

# Tom Hanks, History Guy

The first of my history books, "Killing Lincoln," was made into a movie with Tom Hanks doing the narration. He did a nice job weaving in the facts.

As one of the Executive Producers of the film, I signed off on Mr. Hanks but never actually met him during production.

Over the years, the liberal actor has taken a few verbal shots at me but so did many in Hollywood. One actress actually told a reporter she thought I would come after her with a shotgun.

Then, at an event honoring legendary Beach Boy Mike Love, I saw Mr. Hanks and approached him to explore his beef. Dennis Miller is fast friends with Hanks and told me he's a good guy. So I went in neutral.

We chatted for a few minutes and he told me there was no animus. I suggested if he ever does a "Bosom Buddies" reunion, I want a cameo. Great show.

Anyway, I follow Tom's career but did not go to the recent Mr. Rogers flick. Not for me. However, when Mr. Hanks recently weighed in on some serious history, I became engaged.

Writing in the New York Times, Tom put forth that America basically whitewashes atrocities against minorities. He points to the Tulsa massacre of blacks one hundred years ago. "My experience was common: History was mostly written by white people for white people, like me, while the history of black people – including Tulsa- was too often left out. Until relatively recently, the entertainment industry, which helps shape what is history and what is forgotten, did the same."

To jar Mr. Hanks' memory, I will point to the very powerful films "In the Heat of the Night" and "Mississippi Burning." Both were big hits and made deep impressions.

Heat was released in 1967 and won the Best Picture Oscar. It was a vivid portrayal of southern racism that made Sidney Poitier a superstar.

“Mississippi Burning” was nominated for Best Picture in 1988 but lost to “A Man for All Seasons.” The film accurately depicted the brutal struggle for Civil Rights.”

To me, writing history is not a racial issue. I wrote “Killing Crazy Horse” to chronicle what really happened in the forging of America. In the book, facts matter – my skin color doesn’t.

Tom Hanks goes on to ask: “Should our schools now teach the truth about Tulsa? Yes, and they should also stop the battle to whitewash curriculums to avoid discomfort for students. America’s history is messy but knowing that makes us a wiser and stronger people.”

I agree. But perspective needs to be part of the curriculum as well. Tulsa, Oklahoma is not the same place it was one hundred years ago. Past atrocities need to be reported but not assigned a modern permanence.

And that is exactly what the progressive left is doing. It uses historical wrongs to demonize and diminish the United States.

A shrewd guy like Tom Hanks has to know this. He has to understand that many schools now batter students of all colors with “historical injustice.”

America is a noble country. Its blood and treasure have kept billions of people free all over the world. That should not obscure the bad things that have happened throughout our history. But to allow the negative to become the dominant historical narrative – is desperately wrong.

And that’s the lesson the kids should be learning.