

Friday, December 21, 2007

If Joe Ligotti were a trial lawyer.

CAVEAT EMPTOR: F-bombs and worse ahead. I may vehemently disagree with Joe Ligotti's xenophobia, politics, and general worldview. I may bury my head in my hands about the content -- using expletives, by themselves, does not both me -- of his many rants and raves. I may wish he never appeared on the scene. However, he is here, he is a phenomenon being listened to by over one million monthly online views (by his claim), and he often is not exaggerating when claiming "I have the balls to say what [many are] thinking." Joe Ligotti apparently is in non-fiction -- although possibly, underline possibly, exaggerated -- a character when he rants and raves on YouTube as The Guy from Boston. With an overconfidence in his opinions akin to Rush Limbaugh's overconfidence, he pontificates, rants and raves, and displays near vein poppers (at times) over topics ranging from immigration (he conveniently blames a whole host of society's ills on undocumented immigrants -- how he knows such specific statistics of the uncounted is beyond me) to American Idol to sex. By day, he works at Two Guys Smoke Shop in Salem, New Hampshire; on his offtime, he consistently adds a new self-produced video to his arsenal. Even with all my differences with him, sometimes he tones himself down enough to be entertaining, at least when he is talking about pizza and other non-political topics. He has potential for Hollywood as a character actor, if he is willing to suppress his political and social rants and raves on the movie set. He claims he wants to engage people to assure that all eligible voters vote (he's not eager for non-citizens to vote). Getting out the vote is a good thing, and he might be able to rouse some non-voters who are not roused to vote by others. If Joe Ligotti were a trial lawyer -- at least if he were able to tone down his rhetoric -- he would be able to entertain, engage, and sometimes educate plenty of decisionmakers. I agree with the Dalai Lama that "everyone is my teacher, starting with my enemy." Whether or not Joe Ligotti is my enemy, he is one of my teachers. As much as I wanted to ignore him and hope he goes away, he will not go away, at least not right away. He must, therefore, be known and understood. Ligotti's website well sums up his rants and raves: "This website may contain language and subject matter that is offensive to some people. If you find this content offensive then good. I've done my job." My First Amendment fanaticism has a price, and one part of that price is Joe Ligotti. I wish to learn that he is no more real than Borat, but am not holding my breath. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Persuasion at 00:20