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“Crash”

Cultural Diversity

 I’ve watched the movie “Crash” multiple times for many different classes and each class has asked me to view the movie in the different way. It is a very versatile movie considering that the watcher can analyze it however they see fit and each time it is watched, you can identify or at least understand each character a bit differently. It is not a movie for the close-minded and definitely not a movie for those easily offended. This time around, I was looking for its relevance to our cultural diversity class and it didn’t take long for me to find it. The movie is centered mostly on racial and social tensions in Los Angeles, California and differs from many other films about racism in it takes a rather impartial approach to the issue. It shows no biased and rather than separating the characters into victims and offenders (or racist or not), victims of racism are often shown to be racist themselves in different contexts and situations, much like the diversity of our real world society. Also, racist remarks and actions are often shown to stem from ignorance and misconception about other races rather from a malicious personality (this is seen mostly with Sandra Bullock’s character). This is where the cultural diversity comes into play. The characters, which are all of different racial backgrounds, collide at different parts of the move and their different pre-conceived notions and prejudiced determined how each situation was handled. “You think you know who you are. You have no idea.” (Crash, 2004)

 While watching the movie, I found that I identified with each character to an extent. I understood Jean’s (Sandra Bullocks) fear after her husband’s car was taken and where her prejudiced stemmed from. I also understood Anthony (Ludacris’ character) and his fear of fitting into the stereotypes about African Americans and his need to constantly be on his toes around those who were looking to fit him into a box. More so, the character that I most identified with had to be Farhad’s (the Persian shop owner) daughter. Dorri, the daughter, was conflicted between her father’s stereotypes of other people, his eccentric need to take things into his own hands, and her own desire to call attention away from her family. I find that she was glad to be Persian, speaking the language fluently and even communicating others when her parents couldn’t be understood, but there was also a part of her that seemed to want to Americanize them a bit so that they wouldn’t continue to be prosecuted as “Iraqi terrorists.” This reminds me a lot of my family and the role I take with them everyday. We are not under siege like those of Muslim, Middle Eastern descent but there are a lot of stereotypes about Haitian-Americans that I fight to dissolve everyday while still maintaining my pride about my roots.

 On the topic of Sandra Bullock’s character Jean, I do not think she is racist but rather I find that she is a radicalist in the most extreme sense of the word. She has her qualms about African Americans (as you can see when she pulls her husband close as the two African American young men walk towards her on the sidewalk) but I find that most people have the same fears of black men. I don’t think this is outwardly racist but rather a prejudice that is fed every day when African Americans commit crimes or are seen on the news. Of course, not all African Americans are the same but I see why she reacted the way she did. Unfortunately, her suspicions were confirmed when she and her husband were mugged and their car stolen by the same two men she shied away from. This scary situation is what launched her into a fear of all minorities. As irrational as she became, when she had the locks to her home door changed and her reaction to the Puerto Rican man who did the job, it stemmed from a place of post-traumatic stress rather than outward racism. I wouldn’t put Jean in the same boat as someone who is exclusively racist but I do think she needs some help, even if her actions are coming from fear of past experiences.

 At the film’s end, I found that the world has changed greatly from what this film portrays. Of course, we continue to have our stereotypes and prejudices about other races either based on learned notions or experiences but that is something that, in my opinion, can never fully be eradicated. It’s human nature to protect yourself and your life at all costs and I believe that this mindset is what keeps prejudice and petty racism alive. In regards to what I learned about myself after watching the movie, I found that I am grateful for not having experienced hardcore racism against me. