineate from Disney's tradition of releasing family-oriented films with productions, such as *Pulp Fiction* and *The Crow*.

UNDER THE SEA (OF SCANDAL): DISNEY MAKES THE NEWS

While Disney had been experiencing increased commercial success in its ventures, the 1990s found the animation gurus subject to increasing levels of public scrutiny and criticism. Many Disney films were held up as being racist, sexist, and atheist, including the company's 1992 release *Aladdin*, which opened with the song "Arabian Nights":

Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home (Lyrics007, 2008)⁵

The lyrics and the film's portrayal of certain characters drew the ire the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, which claimed that the film was offensive to individuals of Middle Eastern descent.⁶ Feminist groups complained that Disney films in general portrayed women as helpless and codependent upon men, with several productions presenting young heroines waiting for their prince to come and save them and older women as scheming and villainous. The National Hispanic Media Coalition charged the company with practicing discrimination against Hispanic peoples by failing to promote Latinos or do business with Latino contractors. The most significant and concerted attack, however, came from the Christian community.

In 1994 Disney-owned Miramax Films released the controversial movie *Priest*, which centered upon Roman Catholic priests struggling with their vows, and included portrayals of a young homosexual priest and an older priest having an affair with his housekeeper. The Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus⁷ protested the film, stating that the production contained a "distorted, negative, and fundamentally unfair picture of Catholic priests" (Weinraub, 1995) and accordingly dumped 50,000 shares of Disney stock valued at close to \$3 million.

The film also attracted the attention of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights,⁸ who on March 28,

1995 called for a nationwide boycott of all Disney theme parks and products, running ads in the *New York Times* and denouncing the movie as proof that Disney was blatantly anti-Catholic. From the League's perspective:

We objected not because the film showed five dysfunctional priests, but because it suggested that their depravity was a function of their religion. The cause and effect was unmistakable and so was the intent of the movie. Quotes [from the writer and director of the film] removed all doubt that what was at work was an animus directed sharply at the Catholic Church.

We are embarking on a nationwide campaign aimed at Disney. We are calling for a boycott of all Disney products, a boycott of vacations to Disney World and Disneyland and a boycott of the Disney cable television channel. We are also asking the public to call Disney and tie up the lines by making a complaint... We will take out ads in nationwide newspapers targeting Disney... We will call on all Catholic organizations to sell Disney stock... We will use every means of communication to reeducate the public as to the new face and new status of the Walt Disney Company. ("Religious Tolerance," 2003)

The league's activities drew the sympathies of the American Family Association (AFA), who also called for a boycott of the Walt Disney Company. The AFA, formerly known as the National Federation for Decency, had a long history of protesting sex, violence, and profanity on television and the Catholic League's cause fit its mission, which was to stand for traditional family values and to reform American culture. The AFA had demonstrated a willingness to apply boycotts to leverage its positions in the past, as evidenced by actions against 7-Eleven, Pepsi, WaldenBooks, Circle K, Holiday Inn, Levi Strauss and Company, and Warner-Lambert Company, some of which had met with success.⁹

Disney, however, did not seem to perceive these boycotts as a threat. The organizations involved appeared relatively small, and even actions as provocative as the publicized sale of significant blocks of stock did not seem to register much of an impact on the firm (see Exhibits 2a-c and 3a-d). Michael Eisner and the board offered no comment on these actions. Little did they realize that a "sleeping giant" was about to awaken – the 16 million strong Southern Baptist Convention.

ONCE UPON A DREAM: THE GROWTH OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was founded in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845 as an association of Baptist churches in the southern United States dissatisfied with the national Baptist association. Membership was open to individuals professing a personal belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior who had experienced water baptism by immersion, with the convention stating that “you become a Southern Baptist by uniting with a Southern Baptist church, one in friendly cooperation with the general Southern Baptist enterprise of reaching the world for Christ.”¹⁰

In 1925, recognizing a need for a more interconnected church family both at home and abroad, the SBC created the Cooperative Program Missions. The five-year, \$75 million campaign promised to support less fortunate congregations both locally and globally and had ultimately (in concert with the SBC International Missions Board) grown to sponsor approximately 5,000 home missionaries involved in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to North America, Guam, and the Caribbean. The convention also sponsored more than 5,000 foreign missionaries in 153 nations worldwide.

With a membership of over 16 million in 42,000 churches, the SBC represented approximately 40% of the estimated 34 million Baptists in the United States. Convention members networked via some 1,200 local organizations and 41 state conventions and fellowships, and were conservative in their beliefs, including their understanding of the role of the Christian within society:

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society... in the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. (SBC, 2009)

As American culture became progressively more liberal over time, the SBC found itself increasingly at odds with society, especially with respect to its beliefs on Christian behavior and the practice of homosexuality.

CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT? DISNEY'S OPPOSITION BUILDS

Throughout the early 1990s, Disney employees involved in same-sex relationships had been pressuring the company to extend health benefits to their partners and children. Disney ultimately agreed and in October 1995 announced that a new benefits plan would take effect on January 1, 1996.¹¹ This action dismayed conservative Christians throughout the U.S., and garnered an immediate response from Florida state representative Bob Brooks, who approached the Florida Family Council, an affiliate of the AFA, to prepare a protest letter to be directed to Michael Eisner. The letter was signed by 14 legislators and distributed to the media and suggested that Disney was pursuing a course of action contrary to the company's “family” reputation that would doubtless have negative repercussions among its customers.

On November 15, the Florida Baptist Convention (FBC), a subset of the SBC comprising over 2,000 churches and one million members, met to debate the latest developments at Disney. Disney's change to its benefits policy was characterized as “the last straw after a series of other objectionable practices by Disney, including allowing an annual ‘gay day’ celebration at Disney World in Orlando” as well as perceived “subliminal sexual messages in animated movies like *The Lion King* and... books, movies, and television programming produced by Disney subsidiaries like Miramax, which this year distributed the film *Priest* about a gay Roman Catholic priest” (Navarro, 1995). The FBC unanimously passed a resolution stating that “Disney's moral leadership has eroded” and requesting that its members “seriously and prayerfully reconsider their continued purchase and support of Disney products” (Navarro, 1995). While the convention did not make any specific demands of Disney, it did announce plans to seek the adoption of a similar motion at the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention in June.

Explaining the FBC's actions, its vice president, Reverend Tim Benson, stated that, “[Disney's actions are] just another step in the direction of making the traditional family meaningless.... We're disheartened. Our main impetus behind this is to encourage Disney to take a good look at who they are and what they represent to America” (Navarro, 1995).

