

Bad Parenting: Using Your Child to Zing a Politician

☒ Sometimes we tend to get ticked off when we feel that one of our politicians is a poor example for our children. Whether it be due to a policy decision or the words they speak, we sometimes get so worked up that we find ourselves fantasizing how we'd like to heckle that person if ever given the opportunity. Maybe we've even taken a moment and actually rehearsed the snappy line we'd use – you know, that one that would surely be picked up by cameras and leave that politician looking like a fool in front of an audience.

A lot of us also live vicariously through our kids, whether we'd like to admit it or not. We sometimes invest too much personal emotion in the grand aspirations we have for them. This leads us to get a little unruly on the sidelines at little-league games and feel insulted when our kids don't get cast in a play.

Neither urge is particularly attractive when acted on. You either come across as a buffoon who's looking for attention, or an overbearing parent who won't let their kid be a kid. Yet, what I've seen lately on the national level are parents who have actually integrated the two. They've fed political rhetoric to their children and then poked and prodded them into delivering a stinging blow to unsuspecting politicians.

Last week, GOP candidate Michele Bachmann was at a book signing in South Carolina. When she was approached by a mother with her eight year-old son, Bachmann greeted them both. The mother told the congresswoman that her son had something he wanted to say to her. The boy was clearly nervous to speak but the mother egged him on. At one point, the boy was so uncomfortable that he lowered his head and covered his face with his hands. Bachmann, who clearly recognized the boy's

reluctance, endearingly leaned forward and pulled the child close to her ear so she could better hear him.

The boy then whispered, "My mom is gay and she doesn't need fixing."

This of course stunned Bachmann, as any political verbiage coming from a small child would, and left her speechless for a few seconds. A video of the encounter, filmed by a friend of the mother's, was posted on YouTube.

The comment was in reference to the numerous socially conservative positions the congresswoman has taken on gay rights issues, and it was clearly not concocted by the mind of an eight-year old child, despite some ridiculous claims by his mother that it was. The incident was filmed for the sole purpose of posting it on the internet for the world to see, and for the left to rejoice over. Judging by the number of views it has received, it served its purpose.

Now, I certainly have no problem with someone voicing their opposition to the congresswoman's political views. She's running to be president after all. It's important to hear from the electorate. But as someone who disagrees with some of Michele Bachmann's stances on gay rights issues myself, I am appalled that this mother was such a complete coward that she shamelessly coached and pressured her abiding son into carrying out a verbal hit-job for her, because she didn't have the guts to do it herself. Absolutely pathetic.

I find it interesting that the video of the incident was posted with the proud title, "Activist Elijah With Michele Bachmann". Apparently the new definition of *Activist* is: "An unwitting child who is used as a political prop by his mother."

Back in August at an event in New Hampshire, a similar incident happened when another mother used her son as an involuntary surrogate to confront presidential candidate Rick

Perry on his science and evolution beliefs.

Caught on video as well, the mother is seen repeatedly pushing her son close to Perry and feeding him questions to ask the Texas governor. Knowing that Perry is a believer in creationism, a mindset which she apparently finds offensive, the badgering mom was relentless: "Ask him how old he thinks the earth is!", "Ask him about evolution!", and my personal favorite, "Ask him why he doesn't believe in science!"

Ah yes, the classic half-brained assertion that someone can't be a Christian and also believe in science. That poor kid's mom must be a real gas at PTA meetings.

The mother was standing right there. Why didn't she just ask Perry those questions herself? The answer is that she feared an adult conversation what have ensued, and that was the last thing she wanted. All she wanted was to land some cheap shots on a Christian conservative, without the fear of a substantive rebuttal. After all, no one's going to take questioning to task if it comes from the mouth of an innocent child. Again, it was complete cowardice on the mother's part.

The bottom line is that politics is not a place for children. If you want to dress them up in a campaign shirt and march them in a parade, that's fine. But they need to be kept out of the dirt at all costs. They're too young to understand politics. They don't need to understand politics. And they should in no way be dragged through politics so parents can act out their soapbox fantasies.

What More Do They Want?

✘ Here's a story about a 57-year old woman, Rose Marie Belforti, who'd been the town clerk of Ledyard, NY for the past ten years. In addition to having her office open only nine hours a week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, she cleans the town hall bathrooms, is a married farmer with four grown daughters, who makes probiotic kefir cheese. She also happens to be a Christian who believes that God has condemned homosexuality as a sin. That's where the trouble begins....

As you probably know, this past summer, New York allowed homosexuals to marry and Mrs. Belforti wanted no part of her name on the marriage licenses. So, she came up with a brilliant idea. She delegated the responsibility to another deputy clerk to issue all marriage licenses by appointment.

