

Morgan Freeman's New Role: Race Baiter

✘ I've always been a big fan of Morgan Freeman's acting. He's an accomplished artist whose screen portrayals of good-natured, honest, admirable characters are sometimes Hollywood masterpieces. He plays that type of character so well that he's been a bit typecast over the years. Yet, I never get tired of his strong performances of men of integrity.

When I see an actor frequently play kindred roles so gracefully and convincingly, I tend to think that I must be watching a bit of the actor himself coming out in his characters. Sure, I understand the naivety of that assumption, but I think it's probably an instinctual reaction that we've all been guilty of at one time or another.

In Freeman's case, I thought I might have actually been right.

In 2009, I watched him being interviewed by Mike Wallace. The issue of racism came up and Freeman voiced his displeasure with the idea of Black History Month. He felt it was silly and counterproductive to create a sub-category of American History based on people's skin color, and he voiced his irritation with society's habit of identifying individuals by their race. When Wallace asked him, "How are we going to get rid of racism?" Freeman pointedly answered, "We stop talking about it." I thought Freeman's point was brilliant. He'd reached a conclusion which we often don't hear from today's leaders in the black community, yet he seemed to capture the very essence of what the civil rights movement was all about: A color-blind society.

Earlier this week, however, it became clear that Freeman has since changed his mind on racism in America. He told CNN's Pierce Morgan that the election of Barack Obama has actually

made racial matters worse in our country, and he blames that on – you guessed it – The Tea Party. Freeman pointed to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell as an example. He chided the senator for publicly stating his goal of preventing President Obama from winning a second term. Freeman interpreted the meaning of McConnell's statement as, "We're going to whatever we do to get this black man, we can, we're going to do whatever we can to get this black man outta here." When Pierce Morgan surprisingly challenged Freeman on his claim that racism was the motivator as opposed to partisanship or policy-differences, Freeman bluntly replied, "It is a racist thing."

Oh what a difference two years makes.

Now, I do agree with one thing Freeman said in the CNN interview. I believe there has indeed been an uptick in racial tensions in this country since the election of Obama... But for a completely different reason.

Things are worse now because our president's skin color has routinely and shamelessly been used by his supporters as a shield to protect him from legitimate criticism. Every time I think this ridiculous media narrative of '*If you oppose Obama, you must be a racist*' has run its course, some high-profile elitist from the left throws more fuel on the fire.

I know, I know... In the grand scheme of things, Freeman's just another opinionated celebrity using the soapbox his career affords him to vent out his political frustrations. I shouldn't care what he thinks. But I must say that I'm disappointed in the man. It's not because I'm holding him to the same standards as the noble characters he portrays, but because I found his words from 2009 to be profound and encouraging. Back then, his prescription for ending racism was to abstain from seeking it out and engaging in its over-analysis. Now, he's promoting just the opposite philosophy. He's brought racism to the forefront of our political discourse by presuming it in those who disagree with our

president.

It's a sad thing to watch, but I suppose I'll always have his movies.

What Do Debates Prove?

✘ I love presidential debates. I really do. Primary debates are probably my favorites. While most people find them boring, I'm fascinated with the spectacle of a stage full of well-groomed candidates proudly promoting themselves and devaluing their opponents. The more candidates, the more entertaining. I'm impressed with participants' ability to quickly reply to tough questions with snappy, stylistic answers, and I ponder the number of pain-staking hours it must have taken to prepare those candidates to answer those questions so smoothly.

After each debate, I enjoy listening to the analysis of political pundits who weigh in on all the rhetoric, offer their opinions of who came out on top, and predict how each candidate's campaigns will proceed forward.

A couple days later, I surf on over to Real Clear Politics and check out the latest public opinion polls to see who benefited from their performance and who hurt themselves.

I suppose I'm an armchair political junkie.

Yet, there's something about these debates that really bothers me... I mean, *really* bothers me: While I'm in the minority of people who finds them entertaining, I also believe I'm in a minority of people who thinks these debates are a really bad way of determining the best candidate for the most important

office there is.

While it's important for candidates to have a platform for distinguishing themselves from opponents, voicing their ideas, and stating their records, I can't reconcile how these debates honestly determine who the best **leader** is.

If the best leader is defined by who is the most quick-witted, who is the most gifted speaker, and who looks the most presidential, then perhaps the debates do indeed serve a substantial purpose. But I fear there is a major cultural problem in our election process when we place so much importance on a candidate's presentation.

To me, the presidency and leadership in general is much more about principles and decision-making than it is about personality and delivery. There have certainly been effective leaders throughout history that capitalized greatly from their personal charisma (Ronald Reagan comes immediately to mind), but I think we're far too shallow when it comes to what we expect from our candidates these days. We reject candidates with records of achievement like Tim Pawlenty because he's dull. We give Mike Huckabee a caucus win because he starred in a charming commercial with Chuck Norris. We elect a junior senator from Illinois with no leadership experience because he talks eloquently about hope and change.

