

Gibson's anti-Semitic outburst shocks Jews: Reputation in film industry suffers damage

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Two years after Mel Gibson angered Jewish leaders with *The Passion of the Christ*, the actor/director has again incensed the Jewish community by reportedly spouting a drunken anti-Semitic diatribe upon his arrest in California.

Gibson, who was booked July 28 for driving under the influence of alcohol, “blurted out a barrage of anti-Semitic remarks about ‘[expletive] Jews,’” according to an apparently leaked copy of the sheriff’s department report.

The Hollywood Web site TMZ.com posted four pages of the report online. Gibson, 50, called one officer a “[expletive] Jew” and said “Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world,” according to the report.

Gibson also allegedly asked an arresting officer, “Are you a Jew?” His blood-alcohol level was .12 percent, a spokesperson for the Los Angeles County sheriff’s department told the Associated Press. The legal limit for drivers in California is .08 percent.

Jewish leaders, already upset with Gibson for cowriting and directing the 2004 film that some said unduly blamed Jews for Jesus’ death, quickly denounced the Hollywood star. “His tirade finally reveals his true self and shows that his protestations during the debate over his film, . . . that he is a tolerant, loving person, were a sham,” Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, said July 30.

In an interview with the *New York Times* in 2003, Gibson’s father, Hutton Gibson, dismissed historical accounts that 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Both Mel and Hutton Gibson belong to a traditionalist sect of Roman Catholicism that rejects the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and generally operates outside

oversight of the official church.

“It may well be that bigotry has been passed from father to son,” Foxman said. “It is unfortunate that it took an excess of booze and an encounter with a traffic cop to reveal what was really in his heart and mind.”

Gibson, in a statement July 29, said, “After drinking alcohol on Thursday night, I did a number of things that were very wrong and for which I am ashamed. I acted like a person completely out of control when I was arrested and said things that I do not believe to be true and which are despicable.”

Later, Gibson asked to meet with Jewish community leaders to “have a one-on-one discussion to discern the appropriate path for healing.” To that purpose, he also declared, “Please know from my heart that I am not an anti-Semite. . . . Hatred of any kind goes against my faith.”

An ADL spokesman said the organization accepted his apology and welcomed his efforts to repair the damage.

In the film industry, Gibson’s clout as an independent producer is considerable, but his reputation has suffered damage. “It’s incredibly disappointing that somebody of his stature would speak out that way, especially at this sensitive time,” Sony Pictures movie chair Amy Pascal told the *Los Angeles Times*, referring to the fighting in Israel and Lebanon.

Producer Jerry Weintraub, a longtime friend of Gibson’s, told the newspaper he was sad and hurt. “I really feel bad for him as a human being. I never knew this side of him.”

ABC Television, owned by Walt Disney Co., said it will not do a planned miniseries on the Holocaust with Gibson’s Icon production company but stopped short of saying Gibson’s drunken outbursts were to blame. “Given that it’s been nearly two years and we have yet to see the first draft of a script, we have decided to no longer pursue this project with Icon,” the network said.