Well, that wasn't good enough for a lesbian couple from Florida who owned property nearby who showed up in August and wanted a marriage license. They were unwilling to wait for an appointment. Remember, that this clerk's office is only open nine hours a week so, I'm guessing, everyone has to make an appointment.

So now Mrs. Belforti finds herself in the middle of a "test case" which is supposed to answer how the state balances a religious freedom claim by a local official against a civil rights claim by a same-sex couple.

Mrs. Belforti says that New York law protects her right to hold both her job and her beliefs. I have no idea if that's true. My reading of the EEOC, for example, relating to religious beliefs, doesn't apply to elected officials. If her constituents have a problem with her, they could vote her out of office. But, they didn't. Mrs. Belforti was up for re-election in November and was re-elected – 305 votes to her

opponent's 186.

The article I read in the NY Times said the lesbians are represented by a liberal organization, People for the American Way, and Mrs. Belforti is represented by the Alliance Defense Fund. I'm not sure if an actual lawsuit is pending because the NY Times article is so poorly written.

But when I read it, I said to myself, "what more do these people want?" First of all, they could've gone to any other clerk's office if they had to get married immediately – I have no idea why the marriage was so urgent in August when the law went into effect in July. My guess is they wanted to make a big deal of Mrs. Belforti's religious beliefs.

What was amazing, but not surprising, was to read about this story and the resultant comments on the Huffington Post. The level of hatred towards Mrs. Belforti was so outrageous I had to wonder why are the people who write comments on the Huffington Post so angry? Mrs. Belforti was called just about every name in the book simply because she had strong religious beliefs.

Then I wondered if an elected official somewhere, opposed to the death penalty, refused to pull the lever to the electric chair but delegated that duty to another person, would be the target of the same vitriolic attacks from the left. Would that person be called a religious zealot? Somehow I doubt it.

As a matter of fact, when Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber recently granted death row inmate Gary Haugen a reprieve from the death penalty because the governor was morally opposed to capital punishment and would not allow any executions during his term, I didn't read one comment on the Huffington Post that called him a religious zealot or any of the other vile names spewed at Mrs. Belforti. Instead, he was commended for standing up for his convictions!

As far as I'm concerned, Mrs. Belforti made a reasonable plan

to accommodate all people who wanted to marry in her small town. No one was inconvenienced. No one suffered any damages. No one's civil rights were violated.

I don't get it and, apparently, her constituents don't get it either – since they re-elected her.

What Holiday Are We Celebrating?

✘ I don't know about you, but I get really tired of hearing about the lighting of "holiday" trees. They're Christmas trees. There, I said it.

I'd like to ask all those city/county/state/federal officials who can't get themselves to say the word "Christmas" to explain to me what holiday is actually being celebrated with a decorated illuminated tree.

I wanted to figure out why some people have an aversion to calling something what it is – a Christmas tree – so I looked at my calendar to see if I missed any "holiday" in December that uses trees in its observance.

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There's, of course, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day on the 7th signifying the attack on Pearl Harbor. I found nothing that says tall green trees with lights and ornaments are used to honor our dead patriots on December 7th.

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There's the Jewish festival of Chanukah, celebrated this year from the 20th through the 28th. At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah lighting: a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so forth until all eight lights are kindled. While doing my research, I found nothing that says a tree with glass ornaments and candles was part of the Jewish celebration of Chanukah.



Ronald McKinley Everett aka Maulana Karenga, black convicted felon and professor of Africana studies, created Kwanzaa, a week long celebration held in the United States honoring universal African-American heritage and culture, observed from December 26 to January 1 each year. According to the official website, not one of the symbols of Kwanzaa is a tree with garland, tinsel and a star on the top.



Then, there's the winter solstice celebrated this year on the 22nd of December. The December solstice occurs when the sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees. In other words, it's when the North Pole is tilted 23.5 degrees away from the sun. It's celebrated worldwide and the festivities vary from culture to culture, but I didn't read anything that included decorated evergreens with angels on the top



So, now we come to December 25th – Christmas – celebrating the birth of Jesus, who is either the son of God or merely a historical figure – depending upon your belief/non-belief system. Part of the tradition of Christmas dating back to the 15th Century in Livonia and the 16th Century in Northern Germany, is the use of decorated and illuminated trees. They've been decorated with tinsel, garlands, popcorn, candy

canes, glass ornaments in all shapes and sizes and lights and usually have a star or angel on the top representing the host of angels or the Star of Bethlehem from the Nativity.