Now, I'm not naive. I understand the concept of electability. Presentation is a key component of electability. The goal is to sell yourself to the American people, and style is an easier sale than substance. I just wish we could somehow bring ourselves to distinguish between the best leader and the most attractive candidate. They're often quite different.

“Dogs”

I love dogs, but this will make you cry. Who is man's best friend? His dog of course. No truer words have been spoken. Who is glad to see you when you return from work? Your dog! Who sticks by you through thick and thin? Your dog! Who doesn't care if you're rich or poor, fat or thin, blonde, brunette, redhead, or bald? Your dog! Your dog loves you just because you're you!!! All he/she wants is your love and companionship. When everyone else has left you by the wayside, who is there with that tail wagging and eyes begging just to be with you? Your dog!

I've had many dogs in my lifetime but there are two who are still in my heart after many years since they went to their reward.

Mac was a small mixed breed terrier. He and our other dog, Cocoa, a chocolate poodle, were roomies. Actually, Mac didn't care much for Cocoa, but since Mac was our outside dog, and Cocoa was our inside dog, they didn't have to meet in the middle much, except in cold weather, when Mac would condescend to come indoors to get warm. He'd hear the furnace creak and crack before coming on and he'd go stand by the vent and stretchhhhhhhout out as long as he could to get all the warm air possible. Mostly Mac just wanted to stay outside and play with the other neighborhood dogs. Mac was a little dog, but he didn't know it, he thought he was a big dog. Whenever there was a dogfight Mac was in the middle of it, and he played with the “big boys” once too often. He went down in glory like the hero that he was fighting to his demise.

Cocoa was a miniature chocolate poodle, who was my friend and companion for thirteen years. He even slept in the bed with me, and his regular bedtime was 10:00 PM, whether I went to bed or not. He'd go back to the bedroom, and if I didn't come back after awhile, he'd come down the hall, look in the den,

and glare at me, as if to say, "Where are YOU?"

The last year of his life he became ill. As time went on, he got sicker. I was taking him to the vet every morning on my way to work, and picking him up in the afternoon on my way home. One morning when I arrived at the vet's office, the receptionist was not yet there, but the doctor was standing behind her desk. He just looked at me. I burst into tears. We went in an examining room to talk. I said, "Dr. Nall, I've been waiting for you to tell me that I need to have Cocoa put to sleep, but I realize that you never will, because if you did, and I did it, and then I was sorry, I'd blame you." He told me that he knew how much I loved Cocoa, and to go to work and think about it, and let him know that afternoon when I picked him up what my decision was. I did! When I picked Cocoa up, I told the doctor that I'd let Cocoa suffer too long, because I was selfish, and didn't want to give him up. I told him that I'd bring him in the next morning and let him put him to sleep.

That night Cocoa lay beside me on the couch all evening. His breathing would alternately be strained, heavy, and hard, and then normal. This went on throughout the evening. At exactly, 10.00 PM – his bedtime – he breathed his last breath. It was as though he was telling me, "No, YOU won't put me to sleep, I'll do it myself !"

Rest in peace Mac and Cocoa. I love you.

"Epitaph To A Dog"

Near this spot are deposited the remains of one,
Who possessed beauty without vanity,
Strength without insolence,
Courage without ferocity,
And all the virtues of man,
Without his vices.
This Praise, which would be unmeaning flattery,

If inscribed over human ashes,
Is but a just tribute to the memory of
All of our dogs.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

Cry Babies 'r Us

☒ We've become a nation of whiners and complainers and willing to sue just about anyone because we are too fat, too thin, too short, too tall. That's why we have so many labels warning us of the obvious. Can anyone tell me why they would lick a computer circuit board even if they didn't know it contained lead?

Just about every week I read about some ridiculous lawsuit being filed. Unfortunately, there are plenty of bottom-feeding lawyers who are willing to pass a hanky to some sniveling baby and agree to file a lawsuit hoping to cash in.

There are plenty of lawsuits filed by convicts who have nothing better to do with their time but make up grievances. One sued because he couldn't get Rogaine in prison. Another sued because his packages were sent via UPS and not the USPS. Another sued because he didn't like his haircut.

A doctor sued a restaurant because he wasn't told how to eat an artichoke and ended up in the hospital after he ate the outer leaves. A kookaloonie claimed that Oprah Winfrey and President Bush caused a 3-D Lucida camera to be implanted in her brain. I know that those who suffer from Bush Derangement Syndrome would believe her, but how did Oprah get in the mix? A guy just sued White Castle because he was too fat to fit in the booth.

