



THE BLOG

“I’m Mel Gibson, and I’m an Anti-Semite”

By Marty Kaplan

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When I heard that Mel Gibson had gone into rehab, my first thought was: for alcoholism, or for anti-Semitism?

We now know that alcoholism isn't a character failure; it's a tragic disease, a genetic disorder, and though it can't be cured, it can, with great effort, be managed.

But what about anti-Semitism? While it probably does run in families like Mel's, I don't think DNA is the culprit here. Like homophobia, racism, sexism and loving Ann Coulter, it's really a cultural disorder.

To be sure, a lifetime of saying that Jews are the cause of all the world's wars, or that George Soros is the Anti-Christ, can create synaptic pathways in the brain; what gets fired, gets wired. But just as cognitive therapy, meditation or splurging at Fred Segal can actually change neuronal pathways, surely there must be a comparable recovery program for Jew-hating.

I'm not sure that the answer is doing good works. Mel's been working on a Holocaust documentary for Disney for a couple of years now, and steeping himself in history's worst nightmare hasn't seemed to help him figure out the difference between villains and victims. It probably doesn't help that Hollywood's pet name for Disney is "Mauschwitz."

Would a 12-step program work? Anti-Semites Anonymous? "I'm Mel Gibson, and I'm an anti-Semite." There's something promising about acknowledging that your fate is in the hands of a Higher Power, but I wonder whether the controversy about Who that Power might actually Be could undermine the fellowship of the meeting. Plus there are the complexities that would be endemic to a Malibu chapter: agents feigning anti-Semitism in order to poach other agents' clients whom they meet there, not to mention the self-hating, name-changing, inter-marrying, secularized, assimilated or Republican Jews who might be sitting in the bridge chair next to you.

"Jew Like Me" is another strategy. Walk a mile in my shoes. Gain ten pounds at my table. Wait two hours after lunch before swimming. Laugh that ironic meta-laugh right along with us when Jon Stewart says "Jewey." Sensitize yourself to code like "New York Times" and "neocon." Defend Likud. Like halvah. Who knows - you might even get a development deal out of it. "Gentleman's Agreement" meets "Dude, Where's My Foreskin?" If I were Bob Iger, I'd buy that in a New York minute.

Word around Hollywood now is that Mel's anti-Semitic remarks are just a symptom of how out-of-control his alcoholism has become; his drunken road-rage was really a cry for help. I dunno; I think the real cry for help was "The Passion."

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