Opinion
Guest Voices



A still from the "He Gets Us" commercial "Love Your Enemies" that aired during the Super Bowl. (RNS/Courtesy of "He Gets Us")



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Super Bowl fever infected the nation once again, as more than 113 million folks tuned in to watch the organized chaos that is professional football.

Fox News charged advertisers some $7 million to run 30-second ads. There were 51 national commercials, several much longer than 30 seconds. Reports say Fox raked in some $600 million, with at least another $2.5 million going toward production costs. Maybe more, maybe less, but a lot of people directed a lot of money at telling you what to do with yours.

Taken as a whole, the ads were not very good. In many cases, you could not figure out what they were selling. The big reveal at the end of some often earned a "huh?"

Of course, someone thought to rate the ads. The USA Today Ad Meter determined the biggest winners were dogs. The ad titled "Very Good Dog" was, shall we say, overall best in show. The third-place winner featured a dog whose family cured his antisocial behavior by getting him a dog-friend. Not sure what either was selling.

Advertisement

But two ads created a bit of a stir. Apparently, cuddling up to dogs is considerably more neutral than religion.

The "He Gets Us" campaign — the "He" being Jesus — presented two national ads to mixed reactions.

The 30-second "Be Childlike" is a monochrome collage of photos of children against Patsy Cline's vocal of "If I Could See the World (Through the Eyes of a Child)," ending with a color video of a Black child and a white child running toward each other and embracing. The advice "Jesus didn't want us to act like adults" plays on the screen.

The more pointed, and provocative, 60-second "Love Your Enemies" presents black-and-white photos of people arguing and fighting, with "Human" by Rag'n'Bone Man providing the soundtrack. The ad ends with a slide: "Jesus loved the people we hate."

Some people were unhappy.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., known as AOC, tweeted: "Something tells me Jesus would *not* spend millions of dollars on Super Bowl ads to make fascism look benign."

Nasty or simply misinformed?

You see, the donor-advised fund called The Signatry, whose mission is "to inspire and facilitate revolutionary biblical generosity," funded the Michigan branding agency that reportedly spent $20 million on the "He Gets Us" ads. Primarily an evangelical Christian initiative, The Signatry is connected to various pro-life causes.

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So, what is the "fascism" AOC is so concerned about? Think back to the Hobby Lobby Supreme Court decision, which allows for-profit companies to refuse paying employees' abortion or contraception costs. Is that fascism? Although donors to The Signatry, including David Green of Hobby Lobby, may be connected to political causes, the "He Gets Us" ad campaign does not feature a gun-toting, cigar-smoking Jesus wearing a MAGA hat.

While its assets are impressive — The Signatry has facilitated some $4 billion in grants since its initiation in 2000 — it is essentially an arm of the Kansas-based evangelical Christian ministry Servant Foundation founded by Bill High.

If the problem — the "fascism" — is rooted in folks thinking abortion is awful, then AOC needs to rethink her terminology and perhaps read a few history books (on Mussolini and Hitler, for example). U.S. Catholic bishops are not exactly abortion proponents. Are they "fascists" too?

Whether the evangelical Christian presentation of the story of Jesus is or is not aligned with specific denominational beliefs, it has the right to be presented. And if people want to spend their millions doing so, they can, because the United States is a country free of fascism.