So, after reading about all the “holidays” in the month of December, I ask all those folks who light “holiday” trees, what “holiday” are you celebrating? The answer is simple. “Christmas!” So, call it what it is – it’s a Christmas tree!

I don’t get it, but if you do, God bless you.

Kids’ Villains – From Terrorists to “Big Oil” in 30 Years

✘ Being a father of young children, I’ll occasionally find myself wrangled into taking my family to the movie theater to catch one of Hollywood’s latest *family films*.

Last week, it was the new Muppets movie. I must admit that my expectations for the film weren’t all that high. Although I enjoyed the Muppet Show when I was a kid, I’ve become used to Hollywood botching nearly all attempts to resurrect successful entertainment concepts of the past. This one was no different. The plot and dialogue were lazy, and the musical numbers were hard to listen to. To cap off the unimaginative venture, the writers decided to use the *go to* villain that has sadly become a hallmark of recent children’s movies: “Big Oil”.

Yes, the Muppets’ evil nemesis was a wealthy and greedy oil tycoon whose name was... wait for it... Tex Richman. Get it? “Rich Man”. How terribly clever. Richman’s dastardly plan was to buy

the abandoned Muppet Show theater and turn it into an oil field. Actor Chris Cooper portrayed the part of this cruel CEO who takes great delight in denying Kermit and his poor friends the opportunity to save their old stomping ground.

Coincidentally, the previous children's movie my family saw in the theater together was "Cars 2", which also featured "Big Oil" as the antagonist. In that one, villain Miles Axlerod secretly sabotages race-cars that are using a new clean-burning, organic fuel. His motive? He wants to destroy public faith in *green energy* so that the world's dependence on oil increases, making him a ton of money. No, I'm not joking.

There are plenty of other examples out there as well, but you probably get my point.

Hollywood has a long history of injecting political ideology into their television shows and movies. This is nothing new. But it's particularly annoying when their target is our impressionable youth. Filmmakers often seem to take greater pride in planting ideological seeds in our kids' minds than they do in simply producing quality entertainment. They apparently see it as their public duty to shape the next generation of Americans in their own morally self-righteous mold.

Particularly noticeable is their choice of a villain: Corporate America. To Hollywood liberals, corporations are seen as obvious bad guys who threaten our society with their competitive nature and selfish motivations. Thus, there's nothing controversial or unjust in vilifying them. Never mind that it's corporations that actually finance these movies in the first place and put food on the tables of the people writing these scripts, but hypocrisy has never stood in the way of the Tinseltown elite. Even worse than generic corporations, in their eyes, are oil companies. If a corporation is the villain, an oil company is a super-villain! Not only are they wealthy and greedy, but they're also

destroying the planet!

There's a stark contrast between current-day bad guys and the ones I remember as a child. I've recently been reminded of this because my son has taken a liking to the old G.I. Joe cartoon from the early 1980s, which has been airing on an obscure cable channel over the past few months. I used to watch that same cartoon religiously nearly thirty years ago.

In G.I. Joe, the villain is a terrorist organization known as Cobra. They are determined to take over the world, while G.I. Joe fights tirelessly to stop them. The story lines celebrate American patriotism and warn of the dangers of inaction and complacency in the face of those who wish to harm the United States.

For many people these days, the show would probably come across as a politically incorrect, nostalgic relic of an era long passed. Yet, it seems to me that in a post 9/11 world, it doesn't make sense that the de facto villain in children's entertainment is a wealthy old rich guy in a suit, who's looking to increase his bottom line. Here we are, engaged in a very real conflict between Western culture and radical Islam, yet the notion of a terrorist being the villain in a kids' program or movie is unfathomable. It's not even on the radar in Hollywood, while sinister oil barons grow there on trees.

It makes one wonder why we don't see terrorists in the children's genre anymore? The instinctive answer is that terrorism is too mature of a subject for young minds. I don't buy that. Decades ago, Marvel Comics never had any qualms with creating Nazis and other white supremacists as villains for young readers. I blame it on modern day political correctness. Hollywood has been reluctant to portray Islamic terrorists as villains, even to older audiences, primarily due to their sense of moral relativity and silly concerns that they'll inspire some sort of backlash against Muslims. But when it comes to kids, they don't like to use the concept of terrorism

in *any* form.

Today's filmmakers and show creators are squeamish about drawing a hardline distinction between good and evil. They'd much rather use conflict as a vehicle for examining our own faults as human beings. Another problem here is that they don't value a sense of patriotism as a noble quality for our youth to have. Think about it for a second. When's the last time any of us have seen a children's show or movie that has incorporated patriotism for a purpose other than mockery? I certainly think there's a market for playing it straight, but it's a tough sell in liberal Hollywood where pride in America is scarce. After all, these are the same people who get bent out of shape over military recruitment tables in our high schools and colleges.