The Walt Disney Company finally appeared to take notice of its critics. Spokesman John Dyer issued a comment on the FBC resolution, stating that the company's theme parks did not discriminate against any groups in terms of permitting their attendance and that “we regret that people are offended by a decision to provide health

care to our employees” (Navarro, 1995). He went on to say that “we have not departed from family values. The standard against which to measure our family values is the... entertainment that we produce and the fact that we are the world’s leader in terms of producing family entertainment of all kinds” (Pinsky, 2004).

BE PREPARED: THE SBC VOTE TO BOYCOTT THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

In June 1996, close to 13,000 delegates of the SBC gathered in New Orleans for its annual convention. On the table was a resolution (see Exhibit 4) that expressed the SBC’s deep disappointment in the Walt Disney Company, specifically identifying five corporate decisions via which the firm’s “moral leadership [had] been eroded”:

- 1) Establishing an employee policy which accepts and embraces homosexual relationships for the purpose of insurance benefits.
- 2) Hosting homosexual and lesbian theme nights at its parks.
- 3) Choosing a convicted child molester to direct the Disney movie *Powder* through its subsidiary Miramax Productions.
- 4) Publishing a book aimed at teenage homosexuals entitled *Growing Up Gay: From Left Out to Coming Out* through its subsidiary Hyperion, connecting Disney to the promotion of the homosexual agenda.
- 5) Producing, through its subsidiary corporations, objectionable material such as the film *Priest* which disparages Christian values and depicts Christian leaders as morally defective (SBC, 1997).¹²

The resolution affirmed that “boycotts are a legitimate method for communicating moral convictions” and resolved that “Southern Baptists give serious and prayerful reconsideration to their purchase and support of Disney products and to boycott the Disney Company and theme parks if they continue this anti-Christian and anti-family trend.” The membership voted in favor of the resolution, and while Disney was given no deadline to restructure its policies and reconsider its ownership stake in subsidiary companies, the convention’s Christian Life Committee was empowered to monitor the corporation’s progress.

As the news of the SBC resolution became public, both Disney and the SBC were overwhelmed with responses from several quarters. Members of the lesbian and gay rights movement expressed concern that any Christian would consider them not equal enough to share common health

and benefit plans. The American Family Association,¹³ however, considered the resolution to represent a reinforcement of its existing boycott efforts and, in turn, distributed over 25,000 anti-Disney information packages in its home state of Mississippi. In addition, other Christian organizations were expressing sympathy for the action, including the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. With over 2 million members, the Assemblies’ General Presbytery passed a resolution in August urging its congregations to boycott Disney given that “we have watched with dismay the productions of the Disney Corporation abandoning the commitment to strong moral values, and have noticed this moral shift in a number of Disney-sponsored films and events” (“Religious Tolerance,” 2003).

POOR UNFORTUNATE SOULS: DISNEY RESPONDS

Disney initially responded to the SBC boycott resolution in a frank statement with little regard to its allegations. “We find it curious that a group that claims to espouse family values would vote to boycott the world’s largest producer of wholesome family entertainment. We question any group that demands we deprive people of health benefits and we know of no tourist destination in the world that denies admission to people as the Baptists are insisting we do” (Hilliard, 1996). Otherwise, it continued to be business as usual at the entertainment conglomerate.

In the intervening year, several Disney-controlled productions served to inflame its critics, including:

- Walt Disney Feature Animation’s June 1996 release of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which critics complained contained themes of sexual desire inappropriate for the film’s intended audience.
- Miramax’s July 1996 release of *Trainspotting*, which critics claimed glorified its heroin-addicted characters.
- ABC TV’s airing of a *Dana Carvey Show* episode in March 1997 featuring jokes about cocaine addiction and portrayals of George Washington using cocaine and Ben Franklin as a homosexual.
- Disney’s promotion of the 7th annual Gay and Lesbian Days at Walt Disney World, June 6-8, 1997, and the granting of permission to organizers to portray Mickey and Donald and Daisy and Minnie as lovers.
- Miramax’s plans to distribute the film *The House of Yes* in October 1997, with a story line involving incest between a brother and sister.

Perhaps the greatest reaction was generated in April 1997 when Disney-owned ABC aired an episode of the sitcom *Ellen* in which the main character revealed that she

was a lesbian and became the first openly homosexual central character in the history of American television.

When the SBC met again between June 17 and 19, 1997, a new resolution regarding the Walt Disney Company was central to the agenda. On the day before the vote, Reverend Dr. Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (formerly the Christian Life Committee), reported that the organization had paid no attention to the 1996 New Orleans resolution:

On good days, the Disney Corporation ignored us. On bad days, they contemptuously gave us the back of their hand. They don't think the Southern Baptists are significant. I suspect that tomorrow, when you vote to refrain from giving of your resources to any of Disney's enterprises, that in the next 12 months Disney's going to find out just how many regiments, and just how many godly people Southern Baptists have. (AFA, 1997a)¹⁴

The new document — the “SBC Resolution on Moral Stewardship and the Disney Company” (see Exhibit 5) — was presented to the 13,000 delegates the next day. In addition to affirming the rationale for action, it called specifically for a boycott of Disney and all its related entities. The motion passed with an estimated 85 percent show of support. With the boycott now a reality, several steps were taken to facilitate participation. A pro forma letter was provided for use by SBC members to tally up what they would have spent on Disney each month, to be sent regularly to Michael Eisner. Pledge cards were distributed to churches for members to sign as a show of individual commitment to and solidarity with the boycott. The AFA quickly prepared an information sheet (see Exhibit 6) for distribution to SBC members and interested parties, explaining the rationale behind the boycott. It also produced a video entitled *The Disney Boycott: A Just Cause*, for distribution to churches featuring Reverend Dr. Richard Land explaining the action:

Make no mistake about it. The boycott of the Disney Empire by Southern Baptists is a grassroots movement.... This boycott will work because it has been supported and demanded by millions of Southern Baptists and other Christians, who are outraged that Disney has moved in the direction that it has.... We need to say to the other corporate entities in America, as well as to Disney, through our boycott of Disney, you can no longer bash our values, mock our beliefs, attack our morals, with impunity. There will be a price to pay when you take out after those who believe in the traditional family, those who profess the Christian

faith, and those who believe in the nuclear family....” (AFA, 1997a)

Disney's initial response to the boycott announcement was muted. Spokesman John Dreyer commented that the company had a growing commitment to family entertainment and that “we produce more family entertainment than anyone else, and we have had more in the past year than ever before.” Michael Eisner simply stated that the boycott was a minor occurrence, and that “we think they're a very small group of the Southern Baptists that took a very extreme position, which we think is foolish. They seem to have been off on a tangent this year” (Johnson, 1996).

