

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.

Attention Mika Brzezinski: The Occupiers Aren't Homeless... They Just Smell That Way

☒ Monday, on MSNBC's Morning Joe, lefty sidekick Mika Brzezinski got pretty emotional. She was upset... I mean

really upset with comments Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich made at a recent GOP forum. In discussing the Occupy Wall Street movement, Gingrich ended a diatribe on the hypocrisy and moral falsity of the protesters by suggesting they “get a job” right after they “take a bath”.

The statement absolutely revolted Brzezinski who claimed to be “sickened” and “disgusted” by the “arrogant” and “un-self-aware” Gingrich. She tore into the former Speaker of the House for having the gall to talk down to the protesters with rhetoric that made her “skin crawl”, labeling him a hypocrite and suggesting that he’s the one who needs a bath.

Eager to affirm her outrage, she appealed to the show’s panel of fellow liberals for their thoughts. They of course, agreed.

Now, I can understand how a fierce partisan like Brzezinski would get worked up over a high-profile individual laying a knockout blow on her ideological viewpoint. However, it’s comical to listen to her speak of the Occupy Wall Street protesters as if they’re a group of helpless, neglected, and displaced individuals who have no other option in life than to sleep in parks in unsanitary conditions, and plead for others to take pity on them.

These people aren’t homeless. According to surveys done at protest sites, the majority of them aren’t even jobless. Yet, Brzezinski would have us believe that they’re some sort of protected class who shouldn’t be subjected to public condemnation on the grounds of moral decency.

The Occupy protesters are CHOOSING to stay in these dirty, sometimes disease-riddled, makeshift communities while “Help Wanted” signs are often hanging in the windows of the businesses sitting across the street from them.

They’re not above harsh criticism any more than the Tea Party movement, which commentators from Brzezinski’s own network have routinely said far, far worse things about. I don’t

recall her getting terribly emotional about any of those people's disparaging comments.

I don't doubt that Brzezinski's reaction to Gingrich's words was genuine. Unlike many of her network colleagues who shamelessly play the morality card against anyone with an opposing viewpoint, she wasn't feigning outrage. She absolutely believes what Newt said was morally repugnant... which is in itself ironic, being that she's the one accusing someone else of being "un-self-aware".

No one is discounting the hardships that have come with these tough economic times. As I pointed out in a previous column, I certainly haven't gone unscathed myself. But lets be honest here... We're talking about a collective of people who have chosen to spend both day and night seeking public attention, creating conflict, and burdening others while drenching themselves in an unsavory environment of their own creation. They could be spending their time filling out job applications and submitting resumes, but they have elected not to. Thus, they're not hapless victims worthy of unconditional sympathy from presidential candidates, as our friend Mika has chosen to believe.

Read This!!! – But Only If You Have Nothing Better To Do

☒ This is my Seinfeld column. It's about nothing.

Every now and then I can't think of anything to say. That can be a liability when you have a column to fill. Sure, I could write about the Mormon cult thing and say the Baptist minister who said Mormons aren't real Christians is an idiot. But a

good writer should never waste time stating the obvious. I could say his logic is unimpressive. Unimpressive is a nice way of saying he's an idiot, but I already said that. After all, he said he'd rather vote for a Christian than a non-Christian, then said he'd rather vote for Mitt Romney, a Mormon, than for Barack Obama, a Christian. Hello? Anybody home? I probably could write a whole column about that doofus, but honestly, I don't feel like it. Besides, you know that old saying: "Never get into an argument with an idiot. They'll bring you down to their level and beat you with experience." So I'll take a pass on arguing with the good Christian minister who has a pipeline to God.

I guess I could also write a few hundred words about the Nobel Prize winners occupying Wall Street and other cities around the country. I read a survey in New York magazine that said 34 percent of them believe the U.S. government is no better than Al Qaeda. I'm not sure if I believe that they really believe that, but one way or another I don't really care. They also think that one percent of Americans are oppressing the other 99 percent. Frankly, I'm shocked that they were able to put two percentages together that equaled 100. But I'll tell you this: all those Democrats who are supporting the protestors are asking for trouble. Their message doesn't resonate with independent voters – whom Barack Obama will need in order to win re-election – or anyone else not named Keith Olbermann.

Sometimes I wish I were as prolific a writer as my friend Burt Prelutsky, who is a regular contributor to this Web site. He's really good – smart, funny, fearless. And he writes a lot. Something always catches his eye that he (rightly) thinks is worth writing about. Not me. For a while I was thinking about "borrowing" one of Burt's columns and putting my name on it. Of course, that would be wrong. But that wasn't the reason I didn't do it. The reason I didn't do it is because Burt would have caught me and then written a smart,

funny fearless column that made me look like a thief or something.

There's another Republican debate coming up. I could have written that line anytime in the past six months. The next debate is number 796, I think. I have nothing to say about the debates but I'm not sure if it's my ignorance or my indifference that keeps me from writing about them. Honest answer: I don't know – and I don't care. (Get it?)

You know what writer's block is? I have it. Have a nice day.

An Open Letter to My True-Believing Friends

✘ Hello readers. Not all of you. Just the ones who think I'm an idiot. You know, the ones who have been writing to me saying, "Dear Bernie, You just don't get it."

