

WHY JEWISH GROUPS PASSIONATELY HATE MEL GIBSON

By Rabbi Daniel Lapin

Surely it is now time to analyze the vitriolic loathing demonstrated by various Jewish groups and their leaders toward Mel Gibson over the past six months. This analysis might help forestall some similar ill-conceived and ill-fated future misadventure on the part of self-anointed Jewish leadership. At the very least it might advance human understanding of destructive group pathologies.

As the whole world knows by now, Mel Gibson, his movie, his father, his church and anything else even remotely associated with Mr. Gibson have been smeared as anti-Semitic. From the immoderate assaults, you might have thought that the target was a thug with a lengthy rap sheet for murdering Jews while yelling "Heil Hitler." From the intensity of the rhetoric you would have thought that from his youth, Gibson had been hurling bricks through synagogue windows. Yet until "The Passion," he was a highly regarded and successful entertainer who went about his business largely ignored by the Jewish community, so why now do they hate him so?

Even assuming for the moment that Jewish organizations had a legitimate beef with "The Passion," which assumption I have refuted in earlier columns, they should have hated the movie rather than its creator. After all, Judaism originated the calming idea of hating the sin rather than the sinner. Yet from the pages of the *New York Times* to Jewish organizational press releases and from rabbinic rantings to synagogue sermons the personal hatred for Mel has been palpable.

The key insight, vital to understanding their hatred, is this: just because an organization has either the word "Jewish" or

else some Hebrew word in its title does not mean that its guiding principles emanate from the document that has been the constitution of the Jewish people for 3,500 years—the Torah. Every organization has a set of guiding principles which defines its purpose and unifies its membership. However the guiding principles are often not what they appear to be. This departure from founding principles is not unique to Jewish organizations but is found throughout our culture. For instance, almost none of the eighteen hundred chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) supported the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court in spite of the undeniable fact that Justice Thomas was, and remains a “colored person.”

Were the NAACP truly to be guided by the principle of advancing the interests of colored people, it would always do so even if it occasionally disagreed with the positions of the colored people it supported. For instance, back in 2000, when the NAACP filed an Amicus brief on behalf of convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal, it surely was not endorsing the killing of law enforcement officers as a form of political expression. The NAACP was simply doing what it claims it was formed to do, support people of color. In reality of course, as their failure to defend Clarence Thomas reveals, the causes adopted by the NAACP share something far more profound than the skin color of their protagonists. They share a uniform commitment to the doctrines of secularism. In non-political terms one could say that the NAACP seems to be guided by the principles of secular fundamentalism. Secular fundamentalism is the belief system which buttresses the creed of political and economic liberalism just as the Biblically-based beliefs of Judaism and Christianity buttress the creed of political and economic conservatism. It was its adherence to the guiding principles of secular fundamentalism which compelled the NAACP to obstruct the rise to greatness of a religious conservative, even if he did happen to be a colored person.

Again, almost nobody in NOW, the National Organization of Women, supported radio personality Laura Schlessinger while her media career was being destroyed by homosexual activists. Now Schlessinger is undeniably a woman, so clearly NOW's guiding principles are not to support all women but to support only certain women. Had NOW been about all women, it would have supported Schlessinger, pointing out perhaps that although they do not endorse all her views, since she is a woman under attack the organization supports her just as it was formed to do. After all, in 2001, NOW had no compunction supporting Houston child murderer, Andrea Yates, who cold bloodedly drowned her five tiny children. As Deborah Bell, president of the Texas chapter of NOW put it, "One of our feminist beliefs is to be there for other women." "Other women" obviously doesn't include Laura Schlessinger. An honest explanation is that NOW seeks to advance secular fundamentalism, and since Dr. Laura preaches religious conservatism NOW, in remaining true to its guiding principles, had no option but to oppose her.

Similarly, many Jewish organizations and even many individuals of Jewish ethnicity who possess the title "rabbi" are not guided by the principles Judaism found in the Torah. Instead, like the NAACP and NOW, they are guided chiefly by the principles of secular fundamentalism. Nothing else can explain their dogmatic and ideological commitment to causes such as homosexuality and abortion, both of which are unequivocally opposed by the Torah-based guiding principles of Judaism. How revealing it was last November, when one such Jewish organization saw fit to publicly applaud the Massachusetts Supreme Court on their ruling in favor of homosexual marriage. In choosing between courageously defending Judaism's unequivocal opposition to homosexual marriage and obsequious obeisance to the doctrines of secular fundamentalism, this "Jewish" organization made its choice and in so doing, proved my point. Paradoxically, these so-called Jewish organizations are virulent secularists because of belief—the belief that

religion poisons the world and that we would all be better off living in an eternal utopia of secular democracy.

In their belief system, serious Christianity, which they recognize to have founded western civilization, must be confined to the home, synagogue, and church. It must never be allowed to influence our culture or our political law-making apparatus. In their belief system, religion, when practiced by professional religionists like priests, pastors, and rabbis, is acceptable because these professionals, doing what they are expected to do, are unlikely to influence significantly the public perception of faith as a refuge for the uneducated, the unsuccessful, and the miserable. However, religion when practiced seriously by influential public figures such as presidents and movie producers is totally unacceptable because it might lead to upsetting the current religious-secular cultural balance.

Thus President Bush also merits hatred. Here is Whoopi Goldberg musing in the pages of the *New York Times*, "Wait a minute, is this man leading this country as an American or is he leading the country as a Christian?" Just try to imagine the outcry from the Jewish groups I describe herein were Mel Gibson to have asked during the 2000 presidential elections, "Will Joe Lieberman lead this country as an American or would he lead this country as a Jew?"

Once Mel Gibson revealed himself to be, like the President, a person of serious religious faith the gloves came off. Mel Gibson has done a major favor for serious faith, both Jewish and Christian, in America. He has made it 'cool' to be religious, but in so doing he has unleashed the hatred of secular America against himself personally, against his work, and against his family. God bless him.

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