The Color Purple Review

Steven Spielberg directed The Color Purple in 1985. With a cast of Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg and more, it became a controversy when it was released. Critics thought the movie was degrading black men and women, Personally, I agree and disagree.

The Color Purple follows the life of Celie Johnson (played by Whoppi Goldberg) as she struggles through life between the years of 1906 and 1937. The film begins with Celie about 14 years old, giving birth to her second child, who was fathered by her stepfather. Her stepfather takes the second child away from her and tells her never to tell anyone about it.

Time passes and a local farmer, 'Mister', comes by to marry Celie's younger, prettier sister, Nettie. Her father refuses to let Nettie marry and gives the man Celie instead. Celie had to cook, clean, and mother Mister 3 children. He verbally, physically, and sexually abuses Celie, then one day, Nettie comes by asking to stay with them, because their stepfather was treating her the same way he treated Celie. Mister tries to rape Nettie on her way to school but Nettie fought him off. Out of anger he sends her away, leaving Celie in world of hurt. Nettie promises to write, but Celie never receives a letter. Mister being so upset about Nettie refusing him he hid all the letters.

Later on, Mister son Harper. marries a woman named Sophia. One day Harpo goes to Celie and asked what he should do about Sophia not obeying him. Celie tells Harpo to beat Sophia because that was her NORM. Sophia and Harpo fights and Sophia approached Celie about it. She stressed to Celie that all her life she had to fight. Sophia later in the movie, gets locked up because she hit a white man in public. She was beat and broken in jail. When she came out, she had to work for a white woman after being locked up for 12 years. After being beat for that long, she no longer knew how to be in society. Celie sees her in the grocery store and helps her.

Mister's lover, Shug Avery, comes to visit and befriends Celie. Shug Avery was a promiscuous woman. At first, she was a negative person. She talked about Celie looks, would not eat, or take a bath. Her parents wrote her off and she had nobody, which is how her and Celie became friends. One day Avery kissed Celie making her sexually confused. When Avery got better, she left and Celie wanted to go but was too afraid of Mister.

When Shug did come back, she found all of Nettie letters and gave them to Celie. Celie being angry was about to try to murder Mister, but Avery stopped it. The movie ends in Celie leaving Mister with the threat that everything he touches will fall apart until he does right by her. Mister finds compassion and goes to the INS to help Celie's sister Nettie prove that she is a US citizen and return from Africa where she has been living with Celie's two children. C. After a while, Mister dies, and Celie is still married to him inherited the house. Celie gets one last letter from Nettie explaining that she met her two children and they want to meet her. Celie is reunited with Nettie and her two children.

In my opinion, this movie is a good movie because of the love the sisters have. For Celie and Nettie to go through so much in the beginning of their lives and still manages to have love for

each other after all the years apart is amazing. But the way Spielberg capitalized on the degrading part of black men is despicable.

Gene Siskel (1985 para. 4) released an article stating that “it takes an incredibly strong stand against the way black men treat black women. Cruel is too kind a word to describe their behavior. The principal black men in "The Color Purple" use their women--both wives and daughters--as sexual chattel.” I agree. The first thing you see as soon as the movie starts is a little girl giving birth to her father’s child. You see the same man giving her to a much older gentleman saying “ she is a liar, ugly and spoiled twice.” The same little girl is then beat and raped. It felt like that is the only thing Spielberg wanted you to see about black men.

When statements like, "I wondered, 'Is that really what they think of us?' It's as if there were an element of cruelty implicit in black men that all black women seem to identify (Shipp, 1986) " is released about one movie, something is wrong. The movie did not show any parts of the loving black man. The black man cares and loves their wives or protects their daughters. It shows black men beating and raping their daughters and wives. It made it seem like all black men are “pigs” per se.

I feel like being that this movie was made in 1985 and racism is still high, why won’t the racism capitalize as well. I understand that the movie was about one female and that it is fictional, but there is no way she didn’t get approached by at least one bigoted white man or woman. Why did Spielberg only target the black men? If you want to direct a movie on the blacks have the decency to show how whites were back, then as well.

The only part of this movie that showed compassion from the black man was when Mister went to the INS. But it only showed that part when Mister was on a brink of dying. Death is not the only reason to finally open your eyes and see that you are in the wrong.

If I directed this movie, I would have at least shown Mister apologizing to Celie before he had died. Nowhere in this movie did it show anybody apologizing and admitting that they were wrong, and I feel like that would have made the movie more relatable. I feel like it should have been expressed, so Celie could have moved on. Even though she had met her kids and was at peace it would’ve been good to see it.

Even though I feel like Spielberg was a tad bit racist, I would still recommend people to watch it. I feel like it could help women in similar situations to speak up if they were in the same predicament. The ending is still powerful and show you can overcome anything, which is why this is still one of my favorite movies and I would still watch it any day or time.

Reference

1. Shipp, E. R. (1986, January 27). BLACKS IN HEATED DEBATE OVER ‘THE COLOR PURPLE.’ Retrieved January 26, 2020
2. https://www.nytimes.com/1986/01/27/us/blacks-in-heated-debate-over- the-color-purple.html
3. Siskel, G. (1985, December 20). ``COLOR PURPLE``: POWERFUL, DARING, SWEETLY UPLIFTING. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct- xpm-1985-12-20-8503280315-story.html