

# The Admirable Loyalty of Robert Downey Jr.



The other day, I was listening to the radio when I heard an announcer bring up the topic of a new “Iron Man” movie. Being that Iron Man was my absolute favorite superhero when I was a kid (I had at least 50 Iron Man comic books in my collection), along with the fact that I enjoyed the first three movies, I turned up the volume.

The announcer said that actor Robert Downey Jr. declared, in a recent interview, that he would only agree to star in another sequel to the popular film franchise if his friend, Mel Gibson, was allowed to direct it. I was intrigued by the premise, but what really got my attention was the announcer’s immediate, personal commentary on the story. It went something like this:

“Well if that’s the condition, screw it! Screw Mel Gibson! I hope he never works again!”

The announcer sounded legitimately angry, which struck me as a little weird. Then again, I suppose it reflected how a lot of people probably still feel about the troubled actor-director.

As you might recall, Gibson’s personal struggles became a huge news story back in 2006 when, after being arrested for a DUI in Malibu, California, he shouted sexist and anti-Semitic remarks at the arresting officers. Entertainment news obsessed over the incident, and Gibson was soon dropped by his talent agency. Hollywood imposed an unofficial blacklist on him which is still in place today. The result has been producers

refusing to fund his projects and directors refusing to consider him for quality acting roles.

Over the years, Robert Downey Jr. (a man who has had his own, well-documented history of struggling with personal demons) has publicly pleaded with Hollywood to give Gibson the same second-chance that they gave him. His loyalty to Gibson reportedly goes back many years, when Gibson took Downey under his wing and found him acting work at a time when a stint in prison and lingering substance-abuse questions made Downey virtually un-hireable.

Downey's remarks regarding Iron Man 4 were just the latest example of that loyalty. It should be noted that Downey is by no means holding the movie franchise hostage to land a job for his friend. He long ago made it clear to Marvel Productions (who are desperate to make another sequel) that he's not interested in doing another Iron Man film. It wasn't until the aforementioned interview, when the interviewer pitched the idea of Gibson in the director's seat, did Downey acknowledge that such a scenario would compel him to change his mind.

It won't happen though. Even though Gibson served the sentence for his crime, apologized profusely for his remarks, and has gotten himself clean, Hollywood has made it clear that they're quite content with treating him as an outcast until the end of time; this should at least make that radio announcer happy.

Normally, entertainment news doesn't interest me all that much. However, as someone who often feels compelled to write about blatant double-standards when I see them, the story of Mel Gibson strikes me as possibly the biggest double-standard I've ever seen in the entertainment world.

While no one would condone driving drunk and making bigoted remarks, Hollywood has forgiven far, far worse. We're talking about the same industry, after all, that has long supported director Roman Polanski, a man guilty of raping a 13 year-old

girl, and later fleeing the country to avoid going the prison for that crime.

In an industry overflowing with anti-Israel sentiment, and a long history of giving second chances to individuals who have suffered from substance abuse problems, it seems hypocritical that Gibson has been singled out.

Angry, vulgarity-laced tantrums and the degradation of others certainly aren't career-killers in Hollywood. Guys like Russell Crowe, Christian Bale, Alec Baldwin, and Sean Penn are proof of that. In 2008 and 2010, Charlie Sheen was even caught angrily blurting out the 'n' word in reference to African Americans, yet producers ignored it and continued to pay him close to \$1.8 million per episode to star in "Two and a Half Men." Sheen's peers were silent over the incidents as well.

In 2010, objections from the cast and crew of *The Hangover: Part II* successfully prevented Mel Gibson from having a small part in the film. Yet, the cast and crew voiced no such objections to letting convicted rapist Mike Tyson appear on camera in both the first and second *Hangover* movies.

What makes Gibson different than all the rest? I'm pretty sure I know the answer, and it has something to do with him being an unapologetic, Christian conservative who had the gall to create a purist, biblical film called "The Passion of the Christ" ten years ago. It was a project that the largely secular and progressive world of Hollywood wasn't ready for, and outright belittled. Every major production company that Gibson pitched the film to rejected it, despite Gibson having long proven himself as a reliable commodity at the box office. When Gibson went it alone, and the film went on to become one of the highest grossing movies ever, Hollywood held Gibson in great contempt. The result was him losing the industry's get-out-of-jail-free pass to screw up.

That's all the more reason why I've come to admire Robert

Downey Jr. After defying the odds and clawing his way to the top of his profession (in an industry than can pull the carpet out from under someone in a heartbeat), he's putting his own top-tier position in Hollywood on the line by sticking by his friend. Loyalty is an extremely valuable character trait, and if it eventually leads to one man being given a second chance to redeem himself and contribute again to the art he loves, I think that's a very good thing.

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## **“Life In These United States” and “A Disaster of Biblical Proportions”**

Barack Obama says more dumb things in a day than some people say in a lifetime. For instance, regarding the shutdown, he said: “The House Republicans are holding the government hostage.” I know that Obama isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer and that he has only a passing relationship with the Constitution, but someone should tell him that the House is a part of the government, no matter how he feels about it. So, were we to take him at his word – always a bad idea! – the House Republicans would be guilty of holding themselves hostage.

One always hears that the president, whoever he may be, commands the bully pulpit, but only under Obama has it been changed into something that could better be called the bully's pulpit.

I, for one, am getting sick and tired of hearing Obama constantly going on about the needy. In Obama's case, he is forever referring to them when he's pushing the Affordable

Care Act. For three years, he's been telling us one whopper after another about this god-awful piece of legislation cobbled together by Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi (think Dr. Frankenstein and his assistant, Igor).

He told us that if we liked our doctor and our health insurance, we could hang on to both. He also told us that ObamaCare would not only insure an additional 30 million people, but it would save the average family \$2,500. Not even Bernie Madoff would have ever expected anyone to swallow a lie that big. But, as they proved last November, most American voters have very large gullets and no more brains than a herd of sheep.

It is true that the cost of health care will go down for some because of government subsidies. But those subsidies don't come out of Obama's pocket, they come out of yours if you pay taxes. So not only will you be paying more for your own health care, but you will be paying for millions of people who will show their appreciation for your generosity by continuing to elect Democrats who will continue to bribe them with your money. What a deal!

The sorry truth of the matter is that most of the neediest people in America are actually the greediest. Just the other day, I was standing in line with my wife at a fast food joint. The two guys in front of us, both of whom wore their pants below their butts, kept comparing wads of twenty dollar bills. I could only assume they made the money mowing lawns. However, when they bought their burgers, they used one of their food stamp credit cards.

The next day, I was at the drug store buying batteries. Again, I had a young fool ahead of me using one of those cards to pay for his purchases. The sad fact, though, is that he had a bigger fool standing behind him than I had standing in front of me. After all, I had helped pay his tab, he hadn't paid mine.

Obama is now trying to pressure the Supreme Court to put a limit on what people can contribute to political candidates. He spoke of the democratic ideal being tainted by wealthy radical elements. Funny how that didn't seem to bother him when he still had elections to win. Can we all say George Soros? You can't get much wealthier or more radical than that old Hungarian commie who learned all about the redistribution of wealth when he helped the Nazis confiscate Jewish property in Budapest.

I have to fess up to a mistake I've made more than once. For the past year, I've been ruing the fact that Mitt Romney received fewer votes in 2012 than John McCain did in 2008. I must have seen numbers prior to the final tabulation. In any case, I don't like to spread a falsehood if I can help it. While it's true that Obama's own numbers dropped about 3.5 million between 2008 and 2012, Romney did garner roughly a million more votes than McCain.

That reminds me, people, especially Republicans, keep wringing their hands and telling us that we might as well disband as a party because young people, single women, blacks, Jews, Hispanics, Asians and the mass media, all despise the GOP. And although I am not well-suited to play Pollyanna, the fact remains that Obama did lose those 3.5 million votes in his second election, something no two-termer had ever done in the past. In addition, whereas in 2009, the Democrats had super majorities in the House and the Senate, four years later they have five fewer Senate seats, have lost control of the House, and, what's more, the lion's share of governors are now Republicans. If anyone should be hitting the panic button, it's the Democrats. And whether or not, they ever get the glitches out of those damn computers, ObamaCare is shaping up to be the disaster the Republicans all said it would be when Obama jammed it through Congress without a single Republican vote.

In case you hadn't heard, Carrick High School in Pittsburgh

decided to have a Trayvon Martin theme day as part of school spirit week. Some parents were upset when they got the news that their kids were being encouraged to wear hoodies on Trayvon Martin Wednesday. I'm assuming they will be even angrier when they hear the kids will be encouraged to sell drugs and steal from each other's lockers on Trayvon Martin Thursday and Friday.

In other news, future Hall of Famer Chipper Jones, who played his entire 20-year career for the Atlanta Braves, was invited to toss out the first ball of the National League Division Series. But because he had committed the mortal sin of predicting that the L.A. Dodgers would take the best of five game series in four games, none of the Atlanta players, including his former teammates, would volunteer to catch the pitch. As a result, Jones was forced to pitch to the team's mascot, a cartoonish character with a humongous head shaped like a baseball. The kicker is that the Dodgers won the series in four games. Perhaps Atlanta should have had the mascot suit up in place of one of their overpaid punks.

Finally, wrapping up the news of the day, a prosecutor in Houston filed aggravated rape charges against a 10-year-old girl who had been spotted by a neighbor touching a four-year-old boy in what they're referring to as "his private area." In other words, it's now a felony to play doctor.

I'm no lawyer, but it seems to me that the charge should have been practicing medicine without a license.

### **A Disaster of Biblical Proportions**

Over the past couple of years, I made a couple of prophecies. The first was that in spite of Obama's threats, Bashar al-Assad would remain in power longer than Obama would. The second was that although America could probably survive another four years of Obama, I doubted if the nation could survive an electorate that would re-elect him. Nothing I've

seen in the intervening months since last November has caused me to change my mind.

Apparently, according to polls, even if the Republican House agrees to fund everything but ObamaCare and Obama then shuts down the government in a fit of pique, the majority of voters will hold the Republicans responsible if their Social Security checks are a week late. I mean, just how dumb are we as a nation?

Everyone, including the Catholic Church, labor unions and business owners and their employees, hate ObamaCare, but the voters are ready to punish the GOP in the 2014 elections if they try to kill the damn thing.

I used to just suspect that people got the leaders they deserve. Now I know it for a fact.

Even the United Nations, which helped Al Gore create the hoax known as global warming, has finally come around to admitting that the earth is not heating up. But that's not going to change anything at this late date. For liberal politicians, there's simply too much money and power up for grabs by maintaining the farce. For corrupt scientists, there are simply too many grants and department chairmanships up for grabs by pretending that anything other than the sun determines temperatures on earth.

Hell, if the various hucksters could see a way to bamboozle the rest of us, they would dig up the Piltdown Man and once again display him as the Missing Link. He, too, it should be remembered was "settled science" for about 40 years.

One thing you have to say about Pope Francis is that he knows how to grab headlines. In his latest attempt to steal attention away from Lindsay Lohan and Miley Cyrus, he announced that the Church should stop "obsessing about gay marriages, abortions and contraception." Instead, he wants to focus on social issues. Funny but I thought those were social



issues. But apparently His Holiness has a lot in common with Obama, otherwise known as His Schmolinness, and seems to think his divine mission is to oversee the redistribution of wealth.

The more I hear from Pope Francis, the more certain I am that I've stumbled across Hillary's running mate in 2016.

Aaron Alexis, who murdered a dozen innocent people at the Navy Yard, claimed in the weeks before the massacre that he was hearing voices giving him orders. He was pretty sure the voices were coming out of his microwave. It made me wonder if that could help explain Obama's bizarre behavior. But in his case, I suspect the voice he hears is that of George Soros, who merely looks like a microwave.

I find that I am already sorry that the mayor's race in New York City didn't go the way I was hoping. For 12 years, Michael Bloomberg provided the rest of the country with one laugh after another. I am convinced the laughs would never have stopped if only New Yorkers had seen their way clear to electing Anthony ("I'll show you mine if you let me show you mine") Weiner.

Instead, we have to rely on Obama to keep us chuckling. But the way the media protects this cluck, we're not only being deprived of our laughs, but of a few straight answers. For instance, why is it that nobody has asked him why, if Assad's use of poison gas on a thousand Syrians was a sin of biblical proportions, how it was that when George Bush attacked Saddam Hussein, who had used the same stuff to kill tens of thousands of Iranians and Iraqi Kurds, he deserved to be impeached and tried as a war criminal?

Question: What do Mel Gibson, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, Kenneth Branagh, Richard Chamberlain, Ian McKellen, Kevin Kline, John Gielgud, John Barrymore, Edwin Booth and Barack Obama, have in common? Answer: They have all portrayed Hamlet. But none have equaled Obama's mastery of the role. The

others, after all, merely had to memorize the lines and repeat them for a few hours. But as we've all seen, with his talk about red lines and his threats about the inevitable consequences, followed by his calls for congressional support, followed by his plea for the United Nations to do something, anything or nothing, he has made the role his own. This schmuck doesn't need to parrot Shakespeare's lines; he is Hamlet.

For those who'd say he's not a convincing Danish prince, not a manly and commanding presence like Gibson, Burton and Barrymore, I'd hasten to remind them that at times the role has been performed by the likes of Sarah Bernhardt and Judith Anderson.

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## Which Offenses Are Forgivable in Hollywood?

☒ I miss Mel Gibson. Well, I miss his work in the movies, anyway. Though I thoroughly enjoyed the action heroes he portrayed early in his career, like Mad Max and *Lethal Weapon's* Martin Riggs, I'm particularly fond of his work as a director. *Braveheart* and *Apocalypto* are two of my favorite films, and *The Passion of the Christ* was a groundbreaking, gutsy movie on several fronts.

But as we all know, Gibson was involved in some self-destructive behavior a few years ago. In addition to substance abuse problems, he was caught on tape making sexist, anti-Semitic, and later racist remarks that pretty much derailed his career. His talent agency dropped him, he's been

thoroughly shunned by his peers, and he's been unable to find investors for his projects. He's largely become a ghost in Hollywood, turning up only in a couple of obscure, wince-worthy acting roles since then.

The film industry's banishment of Mel Gibson has been so crippling that longtime friend, Robert Downey Jr., felt compelled to speak out about it at the 25th American Cinematheque Awards, back in late 2011. Downey pled with his peers to forgive Gibson of his "trespasses," and let him back into their good graces so he can continue to contribute to their "collective art" without shame.

Little has happened in response. Mel is still on the outs, and it looks like he's going to stay right there.

It makes you wonder exactly which offenses *are* forgivable to the Hollywood elite.

As Robert Downey Jr. himself has demonstrated, substance abuse is indeed forgivable. He's had a longer history of drug and alcohol issues than just about anyone in the industry, and that's really saying something! Yet, after every stint in jail or rehab, he was always welcomed back to Hollywood with open arms.

We've seen with director Roman Polanski that the act of rape is *definitely* forgivable. How many big names in the industry have regularly called for his legal pardon over the years? In 2010, objections from the cast and crew of *The Hangover: Part II* successfully prevented Mel Gibson from having a small part in the film. Yet, the cast and crew voiced no such objections to letting convicted rapist Mike Tyson appear on camera. So yeah... rape certainly isn't a dis-qualifier in Hollywood.

Hanging out with oppressive dictators and leaders of terror states, like Sean Penn and Danny Glover like to do on occasion, certainly isn't frowned upon. In fact, it's outright admired by many in Hollywood.

Cheating on your spouse, being a sexist, or being a terrible parent to your kids? Definitely forgivable... and need I really provide examples of this in Hollywood?

Angry, vulgarity-laced tantrums that degrade others? Nah. Russell Crowe and Christian Bale are still on top of their games in Hollywood. In the case of Alec Baldwin, even a vicious rant directed at his 11-year-old daughter didn't sink him.

How about spewing out hateful, homophobic comments? Hollywood's big on gay rights, after all. Well, as Alec Baldwin (again) has recently proven, they're pretty forgiving of that as well. It's somewhat surreal to turn on the television and listen to his peers rationalize the things he said, simply because he supports gay marriage.

Racist rants can't possibly be forgiven, can they? Just look at *Seinfeld's* Michael Richards. The racist rhetoric he threw around at a comedy club a few years back effectively ended his career. Or did it? Am I the only one who remembers that his career was dead long before that incident ever took place? And if Hollywood shuns those who throw around racial epithets, why didn't it turn its back on Charlie Sheen back in 2008 and again in 2010 when he was caught blurting out the 'n' word during angry tirades? Sheen continued to hold a successful Hollywood job throughout that time, and really didn't take any heat from his peers. Only when he physically stopped showing up to work on the set of *Two And a Half Men* in 2011 did his career take a hit.


Obviously then, the anti-Semitic remarks that Gibson made had to be the clincher. The line that one simply can't cross in Hollywood must be religious bigotry. Right? Wrong. You can write an entire book on the religious bigotry that comes out of Hollywood. Usually it's directed at Christians, but it also comes at the expense of the Jews. After all, no one turned their back on Oliver Stone after he talked about the "Jewish

domination of the media” in 2010, or Seth MacFarlane after he made some off-color jokes about Jews at last year’s Oscars. Sure, MacFarlane took a little heat initially, but that’s long been forgiven and forgotten.

So why hasn’t Hollywood – a town that clearly seems ready to forgive and forget just about *any* offense – opened their doors back up to a proven talent and a proven commodity like Mel Gibson?

I would contend that it’s because of the one unforgivable violation in Hollywood that I failed to mention: Being an unapologetic, Christian conservative in a land full of social liberals.

Now don’t get me wrong... I think Gibson did and said some pretty bad things, and I’m certainly not making excuses for any of them. I honestly wouldn’t blame an industry for wanting to wash their hands of him. But this is Hollywood – the land of “anything goes.” They love a good *comeback* story more than just about anyone... Just not in the case of a Christian conservative.

If you’re a Christian conservative – especially one who had the gall to create an ultra-successful, biblical film  actually based on the Bible, there is no redemption in Hollywood. If you fall from grace, they’ll make sure there won’t be a resurrection. You just don’t receive the same *get-out-of-jail-free* card to screw up, like the ones that liberals in Tinseltown freely grant to each other.

Conservatives have long had a hard time navigating through the thick, liberal bubble that tightly encases the entertainment industry. That bubble of intolerance has damaged a number of careers, and it’s forced a lot of talented people to keep their opinions and beliefs under wraps.

In the end, even though he’s undoubtedly a man with deep flaws, Gibson’s greatest sin might just be that he isn’t a

liberal. Because if he were a liberal (and an outspoken one at that), does anyone truly believe he wouldn't be receiving lifetime achievement awards right about now?