

This Post relates to these previous posts: Free Range kids (Mar. 27, 2015); #MeToo... But #ThemAlso (Nov 21, 2017); The Confession of Imbecility (Dec. 27, 2017); The Unwanted Book Review (July 18, 2019).

I love the show America's Funniest Home Videos. AFV is like a porthole looking out of this slave ship, giving glimpses of real people just living in the real world. But, once in awhile, they'll show a clip that I just can't believe anyone ~~could~~ ^{could ever} laugh at. Don't get me wrong, I'm no humorless type who finds offensiveness crawling under every rock, but some things... well, here's an example.

A few years ago, AFV featured a clip of a young "black" kid and his mom on their way home from a restaurant. The kid shows her he still has a glass from the diner, as he hadn't realized he was still holding it, then he just walked out with it. With her camera rolling, his mother decides to milk the situation. She basically freaks out, "What!?! You stole a glass from the restaurant!?" and her son tells her he didn't steal it, he just accidentally walked out with it. He doesn't think it's a big deal, clearly assuming his mother can appreciate the difference between theft and unintentional possession, but doubt soon creeps into his voice, then terror, as his explanation evolves into a plea for mercy. His mother just screeches, "I'm taking you to the police station!", angrily proclaiming that she "didn't raise no thief" and he's "gonna learn his lesson" when the cops get hold of him. The look on his face now is heart-wrenching: "Mom! No!!" he cries, "Please! I didn't MEAN to!!", but she coldly ignores his grovelling and ~~pretends~~ ^{pretends} to head to the station with her newly criminal 11 or 12 year old boy. He's panicked and confused, helpless and bawling... eventually she finally admits she's not handing him over to the cops, but by then this bad, BAD "joke" has taken its toll on the traumatized, terrorized kid. Somehow, this sickening spectacle of cruelty was voted America's Funniest video of the week. Ha. Yes. Hilarious.

Of all the people in the world, don't ~~we~~ ^{we} believe it's our parents who wait torture us or deliver us to evil, who will stand between us and all of life's callous coldness for as long as they can? It seems like up to that point, that kid had believed that about his mother — that she was SAFE. That he could TRUST her. That's why he showed her the stupid cup in the first place, right? At the end of AFV, after her son's publicly displayed trauma had won her \$10,000, this "mother" tried to explain that she just wanted to teach him a lesson... but what lesson could he learn from being thrown to the cops for accidentally taking a dish from

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a restaurant? But no doubt, she did teach him something, I'm sure. Her lesson, which the audience found laughable, had nothing to do with a purloined soda vessel, though; instead, she took her evidently trusting, apparently sensitive, and essentially honest, good kid, and instilled in him the cold, hard fact that, whatever he'd felt about his mama before, he absolutely could NOT count on her support in the event he ever finds himself in real trouble. She taught him that she'd actually be the first to hand him over to his pursuers if she ever had the chance. She actually said that — not in those exact words, but very much in that spirit. It was, as they say, as she said, "for his own good." For ~~his~~ ^{His} Own Good... yes, it seems betrayal is always sold as "for one's own good," at least in the eyes of those who need to justify it to themselves so they can sleep at night.

Maybe I'm over-reacting, you might think? "Puttin' too much on it," as the Prisonese might say? But, am I? Isn't this sort of thing one of the main roots of authoritarian thuggery, and of society's harsh, unmerciful punitiveness in general? If not for people like this mother — and the toxic mutilation of conscience they cause in those they influence — how extensive could our various state-sponsored pain infliction apparatuses be? And then, just on the specific, individual level of this incident... I mean, could that terrified, panicked boy possibly have been any more traumatized if that venomous shrew who calls herself his mother had just beaten him with an extension cord for some perceived infraction? In fact, I'd argue that the injury must be far, far worse. It's not physical, but it's deeply psychic and tremendously corrosive to the character of the man he'll become. Potential lessons — Loyalty; Mercy; Understanding; Unconditional Love; Protection; Generosity; non-aggression — what did he learn of any of these concepts? Nothing. Kindness; discerning judgement; temperance; thoughtfulness... all of these things I'd count as virtues were undermined (if not extinguished) by his own mother's militaristic disciplinarianism; by her tragically uncritical endorsement of conventional, status-quo-maintaining middle class ethics, morals, and "justice." When one transgresses, authorities must be summoned for vengeance (even at the expense of your own family). Punishment restores order; Suffering is expiation. Blah blah blah.

And hey, it's all so Fun to watch! Anyway, the family got PAID for it: \$10,000 for first prize, Mammon is satisfied, and that's all that really matters... Isn't it?

[End]