

## **Khalid Ibrahim - the making of an antihero**

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COMMENT Isn't it sublime de facto leadership that after the rottweilers have had their weeks' fill of ravaging Abdul Khalid Ibrahim and sealing his fate as menteri besar of Selangor, Anwar Ibrahim tells the PKR national congress that he does not agree with personal attacks against Khalid... and even calls on the delegates to "acknowledge Khalid's sincerity and track record"?

This latest episode of 'Desperate Politicians' in Selangor brings to mind the creation of an antihero in Jessica Page Morrell's 2008 manual on 'Bullies, Bastards & Bitches'. Has PKR created an antihero in Khalid? Let us revisit Jessica Morrell's guide for would-be writers to see if he fits the mould of the antihero...

"If you dare to write about less-than-charming characters, you don't need to always redeem them with an ending in which they see the error of their ways, mend their faults and allow their flinty hearts to be transformed into a choir loft of goodness.

"You see, Hollywood movies have greatly influenced audience expectations to such a degree that bad people are expected to become good, endings are expected to be tidy and hopeful, and outcomes are expected to be laced with sunshine."

The end of Khalid's days as menteri besar of Selangor is nigh, but I doubt he needs the de facto leader of PKR to orchestrate such a Hollywood feel-good climax to his career.

After all, the show isn't over till the fat gentleman sings and man, when he goes, is he going to sing about the frailties of his erstwhile Pakatan Rakyat politicians since 2008. Remember, he's got more files than the rottweilers.

Jessica Morrell goes on:

"An antihero is a protagonist who is as flawed or more flawed than most characters; he is someone who disturbs the reader with his weaknesses yet is sympathetically portrayed, and who magnifies the frailties of humanity...

"An antihero is often a bad ass, a maverick or a screw-up. An antihero can also play the part of an outsider or loner. This kind of antihero often possesses fragile self-esteem, has often failed at love and/or is estranged from people from his past.

"The reader loves these characters because they are realistic and relatable - just like people in the reader's life, they're imperfect and roiling with contradictions. Antiheroes can be obnoxious, pitiful or charming, but they are always failed heroes or deeply flawed."

Never been a Khalid fan

Coming from a socialist background, I have never been a fan of Khalid, especially since the days when he was chief executive officer of Guthrie Bhd and was on the opposite side of the fence from the plantation workers we were fighting for.

When he became Pakatan's celebrated menteri besar of Selangor, I was still unimpressed by his neo-liberal and populist policies, which included giving away free water to Selangorians.

From 2008 to 2013, we heard nothing but praise and adulation for this Pakatan hero. In a passionate accolade by DAP's Tony Pua as recently as the recent Kajang by-election: "Khalid Ibrahim is an extremely honest and hardworking menteri besar."

Then when PKR announced its asinine 'Kajang Move' in complete contempt for voters' decisions in the 13th general election, Khalid began to display some flashes of the antihero.

When he was being openly maligned for being inept and corrupt by the PKR and DAP rottweilers as the basis for his ousting as menteri besar, Khalid showed amazing team spirit by taking on the role of Kajang by-election organiser and continually putting on his Yogi Bear grin for the cameras. It was like something out of Lu Xun's 'Story of Ah Q' - the classic antihero.

I, for one, could not have stomached such humiliation from the Pakatan rottweilers and still able to carry on with the Kajang Bad Movie. Again, this bears out Jessica Morrell's taxonomy of the antihero:

"One of the most important qualities to remember is that antiheroes rarely, if ever, reflect society's higher values - or what we like to think of as our society's values; their thinking and values are often antithetical to those of the norm. For example, the sort of traits valued by most members of society - such as honesty, strength, integrity and compassion - will not always be exhibited by an antihero in a story.

"Or, he might have a character arc where he grudgingly adopts some of these traits. Traditional depictions of main players were of good guys with traits that we all wanted to emulate. Antiheroes turn that assumption upside down."

Khalid, like most antihero characters who come with flaws, neuroses and "issues", possesses an underlying pathos. There is always something that is screwing up the antihero's plan - perhaps it is from his past. Can Khalid escape from the past and be redeemed or transformed in the end?

Wait for the next episode of 'Desperate Politicians'. Let's hope the fat gentleman does not disappoint us by not singing.

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