I don't think I've read about a more ridiculous one than the \$50,000 emotional distress lawsuit filed by two grown children, now 20 and 23, against their mother for "bad mothering."

The mother divorced their father in 1995. The mother's attorney said it was all payback and an attempt by the ex-husband (a lawyer) to "seek the ultimate revenge" of having her children accuse her of "being an inadequate mother." The father said he only filed the lawsuit after much legal research and had tried to dissuade his children from bringing the case. Well, he didn't have to file the lawsuit, did he?

In my law practice, I've seen more than my share of "bad mothering." But these two losers sued their mother because, although they grew up in a \$1.5 million home in Barrington Hills, Illinois, their mother didn't buy them toys and once sent a birthday card the son didn't like. I couldn't believe it. He also complained he didn't get care packages while he attended college. I wonder who paid for this crybaby's tuition?

Telling her 7-year old son to buckle his seat belt or she would contact the police doesn't amount to bad mothering.

Calling her daughter at midnight to ask that she return home the night of homecoming doesn't amount to emotional abuse.

I remember being about 6 or 7, fighting non-stop with my brother while in the car on the Long Island Expressway, and ignoring my mother's warning that she'd put us on the side of the road if we didn't shut up. She kept her word. After failing to heed her warning, she told my father, "Bob, stop the car." He stopped the car and we were told to get out. My brother and I stood on the side of the road for about 15 minutes before my parents returned and let us back in the car. We kept our mouths shut after that.

After my mother died when I was 8, for a few years I asked my

father for some change and bought my own birthday cards. I wrote out, "Dear Leona" and "Love, Dad" and asked him to copy those words on the card. My father was too busy working and supporting me and my brother to think about this kind of stuff. It never dawned on me to sue him.

What came to mind when I read this story was the notion that a lot of people today – young and old alike – have a sense of entitlement, a belief that certain things are owed to them. I see that in personal relationships and I see it far too often in some people's expectations of government. Too many people want things now without working and saving for them and too many people think the government should give them stuff.

The idea that children are focused on material things and what they're owed as opposed to what they already have is disturbing and goes to show that they've truly lost sight of what's important. As their mother said, she loves her children but found that they wanted "the benefits afforded by a family relationship, but none of the restraints."

I'm curious to know if these two ingrates honored their mother with cards and presents for her birthday, Mother's Day, and Christmas? I'd also like to know whether these ungrateful spoiled brats have jobs or do they continue to sponge off their father.

Fortunately, an Illinois appeals court dismissed their lawsuit and I hope the judgment required them to pay their mother's attorneys' fees and court costs.

The question is what will they do when life deals them a real tragedy – and it will. Who will they sue? God?

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

Kiss Today Good-bye

It's a song from the Broadway play "A Chorus Line" entitled "What I Did for Love". When a dancer is injured, and rushed to the hospital, the question is asked, "What do you do when you can't dance anymore? And if today were the day you had to give it up, how would you feel?"

Kiss today goodbye,

The sweetness and the sorrow.

Wish me luck, the same to you.

But I can't regret

What I did for love, what I did for love.

Look my eyes are dry.

The gift was ours to borrow.

It's as if we always knew,

And I won't forget what I did for love,

What I did for love.

Gone,

Love is never gone.

As we travel on,

Love's what we'll remember.

Kiss today goodbye,

And point me t'ward tomorrow.

We did what we had to do.

Won't forget, can't regret

What I did for love.

As a country, have we kissed today good-bye? A lot of people have given a lot for our country. Some have given their lives for our country. Some have been permanently injured for our country. Some have been injured but recovered and gone back to give even more for our country. And some of us have just

done the best we could for our country, like gone to work everyday, raised our children to be good citizens, flown our flag, protected our families and homes, and yes, voted for the person who we felt would do the best job for America and the American people.

We've done a lot for love, but I think in 2008 we really kissed today good-bye when Obama was elected as President of the United States of America. We allowed a Marxist/communist to be elected to lead our country. Oh I didn't, and a lot of YOU didn't, but did we do enough collectively to prevent what's happening now? We can say we tried, but apparently it wasn't enough.

So we kissed today good-bye, but point me toward tomorrow. Tomorrow is all we have. We have to stop this trampling on The Constitution and our American principles that the present administration is destroying, the activists judges who are ignoring our morals, and those in power who refuse to secure our borders, and allow illegals to come to our country and stay without benefit of becoming citizens. Is tomorrow enough? It has to be! But if we allow Obama to be elected again in 2012, we may very well have kissed tomorrow good-bye as well.

"The gift was ours to borrow.

It's as if we always knew,
And I won't forget what I did for love"

"Mrs. Powel of Philadelphia asked Benjamin Franklin, "Well, Doctor, what have we got?"With no hesitation, Franklin replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."