



## Be a Lion, Don't See This Lying "Lamb": The Mythology of Professor Redford

Debbie Schlusel

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Benjamin Disraeli--and later Mark Twain--said there are lies, damn lies, and statistics. But today, there are lies, damn lies, and anti-war movies.

The latest didactic, silver screen mythology emanating from Hollywood is "[Lions for Lambs](#)," starring (and directed by) Robert Redford, Tom Cruise, and Meryl Streep, and in theaters today. The film's rewriting of history and Middle Eastern religious dynamics is disturbing. And its statements about our military and alleged racism are unconscionable.

As Americans get more and more of their "history" from on-screen fiction, the fairy tales this film puts forth are dangerous in their blatant falsehood.

A constant theme throughout this boring movie is that American military and political leaders--a smug, right-wing caricature, Republican Senator played by Cruise and an Army commander played by Peter Berg--maintain that Sunnis and Shi'ites are working together against American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is something neither soldiers nor a liberal TV reporter played by Streep can believe.

Streep's Janine Roth and two soldiers on whom the movie focuses constantly question this allegation as utterly preposterous. Reporter Streep tells Senator Tom Cruise she can't believe that after centuries of fighting each other, Sunnis and Shias are suddenly working together against us.

The purpose of this constant on-screen ridicule of the notion of a

Sunni-Shi'ite alliance against the West is to ridicule the Bush Administration's positing of the same regarding Iraq. But, it's not ridiculous at all.

Reality check: Sunnis and Shias have worked together against their common enemy--the West--for decades. That the movie questions this fact as preposterous is, well . . . preposterous. Here are just some of the many instances in which the two religious sects have, indeed, worked together in terrorist operations and plots against America:

\* Intelligence reports and eyewitness accounts from the 1983 Hezbollah (Sh'ite) bombing of the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut state that P.L.O. (Sunni) operatives machine-gunned and shot at Marines as they tried to flee the barracks.

\* Yahya Ayyash, HAMAS' chief bombmaker who was known as "The Engineer" (and was a Sunni), received much of his bombmaking training from Hezbollah (Shia) in Lebanon. He repeatedly worked with Hezbollah for years before he was assassinated by Israel in 1996.

\* The June 1998 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia was a joint Al-Qaeda (Sunni)/Hezbollah (Shia) operation.

\* In October 2005, then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that evidence ties Al-Qaeda insurgent IEDs in Iraq to Shi'ite Iran or Hezbollah. "There are certain pieces of information that lead us back either to Ira-

nian elements or to Hezbollah," he said.

\* In July 2006, [Assem Hammoud](#) a/k/a Amir Al-Andaloussi, a Shi'ite Muslim from a prominent South Lebanese family of Hezbollah supporters, was arrested in Lebanon, after a stint in Canada as the ring-leader of an Al-Qaeda (Sunni) plot to bomb several PATH train tunnels between New Jersey and Manhattan and murder thousands of commuters. Several of his cousins in the Hammoud family in Dearborn, Michigan were convicted in cigarette smuggling and money-laundering for (Shi'ite) Hezbollah.

That the Shi'ite Assem Hammoud trained with Al-Qaeda at Ein El-Hilweh, a Sunni Palestinian refugee camp (a U.S. taxpayer/UNRWA-funded entity) in Lebanon, is yet more refutation of the "Lions for Lambs" myth.

\* A July 2007 report by Chagai Hoberman of Israeli newspaper [HaZofe](#) quotes Israeli Security Services sources as saying that [Hezbollah \(Shi'ite\) now controls Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades](#) (Sunni) in the West Bank. The sources said that they picked up Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorists in West Bank cities, like Shechem, over the past several years, who received weapons, money, and training from Hezbollah. In addition, they say Hezbollah controls the terrorist group, now.

Then, there is the other constant lie throughout "Lions for Lambs"--that American soldiers fighting in Iraq

are mostly minorities, who have no choice but to join up and die.

Sure, viewers are shown white commanding officers who command and watch from a distance, and who are viciously attacked as "pieces of s\*\*t" and "lambs" leading lions in a monologue by a college professor played by Robert Redford. But the film centers on two minority soldiers--a Black and a Hispanic--who were Professor Redford's students. We're told that minorities have no choice but to join the military. "They play football to go to college," Professor Redford admonishes one of his more privileged, slacker White students. They have no future or talent and are ridiculed by the White students on campus, so they must join up:

They weren't naturally gifted students. . . . The first ones to sign up are the ones whose country doesn't treat too well. The ones like you and me who went to good schools and were privileged like you and me, we're the first ones to step back when the country's looking for volunteers lectures Professor Redford of Sundance University.

His White privileged slacker student responds that he doesn't have to care about this because I wanna live the good life because I'm smart enough.

While "Lions for Lambs" wants to portray our fighting forces as strictly minorities and Whites as slacker frat boys who stay home, the two soldiers in the movie are commis-

sioned men, who go upon graduation. And the fact is, the majority of those are White, not minorities. They all have college degrees, many of them graduate degrees. They are among America's best and brightest, who chose to go to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, instead of starting their promising careers in the comfort of home.

One of those is [Sgt. James John Regan](#), a star on the Duke Lacrosse Team, who had a scholarship to go to law school and an offer to work at a financial company. Instead, he joined the Army Rangers and served double tours of duty in both Afghanistan and Iraq, earning a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and several other medals. He was killed in action in Iraq, early this year. He was 26 and engaged to be married. His fiancée, Mary McHugh told Newsday that he felt it was imperative to join the Army and serve rather than taking one of the other safer, more lucrative offers:

He said, "If I don't do it, then who will do it?" He recognized it as an option and he couldn't not do it.

And there are so many other non-minority soldiers like him who made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan, contrary to this movie's Redfordian claim.

But that doesn't fit with the myth that Robert Redford, Ph.D. and the rest of the "Lions for Lambs" gang is selling.

If there is any truth to this movie, it's the poignant heroism to the end displayed by the two soldiers portrayed in the film. But even that is not enough to justify the myths throughout this film.

At the end of the movie, Reporter Meryl Streep argues with her TV cable news network boss that Iraq is like Vietnam, and she doesn't believe our efforts to succeed will work so she doesn't want to report on them:

It's like that song by The Who. "Meet the new boss. It's the same as

the old boss." It's the same as Vietnam all over again.

Streep's network boss orders her to report on it:

Sounds like he [Senator Tom Cruise] has a plan to destroy the guys who attacked our guys . . . Our viewers will believe that's a good thing.

If only Hollywood believed it was a good thing.

And if only there was a single news exec for a major TV network news operation who ever uttered such a sentiment.