

“The Axis of Evil”: Changing the Perception of Middle East

There is no denying that the infamous September 9/11 terrorist attacks created the environment of fear in the U.S. that was excruciatingly difficult to overcome. Multiple efforts have been made to minimize the harm caused by prejudices toward Middle East residents, yet comedy might have been the most effective way. Once being able to laugh at their fears, people tend to recognize them for their unreasonable and inflated nature. Specifically, “The Axis of Evil” must have been the show that helped to perpetuate the idea of Middle East people as intelligent, witty, and, most importantly, not dangerous to the safety of U.S. citizens (“Axis of evil,” 2013). By demonstrating their sharp sense of humor combined with high rates of self-awareness, the participants of the show managed to make a positive change in the perception of Middle Easterners in the U.S. community.

“The Axis of Evil” played a crucial role in changing the impression of American citizens about Middle East residents. Namely, the show openly ridiculed the idea of fear toward any person of Middle Eastern descent. From its very start, “The Axis of Evil” set the tone and mood immediately, becoming an epitome of a social satire that skewers prejudices uncompromisingly: “It's great to see so many Middle Eastern people coming together in one place voluntarily” (“Axis of evil,” 2013, 00:01:32-00:01:35). Thus, for American audiences, who were openly laughing at the jokes, the show clearly became the source of relief and the means of getting rid of the fear that had been haunting them for years.

In turn, taking the show to the Middle East allowed for a deeper understanding of the two cultures. Namely, while belonging to the Middle Eastern ethnicity, the creators of the show had embraced American culture fully, which suggested that they could communicate some of its

specifics to Middle Eastern people as well. Thus, the cultural exchange that the show provided could be viewed as an important step in reconciling the cultural misunderstandings between the U.S. and the Middle East.

Admittedly, the show possesses a strong power to change the perceptions and preconceptions of those watching it. Personally, I used to laugh at the same pointless prejudices long before I watched the show, yet “The Axis of Evil” has helped me to look at these prejudices and the situation in general from a different angle. Namely, I was able to realize the pain that Middle Eastern citizens channeled through these jokes, as well as the issues they experienced when having to manage prejudiced attitudes toward them.

Additionally, the show has the power of changing how Middle Eastern residents see the U.S. Namely, representing the country as overly panicking and nearly paranoid, the creators of “The Axis of Evil” made it possible to create an image that was both understandable and sympathetic, even though irrational and quite ridiculous. For example, in a made-up scenario, the narrator says, “you actually think guys in Al-Qaeda are going to public libraries and taking books out” (“Axis of evil,” 2013, 00:03:31-00:03:34), drawing a figure of a distressed and slightly paranoid but overall compassionate character.

Due to the use of humor and sharp wit as the means of pointing out the absurdity of discrimination against Middle Easterners and Muslims, “The Axis of Evil” has served as a cultural shock to American citizens. Encouraging them to accept the idea of Middle Eastern people as peaceful and worthy of respect and trust, the creators of “The Axis of Evil” appealed to the core emotions of Americans by making them laugh. In turn, laughter has produced a

therapeutic and almost healing effect, allowing U.S. residents to embrace the humanity of other cultures, particularly that of Middle East.

Reference

Axis of evil comedy tour Eng full show. [Video]. (2013, July 14). YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCBQzCD5QMU>