

# **“I Am A Little Sister of the Poor” and “Hollywood’s Fountain of Youth”**

In one of the few Hollywood epics that wasn’t entirely wretched, there was a stirring moment in “Spartacus” when the Roman general stands before the slaves huddled on the ground and demands that Spartacus, the leader of the revolt, stand and identify himself. As Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) begins to get up in order that his fellow prisoners not be tortured on his behalf, the others rise, each of them insisting “I am Spartacus.”

I think that when Obama and his thugs demand that an order of nuns or anyone else who holds sincere religious beliefs caves to the power of the state, it behooves us to stand and declare, whatever our religion or gender, that we are all Sisters of the Poor.

Judas betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver. This administration would have Christians betray their convictions for a handful of birth control pills and publically-funded abortions.

The world has never lacked for those who identified with Pontius Pilate, but it is a rare occurrence in America. In the past, even our worst presidents were only lousy in the way that politicians usually are. That is to say, they tended to yield to greed and lust more than they should have, but until Obama came along, they didn’t remind most people of those tinhorn rulers of banana republics.

Obama lies more than any person I’ve ever known, in or out of the White House. He divides people along racial, religious and economic, lines for solely partisan reasons. And while he constantly whines about income inequality, carrying on as if

Karl Marx was his personal speechwriter, he spends millions of our tax dollars on family vacations and is never happier than when he's addressing his supporters at \$35,000-a-seat fundraisers.

Speaking of Obama, it galls me that when an ex-president dies, no matter how shabby his administration may have been, the flags fly at half-mast as if we're all supposed to mourn his demise. But when a great composer, medical researcher or inventor passes, he or she is lucky to muster a couple of paragraphs on the obituary page.

The reason that I and many others believe that the president should come from the ranks of governors and not be a member of Congress is because the job calls for executive experience. The three branches of government, after all, are the executive, the judicial and the legislative. Being the president means being the chief executive of the 315,000,000 member corporation known as the United States of America.

But I wager there isn't another boardroom in the nation that has so many incompetent nincompoops seated around the table. Obama, Biden, Kerry, Hagel, Holder and Sebelius, are people who have never worked a day anywhere but a law office, a college campus or Congress. Ivory towers don't prepare anyone to do anything but go through life confusing theory with reality.

Here in California, the State Supreme Court recently granted an illegal alien the right to practice law. At first I was outraged. Are these people insane? Then it occurred to me that of course they're insane, but if these nitwits are entitled to practice law, why the heck shouldn't Sergio Garcia?

After all, we have justices sitting on the U.S. Supreme Court today who have announced that they wouldn't advise emerging nations to adopt our Constitution as their own. For that matter, Barack Obama has gone on record saying that the major

flaw in our Constitution is that it doesn't deal with the redistribution of wealth. Is it any wonder then that in spite of swearing his allegiance to the sacred document, he ignores what it says with unseemly regularity – things like states' rights and the separation of powers – any damn time he feels like it?

My only problem with the Constitution is that it prevents the foreign-born from aspiring to the presidency. When fewer and fewer Americans seem to appreciate the fact they were lucky enough to be born here, it's far likelier that someone who came here from Cuba, China or one of the countries formerly under the Soviet boot, would more closely resemble the Gipper than the Gypper.

Finally, after watching TV weather reporters spend the last 60 years bundled up in the middle of storms and tsunamis, I have to ask: Why? If I had the job, I'd sit by a window, though not too close, sipping on a cup of cocoa, watching cows and trees flying by, and say, "Boy, I'm sure glad I'm not out there. That's some stinky weather."

### **"Hollywood's Fountain of Youth"**

I've never made a secret of the fact that I liked the films of the 30s and 40s much more than the stuff being churned out today. I actually reviewed movies, first at UCLA and then for Los Angeles magazine, from 1959 to 1971. Even then, I was hard-pressed to come up with even half a dozen movies a year I could in good conscience recommend. Half of the movies I squirmed through were very dumb comedies starring either Jerry Lewis or Peter Sellers. Many of the others were designed as tributes to the beatnik generation, directed by young no-talents straining to appear cool. Those are definitely years I wish I could get back.

One of the things I enjoyed the most about the old movies was

that even the lesser efforts often included character actors and actresses it was a delight to watch. The ones who come quickly to mind include Claude Rains, Charles Coburn, Fay Bainter, Beulah Bondi, William Demarest, Eugene Pallette, Franklin Pangborn, Helen Broderick, Edmund Gwenn, Cedric Hardwicke, Charles Bickford, Ethel and Lionel Barrymore, Oscar Homolka, Clifton Webb, Eve Arden, Raymond Walburn, Thelma Ritter, William Bendix, Frank Morgan, James Gleason, Edward Arnold, Spring Byington, Sydney Greenstreet, Thomas Mitchell, Peter Lorre, Basil Rathbone, Al Bridge, Harry Davenport, Una Merkel, Gene Lockhart and Felix Bressart.

Another important way the earlier movies differed from the modern product was that it was only the exceptions that ran over two hours; today, the exceptions are those that don't.

An even greater distinction is that male movie stars seemed like adults. I realize that at the age I first saw their movies, I was very young and even people in their twenties seemed quite grown up. But I have seen a lot of these movies again in my 60s and 70s and guys like John Wayne, Clark Gable, Cary Grant, Gregory Peck, Jimmy Stewart, Spencer Tracy, Alan Ladd, Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Cagney, Joel McCrea, Eddie G. Robinson, John Garfield, Fred Astaire, Burt Lancaster and William Powell, still seem all grown up.

That's not to say there weren't children and ingénues on screen back then. The likes of Margaret O'Brien, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Butch Jenkins, Jane Powell, Deanna Durbin, Dean Stockwell, Bonita Granville, Roddy McDowell, Natalie Wood, Freddie Bartholomew and young Elizabeth Taylor, were all making their mark, but it was understood by all that they were children.

Today, male leads all seem to have extended their adolescence by two or three decades. Matt Damon, Will Ferrell, David Spade and Adam Sandler, are all well up in their 40s. Brad Pitt and Johnny Depp are both 50. Tom Cruise and Jim Carrey are both

51. Even Leonardo DiCaprio is 39. Do any of them strike you as having hair on their chests? Half of them don't even look like they have to shave. Would any of them be convincing if they were cast as the father of, say, a teenager, even though in real life most of them are old enough to be the fathers of 25-year-olds and the grandfathers of young children? The truth is John Wayne would have had them all for lunch and burped up Johnny Depp before dinner.

All things considered, I suppose it makes sense that we have a president who also seems to be the result of bad casting. It's a job, after all, that calls for someone wise and mature, someone seasoned by the vagaries of life; instead we have a typical teenager whose name, considering the way he loves to skip up stairs to planes and podiums, should be Skippy. Like most other 15-year-olds, he's egocentric, narcissistic and unbelievably lazy. He's never happier than when he's putting off till tomorrow what he hopes someone else will do for him today.

Until Obama's South African sign language interpreter, Thamsanqa Jantjie, confessed that he suffers from schizophrenia and often experiences hallucinations, I naturally assumed that as usual Obama was solely responsible for the gibberish.

Perhaps Obama should have employed Mr. Jantjie to constantly assure us that, if we liked them, we could keep our doctors and health insurance. That way, he could blame the guy's fingers for lying to us over these past four years.

Finally, as Don Imus said, "Nelson Mandela is a leader that Barack Obama should try to emulate. He could start by spending 27 years in prison."

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