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME: OTHER GROUPS JOIN THE BOYCOTT

Richard Land had not been exaggerating when he referred to “millions of Southern Baptists and other Christians.” As news of the boycott spread, it quickly attracted a host of supporters with complaints that were similar if not identical to those of the SBC.

In all, organizations joining the boycott represented well in excess of 20 million members, not including those who — while not joining the boycott — endorsed the action, including Alveda C. King, niece of American civil rights pioneer Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and founder of the activist group King for America.

The boycott claimed early success when almost a week after its implementation, Disney's Hollywood Records recalled over 100,000 copies of hip hop group Insane Clown Posse's album *The Great Malenko* due to its offensive lyrics. Disney, however, claimed that the recall was not due to the boycott but rather to correct a failed internal review process.

By August 1997, Michael Eisner was beginning to hear grumblings from shareholders. The corporation's share values had dropped 8 percent from a May high of \$84.50, and Disney-owned ABC continued to lose ratings. The company had also been forced to pay out \$100 million to former President Michael Ovitz and was facing a threatened \$250 million lawsuit from disgruntled former executive Jeffrey Katzenberg. As well, its newest animated film *Hercules* had not performed as expected, and neither had the two animated releases before it. To top things off, resistance was already being directed at the organization from one of the boycott participants — the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights — over a new ABC show being released in September called *Nothing Sacred*

Table 1: Boycotting Organizations

Southern Baptist Convention	Baptist denomination, estimated 16 million members
Assemblies of God	Pentecostal denomination, estimated 2 million members
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights	Catholic organization, estimated 350,000 members
American Family Association	Pro-family organization, estimated 180,000 members
Catholics United for the Faith	Conservative Catholic lay group promoting traditional doctrine
Congregational Holiness Church	Pentecostal denomination, estimated 6,400 members
National Association of Free Will Baptists	Baptist denomination, estimated 250,000 members
Other Organizations Who Joined the Boycott	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Catholic Lawyers Association • American Life League • Americans United for the Pope • Ancient Order of Hibernians • Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation • Cardinal Newman Society • Catholic Answers, Inc. • Catholic Central Union • Catholic Coalition for Truth • Catholic Coalition of Westchester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholics United for the Faith • Catholic Defense League of Minnesota • Chinese Catholic Information Center • Christian Action Network • Christian Action Network • Concerned Women for America • Coral Ridge Ministries • Dove Foundation • Focus on the Family • League of Catholic Voters
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legatus – Jewish Action Alliance • Jews for Morality • Knights of Columbus • Morality in Media • Muslim Coalition/Peace Press Assoc. • National Association of Black Catholics • National Cops for Life • Pro-Ecclesia Foundation • Pro-Life Action League • Sons of Italy, Comm. For Social Justice • Women for Faith and Family

that featured an irreverent Roman Catholic priest questioning the existence of God, lusting after a former girlfriend, and rejecting traditional church teachings.¹⁵

Business Week magazine challenged the company's performance in an August interview with Eisner:

BW: It's been bad couple of weeks for the company. Why is everyone taking shots at you now?

ME: The company is big and therefore visible. A lot of people are interested in seeing whether we are going to slip up.

BW: Will the Baptist boycott hurt Disney?

ME: No... I may not be as religious as some, but I went to a Baptist college, and I grew up believing that tolerance was the basis of all religions. I think that's what's missing here — tolerance. Now, I got this letter from a group of non-big-time Catholics about *Nothing Sacred*. They haven't even seen the show. They are criticizing it off of a sentence they read in the press somewhere. I showed that show to five priests. We try to be careful, to make changes. And then we get this reaction. It's aggravating.

BW: What was the problem with the Insane Clown Posse? How did that one slip through the cracks?

ME: Has *Business Week* ever made a mistake? Have you ever made a mistake in your life? We made a mistake.

The moment I heard the music, I knew this was something that this company wouldn't release. But you can bet that it won't happen again (Grover, 1997).

GOD HELP THE OUTCASTS: DISNEY UNDER FIRE

As the year wore on, Disney maintained its policy of not responding to continuing attacks by boycotting organizations, other than to point out that theme park attendance was better than ever and that financial performance of the company would suggest that the boycott wasn't having an impact. "We always try to promote moral ideologies in our programming," stated John Dreyer. "We remain committed to certain values in our everyday life, values that include tolerance and compassion and respect for everyone" Pinsky, 2004. Nevertheless the rhetoric of the boycott showed no sign of abating and was attracting media interest. Michael Eisner finally decided to address the situation to a national television audience.

On November 19, a taped interview of Michael Eisner by journalist Leslie Stahl aired on the respected CBS newsmagazine *60 Minutes*. Stahl challenged Eisner to respond to the SBC assertion that by purchasing Disney products, its members were actually subsidizing creative content in other quarters that constituted an attack on Baptist values and beliefs.

“That’s ridiculous,” said Eisner. “We’re not pushing any agenda. We are pushing, in our corporate marketplace, tolerance and understanding, expansiveness. We are totally onto an ethical compass, a moral compass.” He went on to suggest that the real reason behind the boycott was that Disney was a large organization and thus served as a platform to advance the SBC agenda.

When asked whether he would be willing to meet face-to-face with SBC leadership, Eisner stated, “I will meet with anybody at any time, when it is presented in a rational and non-media-hyped way. So my answer is, absolutely.” He further suggested that he was taking the boycott seriously — otherwise he wouldn’t be appearing on *60 Minutes*, although he did assert that the boycott was not impacting the company financially.

“I think we’re the wrong, the wrong group to go after,” he said. “But the one thing that’s great about this country is that they have the right to do it, and they’re doing it the right way. They have the right to do letter-writing campaigns. They have the right to hold back their wallets. They have the right not to go to our property. I love that. I respect that” (Pinsky, 2004).

Boycott participant Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family was unimpressed by Eisner’s defense of Disney’s position, asserting that Stahl had not been hard enough on her interview subject. “How does the glorification of brutal violence, homosexuality, drug abuse, and teen sex, and the mockery of Christian beliefs reflect Walt Disney’s philosophy of family entertainment?” he asked. “He ridicules those with deeply held religious beliefs who are genuinely concerned about the direction the Disney Company has taken in recent years.”

He went further. “Mr. Eisner says he is willing to sit down and talk with those participating in the boycott. If that is now true, why has he never made such an offer to this point? I challenge him to live up to this newly proclaimed openness. So far, Disney has given a deaf ear to our concerns. Its communications department has told our constituents that Disney will not even respond by letter to consumers who send letters of concern on this issue. I hope that Disney will become more receptive to the views of millions of families who would like Disney to return to the legacy of Walt himself” (Pinsky, 2004).

Shortly thereafter, Eisner made a more nuanced statement regarding the company’s detractors in his January 1998 letter to shareholders:

Lest I paint too rosy a picture, let me take a moment to address a downside to the recent history of our company.... As we have become increasingly successful, we have also increasingly become a target for groups that want to leverage our strength with the public for their own ends, trade on our popularity if

you will. I am not denying that some of their issues are valid some of the time nor suggesting that we are better than everyone else, but the fact is that these groups keep bringing their issues forward by focusing on Disney because it is more effective than citing one of our competitors. The issues they criticize us for mostly surround some of our non-Disney-branded films and our non-Disney television shows....

But let me also say something about “subject matter.” In each of our divisions... Disney and non-Disney, we seek to be in business with the best and most creative talent we can find. We then try to give them the freedom to do their best work. We try not to censor them, and I will always defend the right of the talented artists who work for us to push the limits of their imagination. We are all fortunate to be in a country that protects our right to free expression. We will not let a mayor or a congressman or a senator or a particular interest group or even a president attempt to control our content. At the same time, we will not hide behind the protection of the First Amendment. We are editors, and we accept responsibility for the products we produce. If we sometimes make choices with which others disagree, it is not because we have failed to look hard at our decisions. Sometimes we will make the wrong choice. Hopefully we will more often make the right choice, but either way we will always make these choices carefully and responsibly and always within the context of each brand’s audience. And rest assured that when we fail, the first call I will get is from my family, or the larger Disney family. (Walt Disney, 1997)

HAKUNA MATATA: NO WORRIES? OR HAPPILY NEVER AFTER?

As 1998 unfolded, Michael Eisner and the executives of the Walt Disney Company had a decision to make with respect to the boycott. On the one hand, the company’s revenues continued to grow and its share performance appeared to be trending in the right direction. Theme park attendance continued to be high, and while its television assets were struggling, its film assets were drawing solid — though in some cases declining — audiences. Yet the continued boycott activity was a cause for concern. From protesters distributing pamphlets at the gates of Disney World to tens of thousands of angry news releases being faxed across the country to media, churches, stock brokerages, and mutual fund companies, the boycott showed no signs of losing steam. Perhaps most troubling was a July 10 decision by

the Texas State School Board who, after lobbying from the AFA, sanctioned the boycott by divesting \$46.4 million in Disney stock from the state's Permanent School Fund.

"I hope we've sent a message," said board member David Bradley. "If Texas is taking a stand, this must be big — I think this issue has legs" (Johnson, 1998).

It appeared that the boycott had seized new ground by entering into the realm of government, and some analysts believed that the divestiture could signal a new wave of sanctions. Clearly the Walt Disney Company had decisions to make. (Table 2 summarizes the timeline of events.)

SUGGESTED TEACHING APPROACHES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This case would be most appropriate at the senior undergraduate or graduate level in courses in strategic management/business policy/public relations. It would be most effectively positioned in that part of the course deal-

ing with stakeholder preferences and relations. In addition to the questions below, a comprehensive set of teaching notes with suggested answers is available from the authors.

Questions

- 1) Complete an analysis of the decision being faced by the Walt Disney Company. What would you recommend to CEO Michael Eisner?
- 2) Assess the effectiveness of consumer boycotts as a tool for stakeholder action. How concerned should the Walt Disney Company be?
- 3) Does a corporation have a moral imperative to heed the concerns of its stakeholders?
- 4) What actions (if any) should the Walt Disney Company take in response to the boycott?
- 5) According to Table 1 ("Boycotting Organizations") the population of possible boycotting Christians (and others) numbered in the millions. Considering the point of view represented in the case, should Christians participate in consumer boycotts?

Table 2: Timeline of Events

Year	Date	Event
1994		Catholic Knights of Columbus announce the sale of \$3 million worth of Disney stock to protest the movie <i>Priest</i>
1995	March	The American Life League urges Disney boycott over perceived subliminal images, etc. in Disney films
	March 28	The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights launches Disney boycott regarding negative portrayals of the Catholic faith in films such as <i>Priest</i>
	October	Disney announces extension of benefits to partners and children of employees in same sex relationships, effective January 1, 1996
	November 15	FBC issues resolution criticizing Disney
1996	January 1	Disney extends benefits to partners and children of employees in same-sex relationships
	June	Walt Disney World hosts 6th annual Gay and Lesbian Day at Walt Disney World
	June 12	SBC passes resolution giving Disney one year to change its policies or be subject to a boycott
	August 7	Assemblies of God urge Disney boycott
1997	June 6-8	Walt Disney World hosts 7th annual Gay and Lesbian Day at Walt Disney World
	June 17-19	SBC votes to enact boycott
	June 24	Disney pulls music CD by the Insane Clown Posse from retail stores because of offensive lyrics
	July	National Association of Free Will Baptists enacts boycott
	July 23	Concerned Women for America join SBC boycott
	August 14	SBC asks members to withhold at least \$100 of spending on Disney products and services during the subsequent 12 months
	August 27	Focus on the Family joins SBC boycott
	September 6	Numerous organizations report participation, involvement, or support in/for SBC boycott
	November 19	Disney's Eisner appears on CBS's 60 Minutes
1998	January 5	Disney's Eisner defends company's position in letter to shareholders in annual report
	July 10	Texas State School Board divests \$46.4 million of Disney stock

Exhibit 1: Walt Disney Company Holdings (1997-98)

Segment	Investment	Segment	Investment
Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC network • Various US TV stations • Disney Channel • ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNNews, ESPN International, ESPN Enterprises • Lifetime, A&E, and History channels • E! Entertainment Television • Walt Disney Television International 	Media Production (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buena Vista Home Entertainment • Touchstone Pictures, Touchstone
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Network • Radio Disney • Various US radio stations 	Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Television • Hollywood Pictures • Hyperion Books • Chilton • Fairchild Publications
New Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americast • Disney Quest 	Music Labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walt Disney Records • Mammoth Records • Lyric Street Records
Media Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walt Disney Pictures • Walt Disney Television • Walt Disney Television Animation • Walt Disney Feature Animation • Walt Disney Theatrical Productions • Miramax Films • Buena Vista Television • Buena Vista International 	Theme Parks and Attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disneyland • Disney World • Tokyo Disney • Disneyland Paris • Disney Cruise Line
		Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHL Anaheim Mighty Ducks • MLB Anaheim Angels
		Consumer Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disney stores (636) • ESPN stores • Disney Consumer Products

Exhibit 2a: Walt Disney Company Consolidated Statement of Income

Consolidated Statements of Income				
(In millions, except per share data)				
<i>Year ended September 30</i>	1997	1996	1995	1994
Revenues	\$ 22,473	\$ 18,739	\$ 12,151	\$ 10,090
Costs and Expenses	(18,161)	(15,406)	(9,685)	(8,118)
Gain on sale of KCAL	135			
Accounting Change	-	(300)	-	-
Operating Income	4,447	3,033	2,466	1,972
Corporate Activities and Other	(367)	(309)	(239)	(279)
Interest Expense	(693)	(479)	(178)	(120)
Investment and Interest Income	-	41	68	130
Acquisition-related Costs	-	(225)	-	-
Income Before Income Taxes	3,387	2,061	2,117	1,703
Income Taxes	(1,421)	(847)	(737)	(593)
Net Income	\$ 1,966	\$ 1,214	\$ 1,380	\$ 1,110
Earnings Per Share	\$ 2.86	\$ 1.96	\$ 2.60	\$ 2.04
Average number of common and common equivalent shares outstanding	687	619	530	545

Exhibit 2b: Walt Disney Company Consolidated Balance Sheets

Consolidated Balance Sheets					
(In millions)					
September 30		1997	1996	1995	1994
Assets					
Cash and cash equivalents		\$ 317	\$ 278	\$ 1,077	\$ 187
Investments		1,897	454	866	1,323
Receivables		3,726	3,343	1,793	1,671
Inventories		942	951	824	668
Film and television costs		4,401	3,912	2,099	1,596
Theme parks, resorts and other property, at cost					
Attractions, buildings and equipment		11,787	11,019	8,340	7,450
Accumulated depreciation		(4,857)	(4,448)	(3,039)	(2,627)
		6,930	6,571	5,301	4,823
Projects in process		1,928	1,342	778	879
Land		93	118	111	112
		8,951	8,031	6,190	5,815
Intangible assets, net		16,011	17,978	-	-
Other assets		1,531	2,359	1,757	1,567
		\$ 37,776	\$ 37,306	\$ 14,606	\$ 12,826
Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity					
Accounts payable and other accrued liabilities		\$ 5,577	\$ 6,374	\$ 2,843	\$ 2,475
Income taxes payable		995	582	200	267
Borrowings		11,068	12,342	2,984	2,937
Unearned royalty and other advances		1,172	1,179	861	700
Deferred income taxes		1,679	743	1,067	939
Stockholders' equity					
Preferred stock, \$.01 par value; \$.10 at September 30, 1995					
Authorized - 100 million shares					
Issued - none					
Common Stock, \$.01 par value; \$.025 at September 30, 1995					
Authorized - 1.2 billion shares					
Issued - 682 million shares and 575 million shares		8,534	8,576	1,226	945
Retained earnings		9,557	7,933	6,990	5,790
Cumulative transition and other adjustments		(12)	39	38	59
		18,079	16,548	8,254	6,795
Less treasury stock, at cost, 8 million shares and 51 million shares		(462)	(462)	(1,603)	(1,286)
Shares held by TWDC Stock Compensation Fund at cost, 4 million sh.		(332)			
		17,285	16,088	6,651	5508.3
		\$ 37,776	\$ 37,306	\$ 14,606	\$ 12,826

Exhibit 2c: Walt Disney Company Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows

Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows				
(In millions)				
<i>Year Ended September 30</i>	1997	1996	1995	1994
Net Income	\$ 1,966	\$ 1,214	\$ 1,380	\$ 1,110
Charges to Income Not Requiring Cash Outlays				
Amortization of film and television costs	3,781	2,966	1,383	1,199
Depreciation	738	677	470	410
Amortization of intangible assets	439	301	-	-
Gain on sale of KCAL	(135)			
Accounting change	-	300	-	-
Other	(15)	22	133	231
Changes In (Including the impact of the ABC acquisition)				
Investments in trading securities	-	85	1	-
Receivables	(386)	(426)	(122)	(280)
Inventories	(6)	(95)	(156)	(59)
Other assets	(169)	(160)	(288)	(81)
Accounts and taxes payable and accrued liabilities	566	(455)	415	136
Unearned royalty and other advances	(7)	274	161	(141)
Deferred income taxes	292	(78)	133	283
		3,411	2,130	1,698
Cash Provided by Operations	5,098	4,625	3,510	2,808
Investing Activities				
Proceeds from disposal of KCAL	387	-	-	-
Proceeds from disposal of publishing operations	1,214	-	-	-
Acquisition of ABC, net of cash acquired		(8,432)	-	-
Film and television costs	(5,054)	(3,678)	(1,886)	(1,434)
Investments in theme parks, resorts and other property	(1,922)	(1,745)	(896)	(1,026)
Investment in and loan from E! Entertainment	(321)	-	-	-
Purchases of marketable securities	(56)	(18)	(1,033)	(953)
Proceeds from sales of marketable securities	31	409	1,460	1,494
Other	(180)	-	67	(968)
	(5,901)	(13,464)	(2,288)	(2,887)
Financing Activities				
Borrowings	2,437	13,560	786	1,866
Proceeds from formation of REITs	1,312	-	-	-
Reduction of borrowings	(4,078)	(4,872)	(772)	(1,315)
Repurchases of common stock	(633)	(462)	(349)	(571)
Dividends	(342)	(271)	(180)	(153)
Exercise of stock options and other	180	85	183	76
	(1,124)	8,040	(332)	(97)
Increase (Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	39	(799)	890	(176)
Cash and Cash Equivalents, Beginning of Period	278	1,077	187	363
Cash and Cash Equivalents, End of Period	\$ 317	\$ 278	\$ 1,077	\$ 187
Supplemental disclosure of cash flow information:				
Interest paid	\$ 777	\$ 379	\$ 123	\$ 99
Income taxes paid	\$ 958	\$ 689	\$ 557	\$ 320