I started getting these love letters after my last piece about purists vs. realists, true-believers vs. those of us who want the most viable – read that as the most electable – conservative to win.

Be assured, purists, that we, like you, would rather see Christine O'Donnell win in Delaware than one more big-spending liberal who will vote "yes" on anything President Obama sends his way. But unlike you true-believers, we understand that the kind of Republican who can win in Alabama or Mississippi or Texas or Idaho, probably isn't the kind who can win in Maine or Massachusetts or Delaware.

So listen up out there all of you who think I'm clueless (and

think the same about Karl Rove and Charles Krauthammer, while we're on the subject): We get it. We're not selling out our principles. We believe in the things most fiscal conservatives believe in. But we want to win. So we can live with a few "moderate" Republicans, if that's the price we have to pay for taking control of Congress.

We understand Jim DeMint when he says he'd rather have 30 conservatives with him in the Senate rather than 60 Republicans "who don't have a set of beliefs." Can you say "Straw Man," Senator DeMint? How about this, Senator, as a more realistic question: Would you rather have 60 Republicans, most of whom are good conservatives with a few RINOs thrown in, or would you rather have 30 rock-solid conservatives and 70 liberal Democrats?

So, my purer than the driven snow friends, enough of your righteous indignation. It's getting old. You don't have a monopoly on principle and you certainly don't have a monopoly on political smarts. Let's see what happens on November 2. I hope the voters are so fed up with the Democrats that they'll vote in every Republican on the ballot. Yes, including the more colorful ones who who say really dumb things – the kind of things that if a liberal Democrat had said them, you'd be calling him, or her, all sorts of nasty names.



Surprise!

☒ My sources at the White House tell me that President Obama and his chief of staff Rahm Emanuel had a top-secret meeting just minutes ago – and guess who just got a leaked, classified transcript of that conversation?

Correct. So, here it is:

RE: Mr. President, I have an idea about how we can kick some GOP you-know-what in November.

Pres: I'm all ears.

RE: That's funny, Mr. President.

Pres: What do you mean?

RE: Your ears, sir. They're giganto. And you said, I'm all ears. Get it, Mr. President?

Pres: No.

RE: Okay. Here's my idea, sir. Just two words ...

Pres: Whoa! This is the Oval Office Rahmbo. No F bombs allowed around here.

RE: F bombs? Me, Mr. President?

Pres: R-Man. You think "mother" is half a word. So be careful.

RE: Yes sir. Okay, the two words are, October Surprise.

Pres: I love surprises. Who's birthday is it?

RE: Mr. President, are you channeling President Bush?

Pres: If I am, it's his fault. EVERYTHING is his fault.

RE: Okay, Mr. President, October Surprise is when a politician – and I know you're not THAT, you're a Saint – it's when we pull off some last-minute stunt to yank victory from the jaws of defeat.

Pres: I like that. I mean the Saint part.

RE: Right. So here's how it goes: In mid-October, just two

weeks before the elections, you go on national television and announce that you're extending the Bush tax cuts for everybody – even – ready for this? – even for RICH people.

Pres: And why would I want to do that, Rahmalama-ding-dong?

RE: Because the stock market will go up a thousand points – in ten minutes! The morons out there in lamestream media who worship at your feet will tell those dopey independents – you know, Mr. President – those doofuses who don't know shi ... sorry ... don't know jack about politics, that everything is okay with the economy and we'll kick those Republicans where it hurts.

Pres: No can do, Rahm-0.

RE: Why not, Mr. President?

Pres: Well, Rain Man, it's a matter of theology.

RE: Excuse me, sir?

Pres: Theology, you know religion. You Jews believe in religion, don't you?

RE: Yes. Mr. President, but I still don't understand.

Pres: It's against my religion to NOT raise taxes on the rich. That's how I roll, Rahm. As I say, it's a matter of theology. It's what I believe in.

RE: But Mr. President, we'll get killed in November.

Pres: No we won't Dead Fish. I went on The View today. Did you see me?

RE: Mr. President, I was SW000000NING!

Pres: Exactamundo. EVERYBODY was swooning, Manny. For a second I thought Joy Behar was going to commit a sex act on my person, right there on the couch. You don't get it, R Man.

I'm Barack Obama. They love me out there. They will do whatever I tell them to do. I am their ... Messiah. You believe in the Messiah, Rahmowitz?

RE: But Mr. President, the polls don't agree. They say you're not as popular as you think.

Pres: The Poles can kiss my ass. You ever been to Warsaw. It ain't happening. I tried to get a cinnamon machiado vente there once and I couldn't even find a Starbucks. Screw the Poles.

RE: So no October Surprise, sir?

Pres: Hang on, Rahmstein. I got a plan. We raise taxes, the economy tanks, we throw the Democrats under the bus in November, just like I did with my BFF Rev Wright and my grandmother. Then when the Republicans take over, we blame it all on Bush. The people hate that guy. And we win in '12 in a breeze.

RE: But if we lose in November Hillary will run against you in two years.

Pres: I'll cross that bitch when I get to it. I mean BRIDGE.

RE: Anything you say, sir.