



Clint Eastwood, in Esquire Interview, Condemns Political Correctness

In a joint interview with his son, Scott, for *Esquire* magazine on August 3, veteran actor Clint Eastwood (shown on right) said that “everybody’s getting tired of political correctness” and that “We’re really in a p***y generation” — using the crude, vernacular term for a weak or cowardly man.



When *Esquire*’s Michael Hainey asked Eastwood what the “p***y generation” is, he replied: “All these people that say, ‘Oh, you can’t do that, and you can’t do this, and you can’t say that.’ I guess it’s just the times.”

Hainey segued immediately into asking Clintwood about presidential candidate Donald Trump, who has also spoken out against political correctness, asking: “What do you think Trump is onto?” Eastwood answered:

What Trump is onto is he’s just saying what’s on his mind. And sometimes it’s not so good. And sometimes it’s ... I mean, I can understand where he’s coming from, but I don’t always agree with it.

When Hainey took Eastwood’s reply as an indication that he was not endorsing Trump, the actor confirmed: “I haven’t endorsed anybody. I haven’t talked to Trump. I haven’t talked to anybody.”

A little later on, Hainey asked Eastwood what he thinks of Hillary Clinton. To which he replied:

What about her? I mean, it’s a tough voice to listen to for four years. It could be a tough one. If she’s just gonna follow what we’ve been doing, then I wouldn’t be for her.

Then came the obvious follow-up question: “But if the choice is between her and Trump, what do you do?”

In his answer, Eastwood suggested that a major difference between the two candidates was that Clinton has profited financially from her political career, while it would cost Trump money to enter politics:

That’s a tough one, isn’t it? I’d have to go for Trump ... you know, ‘cause she’s declared that she’s gonna follow in Obama’s footsteps. There’s been just too much funny business on both sides of the aisle. She’s made a lot of dough out of being a politician. I gave up dough to be a politician. I’m sure that Ronald Reagan gave up dough to be a politician.

During the interview Eastwood talked about what he considered to be one of Trump’s “dumb things to say,” referring to the candidate’s open speculation last June that U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel — who presided over a class-action suit against Trump University — might be a “conflict of interest,” because of his Mexican heritage and the fact that Trump had come under criticism from the Hispanic community because of his tough stand on immigration. At the time, Hillary Clinton said that that



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 8, 2016

Trump's assertion about Curiel was "a racist attack on a federal judge."

In an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper on *Face the Nation*, Trump said: "[Judge Curiel] is a member of a club or society, very strongly pro-Mexican, which is all fine. But I say he's got bias."

The club Trump was referring to was the La Raza Lawyers' Association of California, which has the stated mission "to promote the interests of the Latino communities throughout the state."

Eastwood ridiculed the prevailing charge in many circles: "You know, he's a racist now because he's talked about this judge."

In continuing, the actor questioned Trump's political common sense, but obviously did not consider the comments to be based on "racism." He said:

And yeah, it's a dumb thing to say. I mean, to predicate your opinion on the fact that the guy was born to Mexican parents or something. He's said a lot of dumb things. So have all of them. Both sides. But everybody — the press and everybody's going, "Oh, well, that's racist," and they're making a big hoodoo out of it. Just f***ing get over it."

Earlier in the interview, Eastwood lamented: "Everybody's walking on eggshells. We see people accusing people of being racist and all kinds of stuff. When I grew up, those things weren't called racist."

There definitely is a generational factor at play in how people of Eastwood's generation might see things. When this writer was in high school more than 50 years ago (in a school where the athletic teams were called "the Polish Ironmen") most students belonged to one of three dominant ethnic groups: Polish, Irish, or Italian. Kids from each group told jokes poking fun of each others' ethnicity, and the same jokes were circulated freely, with the teller adjusting the ethnic identity of the joke according to whom it was being told. Yet, no one was offended, and these same kids ate lunch together and shot baskets together afterwards. Skins were obviously thicker back then.

And yet, after the *Esquire* interview, some people sharply criticized the actor. One headline read: "Clint Eastwood Gets Shut Down After Defending Trump's Racism." The writer of that article said that Eastwood's comments:

led Sarah McBride, National Press Secretary for the Human Rights Campaign, and the first transgender person to speak before a major political convention, to start a meme of listing all of the awful things that were considered "normal" when Eastwood was born in 1930. "Let's start a list of things that weren't considered racist when he was growing up," she wrote on Twitter.

Most of the complaints tweeted by McBride (such as "Jim Crow" laws, membership in the Klan, and "forbidding black people from talking to white people") would have been either on the way out or non-existent by the time of Eastwood's youth, especially where he grew up in California. Everyone who has seen episodes of Hal Roach's *Little Rascals*, filmed in California in the 1930s, knows full well that they depict black and white children playing together. McBride obviously has an axe to grind.

Another writer, however, Lewis Beale for CNN, defended the actor, noting that his "critics have forgotten that for years Eastwood has, in his own way, been one of the most racially sensitive people in Hollywood." Beale offered the following rhetorical questions to make his point:

Does a racist make a film like *Gran Torino*, in which a grumpy old racist learns compassion for others when a Hmong family moves in next door?



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Does a racist make a film like *Bird*, the story of black jazz musician Charlie Parker?

Does a racist appear in a film in which his lover is a black woman, as McGee was in *The Eiger Sanction*?

Does a racist consistently appear along with, or cast black performers in key roles in his films (Morgan Freeman in *Unforgiven* and *Million Dollar Baby*, Isaiah Washington and Lisa Gay Hamilton in *True Crime*)?

Does a racist become a lifelong lover of blues and jazz, and make a 2003 documentary called *Piano Blues*, that features performers like Ray Charles, Pinetop Perkins, Big Joe Turner and Oscar Peterson?

Does a racist marry Dina Marie Ruiz, a Hispanic woman? (The couple divorced two years ago after 17 years of marriage.)

The worst thing that might be said about Eastwood, asserts Beale, is that “he seems to have settled into grumpy old manhood.”

Beale concludes his article:

But [Eastwood’s] current antics do not negate the years when he was one of the few white filmmakers in Hollywood who showed some sensitivity toward minority performers and their stories. To those of you willing to throw his entire career out the window because of his recent stupidity, I can only quote Jesus: “Let [him] who is without sin cast the first stone.”

Perhaps because this writer is perilously close to sharing in Eastwood’s “grumpy old manhood,” we are inclined to cut this veteran actor a bit more slack than even Beale has allowed, perhaps preferring the description “eccentricity,” to “stupidity.”

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