Exhibit 3a: Disney Stock Performance 1995

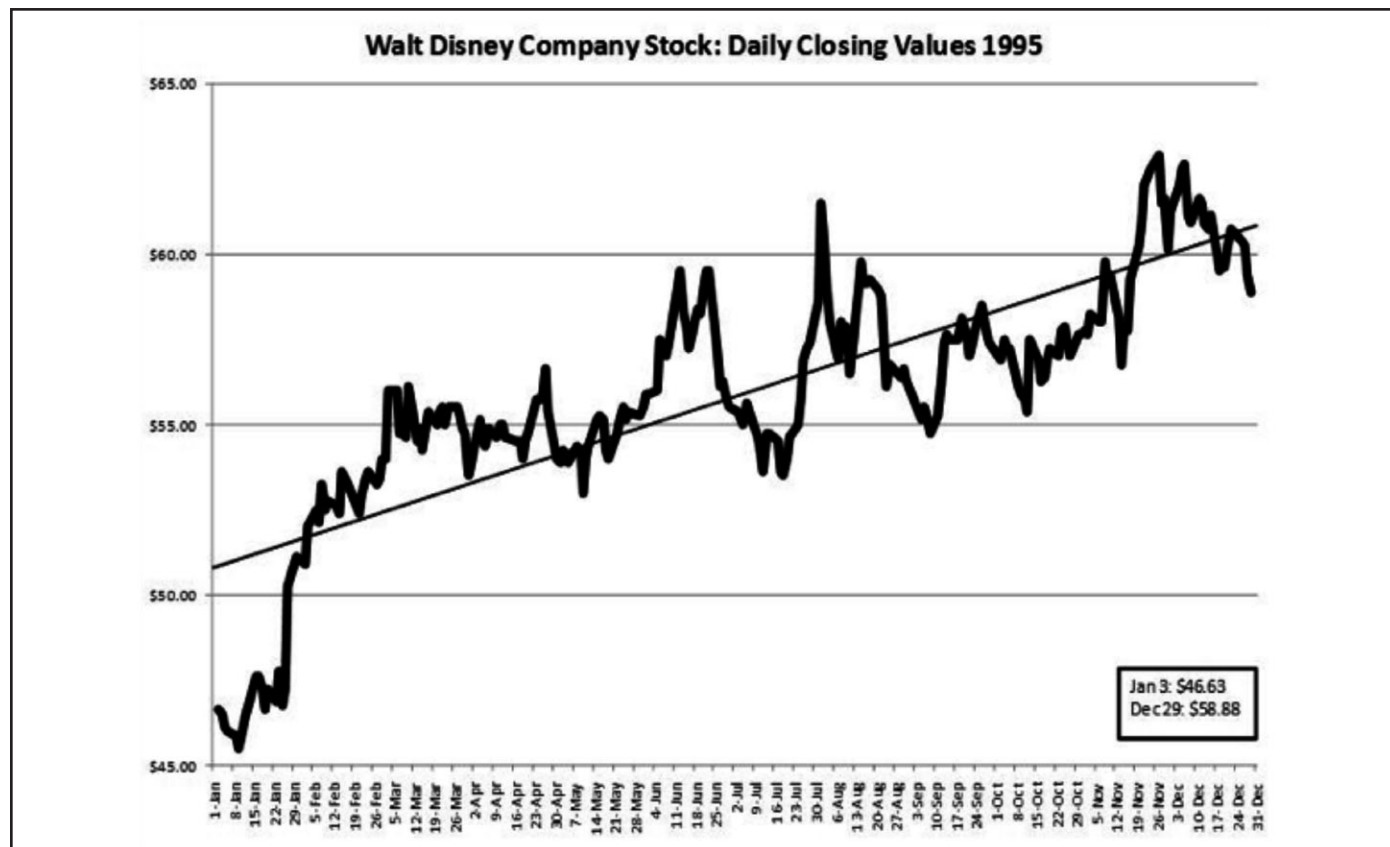


Exhibit 3b: Disney Stock Performance 1996



Exhibit 3c: Disney Stock Performance 1997

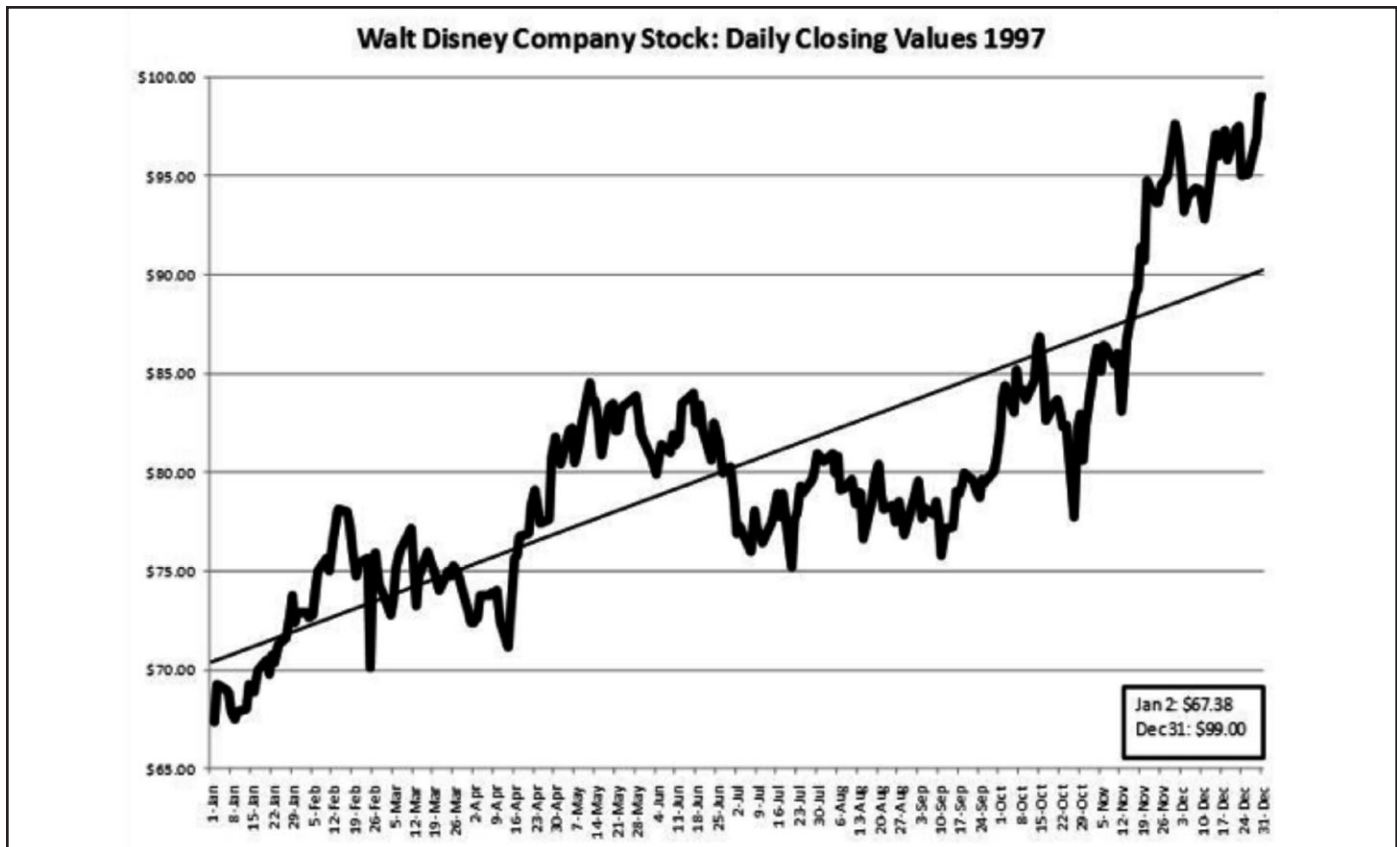


Exhibit 3d: Disney Stock Performance 1998



Exhibit 4: SBC Resolution on the Disney Company Policy June 1996 (SBC, 1996)

WHEREAS, Southern Baptist and their children have for many decades enjoyed and trusted The Disney company's television programming, feature-length films and theme parks which have reinforced basic American virtues and values; and

WHEREAS, The virtues promoted by Disney have contributed to the development of a generation of Americans who have come to expect and demand high levels of moral and virtuous leadership from The Disney Company; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, The Disney Company has given the appearance that the promotion of homosexuality is more important than its historic commitment to traditional family values and has taken a direction which is contrary to its previous commitment; and

WHEREAS, In recent years we have watched the world's largest family entertainment company with growing disappointment as Disney company's moral leadership has been eroded by a variety of corporate decisions, which have included but are not limited to:

- 1) Establishing of an employee policy which accepts and embraces homosexual relationships for the purpose of insurance benefits;
- 2) Hosting of homosexual and lesbian theme nights at its parks;
- 3) Choosing of a convicted child molester to direct the Disney movie *Powder* through its subsidiary Miramax Productions;
- 4) Publishing of a book aimed at teenage homosexuals entitled *Growing Up Gay: From Left Out to Coming Out* through its subsidiary Hyperion, connecting Disney to the promotion of the homosexual agenda;
- 5) Producing, through its subsidiary corporations, of objectionable material such as the film *Priest* which disparages Christian values and depicts Christian leaders as morally defective;

WHEREAS, These and other corporate decisions and actions represent a significant departure from Disney's family-values image and a gratuitous insult to Christians and others who have long supported Disney and contributed to its corporate profits; and

WHEREAS, Previous efforts to communicate these concerns to The Disney Company have been fruitless; and

WHEREAS, Boycotts are a legitimate method for communicating moral convictions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, We as Southern Baptist messengers meeting in annual session on June 11-13, 1996, go on record expressing our deep disappointment for these corporate actions by The Disney Company; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we affirm the employees of The Disney Company who embrace and share our concerns; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to give serious and prayerful reconsideration to their purchase and support of Disney products and to boycott The Disney Company and theme parks if they continue this anti-Christian and anti-family trend; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage the Christian Life Commission to monitor Disney's progress in returning to its previous philosophy of producing enriching family entertainment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage state Baptist papers and national Southern Baptist publications to assist in informing the Southern Baptist family of these issues; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Convention requests the Executive Committee to send a copy of this resolution to Michael Eisner, CEO of The Disney Company, and to encourage the Southern Baptist family to support this boycott with our purchasing power, letters, and influence.

Exhibit 5: SBC Resolution on Moral Stewardship and the Disney Company June 1997 (SBC, 1997)

WHEREAS, Everything Christians possess of time, money, and resources is given to them by God as a stewardship for which they will give an account before a holy God; and

WHEREAS, Those who serve the public in any manner also have a stewardship before God regarding their service, and those who have greater influence have greater responsibility for their stewardship and must give a greater accounting; and

WHEREAS, Many entertainment providers including, but not limited to, The Disney Company are increasingly promoting immoral ideologies such as homosexuality, infidelity, and adultery, which are biblically reprehensible and abhorrent to God and His plan for the world that He loves; and

WHEREAS, The 1996 Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution regarding these issues with a specific appeal to The Disney Company, which had long been a respected leader of family entertainment in keeping with traditional moral values; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned resolution called for our Christian Life Commission to monitor Disney's progress in returning to its previous philosophy of producing enriching family entertainment and the Christian Life Commission has now reported that The Disney Company has not only ignored our concerns but flagrantly furthered this moral digression in its product and policies; and

WHEREAS, We realize that we cannot do everything to stop the moral decline in our nation, but we must do what lies before us when it is right through a proper use of our influence, energies, and prayers, particularly when it affects our nation's children;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17-19, 1997, urge every Southern Baptist to take the stewardship of their time, money, and resources so seriously that they refrain from patronizing The Disney Company and any of its related entities, understanding that this is not an attempt to bring The Disney Company down, but to bring Southern Baptists up to the moral standard of God; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to refrain from patronizing any company that promotes immoral ideologies and practices, realizing that The Disney Company is not the only such provider; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we ask our pastors and church leaders to become informed regarding these issues and teach their people accordingly, and that we urge all Southern Baptists to graciously communicate the reasons for their individual actions to The Disney Company and other companies; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we pray that God would use these actions to help the employees of such companies to respect the enormous stewardship they have before God, and we affirm those employees who embrace and share our concerns.

Exhibit 6: American Family Association Information Sheet (AFA, 1997b)

WHY BOYCOTT DISNEY?

What would cause Christians to boycott The Walt Disney Company - the maker of some of the most enduring, wholesome, family entertainment products?

The facts in the case against the Magic Kingdom are unchallenged. In recent years Disney has established a record of products, policies and practices that insult the very families to whom it has traditionally catered.

