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.