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Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, May/June 1996, pgs. 46-47

What They Said

# Marlon Brando on Jewish Influence On U.S. Culture in Films

Film star Marlon Brando's remarks about Jewish influence in Hollywood made in the course of a long April 5 interview on CNN's Larry King Live have been the subject of heated comment in the weekly Jewish press and some confusing subsequent remarks by Brando himself. Following are all remarks on the subject by both Brando and King excerpted from a CNN-supplied transcript of the interview. In his introductory remarks, King told the television audience that Brando had asked to appear on the program to talk about a videotaped beating of two Mexican migrant workers by Riverside County sheriff's deputies, racism, and violence in Hollywood.

**Larry King:** ...Our guest is Marlon Brando. We will be including your calls in a little while. Two other areas we want to discuss. I know you have been an admirer of Judaism, right?...And you told—and we have discussed this off the air as well—that you've always admired the culture—the Jewish culture.

**Marlon Brando:** Oh, the Jews are amazing people. They are truly amazing. I think that per capita, people generally don't realize that per capita that Jews have contributed more to American—the best of American culture than any other single group. If it weren't for the Jews we wouldn't have art, we wouldn't have much theater. We wouldn't have, oddly enough, Broadway—and Tin Pan Alley—and all the standards that were written by Jews—all the—the songs that you love to sing. You remember—

**King:** Yeah, we sang them.

**Brando:**—when we sat around and sang all those songs.

**King:** So you're very affectionate for—right? Well, you—you've hung around with many

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**Brando:** The Jews—the secret of the Jews is their worship for the word sechel. That doesn't mean that they are superior people it just means that they are culturally advantaged in the same way that the Chinese and Japanese are.

**King:** But they're not better than that Mexican across the line—

**Brando:** Of course—of course not.

**King:** —or that Black in Mississippi.

**Brando:** Absolutely not. As a matter of fact you find an extraordinary contrast between the Jews that left Israel and the—who—

**King:** You mean who left Europe?

**Brando:** No, they left Israel and left behind the Sephardic Jews and when they came back—not the—you know, the—you know, the—what is the name of the group of Jews that came back?

**King:** Levis?

**Brando:** No, no, no. There was the—the [unintelligible] the split in Europe.

**King:** All right.

**Brando:** But the Jews that left Israel were called the—

**King:** I forget.

**Brando:** Okay.

**King:** The gist of it is?

**Brando:** The gist of it is, when they came back, they got in dutch with the Sephardic Jews, who never had any trouble with anybody, they lived there with the Arabs, they were perfectly happy living there with the Arabs for thousands, 1,300 years or so—

**King:** So there is a lot about modern Judaism you don't like?

**Brando:** Oh, it has nothing to do with that. It has nothing to do with that. We're talking about the Jews just in general—

**King:** But in this—in this—

**Brando:** But their regard for knowledge, their regard for information. They saved all of their money in the days when they were pressured—pressured in Europe and the days when they had pogroms and the days when they—see, you are rushing me, I can't—I can't think—

**King:** I'm not rushing you.

**Brando:** But you are pointing your finger at me like this. It's very—it's battery to do that.

**King:** Ha, ha, ha. No, I'm trying to focus in on—because I know you are a great admirer, yet, at the same time, you feel badly about what Hollywood has [crosstalk]

**Brando:** Feel bad—badly is—you can't say badly. You feel bad. Okay, I'm—I'm slightly rattled here, because I'm having trouble—

**King:** I don't mean to rattle you.

**Brando:** No, it's not that. It's the time and the pressure and the nature of this—the nature of these circumstances.

**King:** Let me get a break and we will [crosstalk]...

**King:** You told me you are sending your children to Jewish schools?

**Brando:** Yeah, my kids go to a Jewish school.

**King:** Because?

**Brando:** Because I think that the Jewish schools, one, are the safest and the best.

**King:** You are also critical, though, are you not, of many of the Jewish people who run a lot of important studios in Hollywood and who you feel—

**Brando:** Yes. Generally—you—

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**King:** —do violent films.

**Brando:** You have to understand something: that generally people do not understand that people who hate Black people, the people who hate Jews, the people who hate anybody who is not free, white and 21 and Protestant, are carrying around in their children, are carrying around in their bodies, and have had visited on their children, this extraordinary magic that was created by a Jew—called the—the uh—the Salk vaccine, which prevents polio.

**King:** So?

**Brando:** It's just a matter of just ordinary things. And if they knew that would they refuse to have the Salk vaccine?

**King:** Oh, if they knew that a Jew had invented it? They knew a Jew invented it.

**Brando:** Of course. And there has been a lot of anti-Jewish feeling, which is—is—you have to understand that Max—people like Max Youngstein, who was head of United Artists—founded, or was a financial backer of SNCC, which was a very militant Black group...

