ALADDIN ANIMATED RACISM
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**A L A D D I N ANIMATED RACISM**

by Jack Shaheen

Arabland’s other disturbing characteristics raise any number of questions. Why are Arabic names mispronounced? Why are storefront signs written in nonsensical scribble-scratch rather than a real language? Why do the palace guards and merchants have large, bulbous noses, sinister eyes, and idiotic accents? Why do the hero and heroine, Aladdin and Princess Jasmine, look and speak so differently than other Arabs? In this family entertainment, what impression of Islam is conveyed when a street vendor insists that the standard penalty for stealing is chopping off one’s hand? How will children judge a society in which hideous guards chase a homeless Aladdin because he stole bread, and still other hideous guards threaten to cut off Jasmine’s hand for taking an apple to give to a starving child? What concept of justice is conveyed when a cruel guard screams at Aladdin, “I’ll have your head for a trophy, you sewer rat!”

Just as Aladdin’s genies serve as serfs-to-the-lamp, Hollywood’s filmmakers seem to serve as serfs-to-the-Arab demonizers. The celluloid caricatures of Aladdin effectively reinforce the media image of Arab terrorists and religious fanatics. And the Disney studio knows better. Disney Chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg has said, “Each of us in Hollywood has the opportunity to assume individual responsibility for creating films that elevate rather than denigrate, that shed light rather than dwell in darkness, that aim for the highest common denominator rather than the lowest.”

I would remember those words if I were ever fortunate enough to come across an enchanted lamp with a genie able to grant three wishes. My first wish would be to have the Disney studio make films that fulfill the stated ideals of its executives. My second wish would be that all other Hollywood producers did likewise. My third wish would be that reviews of this kind would never again be needed.

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The Genie, Aladdin and Princess Jasmine are seen as the ‘good Arabs’... while the evil Jaffer and his cohorts reinforce the worst anti-Arab prejudices.