



## **GOP's Fear of Rand a 'Big Mistake' Says Atlas Shrugged Producer**

*With or without Paul Ryan's support, filmmaker's hope Ayn Rand's message makes a splash in the election*

By TIERNEY SNEED - October 3, 2012

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Twenty years ago, successful CEO and Ayn Rand disciple John Aglialoro bought the movie rights to the objectivist's opus *Atlas Shrugged* and tried for unsuccessfully to get Hollywood to make a film about a book the Library of Congress named the second most influential work in history. He was perplexed then when studios balked at producing the film, but soon came to believe that Hollywood feared the novel's conservative philosophical and political implications. In early 2010, as his ownership rights were close to expiring, he decided to turn the book into a movie trilogy himself, rushing to make the first two films so the second installment would be in theaters for the 2012 presidential election.

But at the time, Aglialoro couldn't have known that a high-profile Ayn Rand apostle would have been tapped as the GOP nominee's vice presidential candidate. Though Rep. Paul Ryan has said he "grew up on Ayn Rand," spoke at the Atlas Society, and even handed out copies of *Atlas Shrugged* as Christmas presents, since becoming Mitt Romney's running mate he's backed away from much of Rand's philosophy.

"If I were advising Paul Ryan," Aglialoro conceded, "I would tell him he should publicly distance himself" from Rand, citing her atheism as problematic for the devout Catholic. Aglialoro purchased the rights to the film from Rand's legal heir in 1992, expecting a quick transition from book to the big screen. With no major studio signing on, Aglialoro teamed up with Hollywood producer Harmon Kaslow to make the film on his own.

"Hollywood didn't have the courage," says Kaslow, who's worked with independent movie-makers before. The first installment of *Atlas Shrugged* was released on Tax Day last year.

The book follows a railway COO and her fellow industrialists as they struggle to deal with an overbearing government in a dystopian near future.

Aglialoro's first film introduces the increasingly oppressive government and its impact on the free market. The second film, titled *The Strike*, depicts the disappearance of the most successful industrialists, scientists, and artists as they reject government mandates—growing increasingly tired of carrying the weight of the world like the Greek mythological character Atlas, they shrugged.

The message of the film—and the book—is one of rugged individualism, or what came to be known as "Objectivism," where the efforts of the individual is paramount.

"Republicans are making a mistake by distancing themselves from Ayn Rand's message," says Aglialoro. However Rand's work is like a "buffet," he says, offering something for the left in her social libertarian views, and for the right in her moral defense of capitalism. Speaking to the audience before *The Strike*'s world premiere screening at the Ronald Reagan building in Washington, D.C., Aglialoro said *Atlas Shrugged* represents a "philosophical movement, not a political event." But he stressed the importance of Rand's pro-capitalist, anti-government message for the coming presidential election.

Without a studio marketing machine or budget, Aglialoro and Kaslow are promoting the film through conservative think tanks like the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, Americans for Prosperity, and Americans for Tax Reform (whose president, Grover Norquist, makes a cameo appearance in the second film). Kaslow sees it as "an opportunity to activate people for the election." *The Strike* will roll out in about 850 theaters across the country.

*Atlas Shrugged Part I* was panned by critics with "42 out of 42" reviewers giving it a thumbs down, Aglialoro said, arguing the critics were "prostituting their profession for their politics."

Despite the cool reception from critics for the first part of the series, the filmmakers are optimistic that *The Strike* will make a big splash. And having a high-profile Ayn Rand frenemy on the ballot next month can't hurt.