

## **Disney Shareholder Meeting – Remarks by Paul Chesser, director of the Corporate Integrity Project for National Legal and Policy Center – March 9, 2022**

An annual report on due diligence on human rights is all we ask for from The Walt Disney Company.

But Disney's board of directors says that's a waste of the company's time and money.

This multi-billion-dollar corporation fritters away millions of dollars of the company's resources on social justice initiatives for things like:

- erasing symbols of our nation's history;
- forcing abusive racial training programs on employees;
- and adding "content warnings" to classic films like "Dumbo" and "Fantasia."

Disney's board thinks the company has plenty of time and money for those things.

Do you know what else Disney had the time and money for?

They had the time and money to film "Mulan" in the part of communist China with among the most disgusting and egregious human rights violations in the world – in Xinjiang.

Forced abortions, slavery, torture and genocide are among the reported atrocities conducted under the authoritarian government, against the Muslim minority Uighurs in Northwest China.

The degree of evil in this region is so bad that it means you cannot trust that ANYTHING that is produced there, because of the forced labor practices going on there. Not cotton, not sugar, not assembled products – nothing.

And that's not me saying that – it is human rights groups saying that.

It's also top members of Congress, from both political parties, who also say that. The Democratic chairman of a special joint committee on China in Congress confirmed to Disney's ESPN recently that, yes, "It IS a genocide."

But rather than avoid Xinjiang and the abusive government that manages the region, Disney instead filmed “Mulan” there and then THANKED the local authorities for their help in the film’s credits.

So when the rest of the responsible corporate world is running away from the stigma of slavery, Disney is praising the local communists.

Meanwhile, Disney executives say they will not release any new films in Russia due to Vladimir Putin’s aggression against Ukraine.

Since when do ESG principles mean you get to support genocidal regimes in Asia, but you must oppose colonial warmongering in Europe?

Seems like cognitive dissonance to me.

But again, as the board says in this year’s proxy statement, they just don’t have the time and money to be accountable for this stuff.

What other priorities, besides “Mulan,” has the company made time and money for?

They so badly wanted a Disney resort in Shanghai, that the company gave majority ownership of the theme park to a Chinese government-controlled company.

Disney’s leadership also thinks it’s important for ESPN to be in a business partnership with NBA China and with Chinese broadcaster Tencent, despite those entities’ well-known censorship practices.

And Disney executives make sure that their Chinese government partners stay happy, by self-censoring “The Simpsons” episodes and movies like “Dr. Strange.”

No need to upset Dictator Xi Jinping!

Still, Disney’s board of directors says our shareholder resolution asking for a human rights report is a “misplaced premise.”

Disney’s lawyers use lots of meaningless words like “policies,” “practices,” “principles,” “standards,” and “values” to make it appear like they are vigilant about human rights.

They even say they are “deeply committed” to human rights – that’s a favorite phrase of corporate lawyers.

Disney even says it supports documents like the “United Nations’ Universal Declaration on Human Rights.” But is this statement doing ANYTHING to China for its genocidal actions?

Just because you say you are FOR something, doesn’t mean you are DOING anything about it.

Rather than all these empty statements and policies, we want to know what Disney is actually DOING in conducting its businesses with China and other countries with poor human rights protections.

But all the Disney board has to say for itself is that our proposal is a waste of their time, that they don’t have enough resources to carry it out, and that they are already disclosing their human rights activities.

Well, the Securities and Exchange Commission disagreed with Disney’s lawyers, which is why this resolution is in this year’s proxy statement.

We have asked our fellow shareholders at BlackRock and Vanguard to support our proposal, but they have given no indication whether they will do so. I guess their so-called ESG principles also have an exception clause for communist China.

Nonetheless, all we ask is that Disney’s leadership simply explain the human rights impacts of their interactions with foreign governments and entities.

If they can’t bring themselves to do that, then the question we have for Disney executives is: What are you hiding?