To them, kids aren't supposed to know of a villain that isn't motivated by greed. It's really that simple. And because of that, creators of kids' entertainment have grown content in relying on their own liberal instincts to define what a villain should be, rather than creating a representation of genuine evildoers like terrorists.

Now don't get me wrong... I'm not suggesting that Hollywood adopt a radically more serious tone in children's entertainment. Like most people, I enjoy light-hearted movies with comedic villains who turn over a new leaf by the end of the story. But it's frustrating as a parent that the baseline for what makes a character *bad* has been so distorted by the entertainment world. Economic inequality is not a villain. Financial success is not evil. People who attack the United States... now *they* are bad.

If Hollywood is so eager to send our children home with an ideological lesson, how about occasionally making a couple of those lessons *pride in country* and *the cost of freedom*? They might actually find an even larger audience in the process.

Pop Another Pill

☒ Look, I'm no doctor. But I've just learned of a new ailment that has to be the craziest thing that's come along in a while. I was listening to my radio when a commercial came on for a new remedy for folks suffering from, are you ready... "Shift Work Disorder." This occurs when your body's internal sleep-wake clock is out of sync with your work schedule—your body is telling you to go to sleep when your work schedule needs you to stay awake.

Just about every parent I know suffers from this "disorder." How many parents work all day, come home to a sick child and are up all night nursing that little one and turn around go right back to work?

If someone has short shifts, long shifts, or different shifts, they should be happy to have a job in this economy. And whatever shifts you're working – even if you're working double shifts – that's what you do to support your family.

Being the cynic that I am, it all sounds as if this is some made-up syndrome created in anticipation of a lawsuit against an employer or a claim for disability.

So, I spoke with my niece who is a nurse practitioner in a neonatal intensive care unit after I heard the radio ad. Before she was able to create her own 12-hour work shift, she had to accept the hospital's 3 p.m. to 3 a.m. or 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. shift in any combination during the week. And my niece, even today, does not immediately leave at the end of her shift but rather makes sure that the next shift of RNs, NPs,

residents and doctors are up to speed on all 50+ babies in her unit. Then, she goes home and takes care of her own family – three children and a husband – gets some sleep whenever she can, ready to do it all over again.

Now, she did mention there are studies that involve nurses who work the night shift being prone to being overweight and have a higher risk of cancer. She mentioned one she worked with who got a note from her doctor who said she couldn't work the night shift because she experienced headaches.

Rather than taking an aspirin or drinking a cup of coffee, the inventors of NUVIGIL would like you to take their pill. This is when my head starts spinning. Every time I hear a commercial for yet another drug, I have to say to myself, the cure is far worse than the disease.

According to its website, NUVIGIL may cause serious side effects including a serious rash or a serious allergic reaction that may affect parts of your body such as your liver or blood cells, and may result in hospitalization and be life-threatening. If you develop a skin rash, hives, sores in your mouth, blisters, swelling, peeling, or yellowing of the skin or eyes, trouble swallowing or breathing, dark urine, or fever, stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor right away or get emergency help. And someone is actually willing to risk these side effects because they're sleepy?

And then, you're supposed to stop taking NUVIGIL and call your doctor or get emergency help if you get any of the following serious side effects: mental (psychiatric) symptoms, including depression, feeling anxious, sensing things that are not really there, extreme increase in activity (mania), thoughts of suicide, aggression, or other mental problems.

And here's the kicker. Common side effects of NUVIGIL are headache, nausea, dizziness, and trouble sleeping. Are they kidding? Trouble sleeping is a side effect of a drug that's

supposed to help when you have trouble sleeping?

Like I said, I'm not a doctor but it seems like a lot of people are willing to pop a pill, looking for an easy cure for some real or imagined malady. The airwaves are filled with commercials for losing weight – take a pill, don't exercise, don't change your eating habits, and you'll still lose weight. Your penis isn't long enough, take a pill and watch it grow. And people are buying into it to the tune of billions of dollars.

I'm sure every small business owner in America has sleepless nights thinking whether they're going to meet their payroll, whether that big sale is going to come through, or whether they'll be able to pay expenses this month – after they've spent an entire day at the office dealing with the day-to-day problems.

Although we didn't know each other at the time, both my husband and I worked full-time jobs while going to law school at night for four years. We didn't get a whole lot of sleep at the time but we did what we had to do.

Maybe all this is legit. How do I know? Still sounds ridiculous to me.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.