

Disney's China ties in 'Mulan' undercut any virtue in the original film

The Hillsdale Collegian: Hillsdale College

September 24, 2020 Thursday

University Wire

Copyright 2020 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

Section: OPINION; Pg. 1

Length: 840 words

Byline: Carmel Kookogey

Body

When the match-maker calls roll in the iconic scene in my favorite Disney princess movie, my answer will be "not present."

No, I won't buy a ticket - and certainly not Disney Plus access - to see the new live-action "Mulan," which released online Sept. 4. Disney's latest endeavor was largely shot in Xin-jiang, a north-western province in China where more than 1 million Uyghur Muslims are currently held in internment camps by the Chinese Communist Party. It's a pro-pa-ganda product for which the company should be ashamed.

Iron-ically, "Mulan" is the one princess whom leftist media has paraded for decades as truly "fem-inist," while "Cinderella" and "Snow White" promoted the so-called regressive female norms perpetuated by a patriarchal society. Yet the latest take on Disney's most egalitarian princess was funded by one of the most anti-equality regimes in the world today.

It's not simply that the brand has financially supported a horrific regime which currently enslaves religious minorities, silences dissidents, and oppresses its own people. Because of China's lucrative market for American films, Disney - not to mention Netflix and most of Hollywood - has been tied to China's purse-strings for years.

As The Heritage Foundation's Tim Doescher has pointed out, "our films are being written with China in mind." Directors of "Top Gun: Maverick" removed a Taiwanese symbol from Tom Cruise's jacket in one of Hollywood's latest efforts to ensure continued access to China's movie-goers.

But until 2018, so long as you avoided the three Ts - Tibet, Taiwan, and Tiananmen - you were OK. Now there's a fourth item: Xin-jiang.

What makes "Mulan" particularly disturbing is its directors' and actors' blatant praise of Chinese state authorities, like when Chinese-American star Yifei Liu (a.k.a. Crystal Liu) sided with Hong Kong police over pro-democracy protesters last year during a crackdown on demonstrations. The directors' willful blindness to the atrocities committed in Xin-jiang shows that for Hollywood, profit always comes before principle.

Many Americans have heard of the Uyghur internment camps, but widespread knowledge of the atrocities the CCP is committing in Xin-jiang was not immediate. The barbed-wire-lined compounds China calls "re-education camps" were created for the purpose of Sinocising, or making more Chinese, the Uyghur Muslims living in the Xin-jiang province.

Disney's China ties in 'Mulan' undercut any virtue in the original film

These camps were dis-covered in 2018, but may have existed for a while before that point.

Mean-while, an unknown number of Uyghurs - we now know at least 1 million - con-tinue to be iden-tified and tar-geted via China's face-recog-nition tech-nology. They are then forced to labor and recite Chinese pro-pa-ganda as a part of their "re-edu-cation" process and taught to think, speak, and act only for China. Much of this "training" involves forcing Muslims to violate their reli-gious prac-tices, like wearing beards or abstention from certain types of meat and alcohol.

The CCP describes its detention of 1 million Uyghur cit-izens as a "quar-antine" for the "disease" of being "infected by unhealthy thoughts."

Since 2018, many have since decried China's senior party leaders for their behavior. The United States passed a law this year con-demning China's treatment of the Uyghur minority. Yet thou-sands of busi-nesses, espe-cially in the film industry, con-tinue to shake hands with the Uyghurs' captors, pre-sumably in exchange for another round of pocket-linings.

Did Mulan's directors simply not notice the forced labor camps in the province where they filmed, or did they agree to keep their mouths shut - and praise CCP author-ities in the movie's credits - in exchange for shooting there?

The film credits' "China Special Thanks" list included the "Pub-licity Department of CPC Xin-jiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Com-mittee" and dis-plays that the film was "super-vised by China Film Co-Pro-duction Cor-po-ration."

The director didn't praise just any party leader, either. He praised the police security bureau in Turpan - the bureau reportedly tasked with running some of the Uyghur internment camps, and which "was black-listed last year along with other Chinese law enforcement agencies by the U.S. Com-merce Department, pro-hibiting U.S. com-panies from selling or sup-plying products to them," Vox reported.

Even CNN admitted this was a bad look for Disney. In a com-mentary segment on Sept. 13, network host Jake Tapper called out Disney's "prob-lematic" choice of thanking "the pro-pa-ganda author-ities of the ruling Chinese Com-munist Party in Xin-jiang" in the movie credits.

Disney Chief Financial Officer Christine McCarthy defended the brand's praise of China in the "Mulan" movie credits as standard pro-cedure in the film industry, which only fur-thers the point.

Disney may be OK with propping up a mur-derous com-munist regime, but American con-sumers should not be.

Carmel Kookogey is a senior George Wash-ington Fellow studying pol-itics. She is the editor-in-chief of the Col-legian.

Load-Date: September 24, 2020