**King:** Are you—are you critical—

**Brando:** That's—

**King:**—of the Hollywood that makes violent movies?

**Brando:** I think that—I—am very angry with some of the Jews. I am very goddamned angry—

**King:** At some of the Jews?

**Brando:** —at some of the Jews who have known—who have suffered terribly at the hands of the Russians, of the Germans and the Poles and all of the anti-Semitic elements in Europe and it was a godsend to come to America where they could be free—and they could—they could do whatever they wanted.

**King:** Then what are you angry at?

**Brando:** And then Sam Goldwyn and all of the rest of them. Metro Goldwyn Mayer, they—Hollywood is run by Jews. It is owned by Jews—and they should have a greater sensitivity about the issue of—of people who are suffering. Because they've exploited—we have seen the—we have seen the [deleted] and greaseball, we've seen the Chink, we've seen the slit-eyed dangerous Jap, we have seen the wily Filipino, we've seen everything but we never saw the kike. Because they knew perfectly well, that that is where you draw the—wagons around—

**King:** When you 7, when you say something like that you are playing right in, though, to anti-Semitic people who say the Jews are—

**Brando:** No, no, because I will be the first one who will appraise the Jews honestly and say "Thank God for the Jews." If it weren't for the Jews, we wouldn't have any—

**King:** All right. But they anger you when they pander—

**Brando:** Yes.

**King:** Or they make films that—

**Brando:** They don't anger me. That's the nature of human beings. That is the nature of human beings. I would like that they were more sensitive. And through the years, I think we've gained a certain sensitivity here in Hollywood—"here in Hollywood"—as though I—I am not a standing—welcome member of the community here, but, nevertheless I feel that we—we have now sensitized so that we can't treat Blacks that way—because Blacks are not going to stand for it. These people—if you see these people down in front of the federal building—the brown people, they are not going to stand for it...

**King:** There is a good friend of mine that Marlon wants to discuss a second before we take calls and that is Lew Wasserman, the Chairman Emeritus of Universal.

**Brando:** Yeah, I wanted to say that I was on a picture that I thought was funnier than hell—it turned out to not make very much money—it was me and David Niven trying to be funny. But he made me scream. However, they had a scene—it was in the '80s. And I

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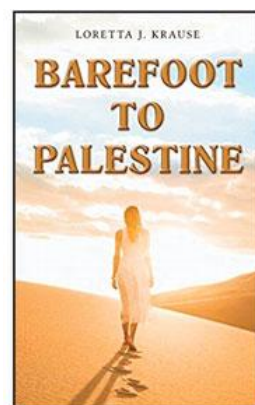
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said “How come there are no Black people in this film?” And no—there was just pure white people. Anyway, I said—I said, “I can’t—I can’t do it, if you are not going to hire any Black people I am not going to be in the scene.” And he said, “Marlon, come on, it’s not that kind of a picture.” I said, “What kind of a picture?” What kind of a picture is it that you have to have to show Black people, to show Brown people, to show yellow—so I said, “You have to cut me out, I’m walking out of the picture.” I went to Lew—Lew Wasserman’s office and I said, “Lew and he doesn’t like publicity and forgive me Lew if I am embarrassing you, but the fact is that I went to his office and said, “Lew—” and he was—Lew Wasserman is Mr. Hollywood. He is the head of Universal, and he is an extraordinary man, he came from—well, never mind him—

**King:** Poverty. And he what?

**Brando:** Worked his way up to be a big macha as they say in Yiddish. And he said, “Marlon, do me a favor,” he says. “Go back to work,” and he said, “I promise you—,” it touches me even now because he did it.

**King:** What did he say?

**Brando:** He said, “Marlon, if you go back to work, I promise you we will settle this thing.” And he got everybody by the lapels, and he says “Hey—” he got all the big machas—that’s Jewish for big shots, and he got all the Jews and he said, “Listen, this is going to be the way it has to be.” He was the Godfather. And—

**King:** We’re back with Marlon Brando. He does want to clear up that his criticism of Jewish people who are in positions of power in Hollywood—

**Brando:** I don’t want to clear it up. No, I think—

**King:** You don’t want people to think that you’re—

**Brando:** No, the Jews have—they understand, they know perfectly well, what their responsibilities are and more and more you see among younger Jews a sense—I mean we wouldn’t have the extraordinary films that come out of Hollywood that are so sensitive really—these are the old time Jews—that ran Hollywood. I think more and more that you see that. However, all those old films like John Wayne and Charlton Heston and all of those Indian killers, they killed—they did more harm to the American Indians than Custer did.

**King:** They didn’t know, though, did they?

**Brando:** They—knew very well...

**King:** So what’s the perspective?

**Brando:** So my—my—as far as the Jews are concerned—in the early days when I was supporting the [unintelligible] they blew up the King David Hotel, they killed an awful lot of Englishmen, some Arabs and also some Jews. They—

**King:** They were persecuted.

**Brando:** Of course, coming off that you—

**King:** By the way—

**Brando:** —you would do the same thing.

**King:** —you look terrific. Thank you my friend.

**Brando:** Thank you. So do you.

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