

MHA Opinion Essay - Shigaraki's past and his ability to make his own choices

After reading the last chapter, I finally figured out why the usual rants about Shigaraki from MHA being fully responsible for his own choices instead of getting sympathy for his past ring hollow to me. Namely, the fact that his childhood of being groomed as a spare meat puppet for the main antagonist isn't really his childhood but his immediate present. A lot of these arguments treat Shigaraki as an independent adult, forgetting a very important fact: that guy spends only 6-8 months without being groomed by his master.

As in, in his total life he spent less than a year making his own choices and his own human connections and even then they were partially engineered for him. By the series timeline, the only time he's not having All for One either directing him personally or personally pulling the strings right beside him is the few months between battle for Kamino and end of the Jaku hospital raid. Even if we are being generous with time and assume that doc Garaki's experiment's don't feature into grooming process, which is a massive stretch since he was literally being remade into perfect meat puppet for All for One to inhabit, this leaves us with Shigaraki being independent for a much less than a one full year in his whole life.

I want to repeat it for emphasis, this guy was making his own decisions for less than a year in his life. His abusive past wasn't an old event he had a time to outgrow, it was essentially his immediate present. Saying that Shigaraki is an adult fully responsible for his actions rings hollow since he is a little more than a manipulated puppet that only recently learned that he's capable of making his own decisions and properly lashing out against his master.

The idea that this guy was supposed to act as a moral adult capable of understanding that his childhood trauma doesn't justify him is absurd, because it assumes that he was supposed to just pick up a healthy moral compass out of nowhere and grow past his lifelong brainwashing within roughly six to eight months between his master's defeat and him becoming a literal meat puppet.

So, should Shigaraki be stopped? Yes, of course. He's a danger to everybody around him due to being a mentally unstable wreck that's showing signs of clinical emotional retardation. And I'm using this term in the literal meaning of him being set back in emotional development. This guy is, from a practical point of view, a monstrous abomination that can't be contained without killing him. But the question of this essay isn't whether or not Shigaraki is a monster. It's whether or not he can receive sympathy for his life of constant brainwashing.

I believe that while Shigaraki should be seen as a literal rampaging monster he is, he still deserves some clemency in his judgment on the account of a little more than an unstable, brainwashed experiment lashing out against his pain. Shigaraki is a monster in a more literal, tragic sense of being a wretched creature unfit to be judged to the moral standards of a normal human.

To conclude it, I sincerely believe that seeing him as a threat that needs to be stopped doesn't mean that we can't acknowledge that the main responsibility for him becoming it lies in All for One and doctor Garaki who literally made him into the impossible to contain monster.