At right is a partial list of Disney's anti-family activities.

For more information about why Christian groups such as American Family Association, Southern Baptist Convention, Concerned Women for America, Focus on the Family and others are promoting the Disney boycott and for monthly updates on the progress of the boycott, call toll free 1-888-326-4543, ext 0.

Partial list of Disney brands:

- Walt Disney World
- The Disney Channel
- Disneyland
- Disney retail outlets
- Walt Disney brands
- Hollywood Records
- Buena Vista brands
- ESPN
- ABC TV and radio
- A&E TV Network
- Touchstone Pictures
- Lifetime TV Network
- Hollywood Pictures
- Disney Publishing
- Caravan Pictures
- Hyperion Press
- Miramax Films
- Chilton Publications
- Anaheim Mighty Ducks hockey team

Chairman Michael Eisner
Walt Disney Company
500 S. Buena Vista St.
Burbank, CA 91521
Phone: 818-560-1000

- **Priest** (Miramax) is a pro-homosexual movie which depicts five Catholic priests as dysfunctionals and blames their problems on Church teachings.
- A Disney/ABC TV drama, *Nothing Sacred*, depicts a negative portrayal of Catholic priesthood.
- The president of Miramax Films, a wholly-owned Disney subsidiary, admitted that his company thrives on racy, often violent promotion for its movies.
- After reading the script to *Dogma*, a movie that asserts that Christian beliefs are little more than mythology, Miramax principal Harvey Weinstein said, "Love it! We'll release it on Good Friday."
- Other objectionable films from Disney subsidiaries: *Chasing Amy* (lesbianism), *Pulp Fiction* (sex, violence), *Color of Night* (sex), *Clerks* (graphic language), *Chicks in White Satin* (lesbianism), *Lie Dawn with Dogs* (homosexuality), *The House of Yes* (incest).
- Danzig, an occultic rock band, is signed to a Disney record label. Their music is laced with satanic themes.
- Chairman Michael Eisner and The Walt Disney Company are both donors to People For the American Way, a group whose stated goal is to "monitor and counter the divisive agenda of the Religious Right."
- Disney hired a convicted child molester to direct its movie *Powder*.
- Disney signed Martin Scorsese, director of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Casino*, *Taxi Driver* and other hard-edged films, to a four-year-contract.
- Disney/Miramax originally purchased and intended to distribute *Kids*, a pornographic movie about early teen sex and drug abuse. Miramax later formed an independent company to distribute the film. It was rated NC-17 (formerly X) by the MPAA.
- During the first weekend in June for the past seven years at the Orlando, Florida, theme park, Disney World has hosted a huge homosexual celebration called "Gay Day at the Magic Kingdom that Walt Built." Patrons, including many families, have no prior warning that the event is taking place.
- Disney company executives, including Chairman Michael Eisner, are on the board of trustees of Hollywood Supports, a powerful homosexual advocacy group whose focus is to promote the gay agenda in the workplace.
- Disney has extended company benefits to live-in partners of homosexual employees. The policy does not cover unmarried heterosexual couples who live together.
- The May, 1995, issue of *Buzz* magazine reported that a homosexual rights activist said that she was once told by Disney Chairman Michael Eisner that "as many as 40% of the company's 63,000 employees might be gay!" The cover story also reported that Disney has the "largest lesbian and gay employees organization in the entertainment industry." *Buzz* named several openly homosexual Disney executives.
- Eisner approved the storyline of the Disney/ABC series *Ellen* in which the lead character declares that she is a lesbian. Disney/ABC leads the TV networks in the number of prime-time gay characters.
- Disney has advertised in *Out*, a homosexual magazine.
- Disney-owned Hyperion Press has published at least three books which promote homosexuality, including one aimed at teens.
- Disney/ABC's *Relativity* has shown what is perhaps the most passionate lesbian kiss so far on network TV.
- Disney helped underwrite a fundraising event for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a homosexual activists group.

PREPARED BY AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This case was prepared for the purpose of classroom discussion only and not to indicate either effective or ineffective management of a business situation. Information was drawn from materials available from various public sources.
- ² *The Mickey Mouse Club* would become the longest running prime-time television series in history, airing for 29 years and introducing many celebrities to stardom.
- ³ The Mighty Ducks were named for a successful 1992 Disney film about a fictional hockey team of the same name.
- ⁴ Disney's continued success in theatrical production led some pundits to credit the company with restoring the Times Square-Broadway theater district to its former glory.
- ⁵ Disney would subsequently re-release the film with new lyrics, replacing the reference to mutilation with "Where it's flat and immense and the heat is intense."
- ⁶ The ADC maintained that the film's protagonists were rendered with western features and voices, while the villains were portrayed as dark-skinned with Middle-Eastern accents.
- ⁷ The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 in New Haven, Connecticut, by Father Michael J. McGivney to promote among its members "educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief, and public relief works." Their membership was estimated to exceed 1.5 million.
- ⁸ The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights was founded in 1973 by Jesuit Father Virgil C. Blum, professor at Marquette University, and claimed a membership of 350,000.
- ⁹ The AFA's Pepsi boycott prompted the soft drink producer to drop pop singer Madonna from its ads, and its boycott of 7-Eleven persuaded the chain to discontinue sales of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines.
- ¹⁰ The term "Convention" was derived from the annual meetings – i.e. conventions – held by its membership.
- ¹¹ This in itself was not extraordinary, as over 200 employers in the US had already extended domestic partner benefits. Interestingly, Disney did not extend coverage to unmarried heterosexual couples.
- ¹² Regarding the third point, Miramax had employed Victor Salva, who had been convicted of child molestation and served sentence, to direct the film.
- ¹³ Aside from casual publication in the AFA online newsletter, the SBC and the AFA were not connected aside from their common belief in promoting traditional family values.
- ¹⁴ Land uses an interesting metaphor here, referring to a statement attributed to Joseph Stalin regarding Catholic opposition to the Soviets.
- ¹⁵ In addition to its ongoing support of the boycott, the League directly targeted advertisers in the *Nothing Sacred* timeslot. Isuzu, Chrysler, Nissan, Kmart, Red Lobster, A&M Kitty Litter, Montgomery Ward, Albert Culver, Cortexx Hair Conditioner, Honda, Ovaltine, Ponderosa Steak House, Weight Watchers, Home Depot, and Pier 1 all discontinued their sponsorship. The show's low ratings ultimately led to its cancellation after one season.

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