"Killin' Nazis": How Jews are Portrayed in Tarantino's Inglorious Basterds

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Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglorious Basterds* portrays a group of Jews that are sent to Nazi-occupied territory to kill Nazis. This group murders and tortures the Nazis they come across. This is a film which depicts Jews as capable of committing the atrocities of which they were victims. Tarantino created an internal conflict for his viewers by showing politically incorrect vengeance. While Americans view Nazis as the epitome of evil, is portraying their graphic demise in a film justified?

While it can be said that the violence in *Inglorious Basterds* is insensitive, there is more to the violence depicted in this film. By portraying Jews as seeking vengeance, Tarantino shows his audience a different type of historical film. Instead of portraying Jews as victims, Tarantino portrays them as victors against the Nazis. This depiction blurred the lines between right and wrong, though.

The actions of the Nazis have been defined as an unprecedented “attack on human diversity.” By that definition, the Jews in *Inglorious Basterds* do not fit the description of their counterparts. Their violent actions are out of revenge instead of hateful discrimination. It is not fair to call the Basterds just as bad as Nazis because their motives do not come from the same place.

Tarantino created complex characters that portray Jews as vengeance seekers. The vengeance they take on the Nazis brings the audience’s focus to the real violence that Nazis inflicted on Jews.

Two Basterds stand over their last victim after carving a swastika into the forehead of a notorious Jew hunter.

References


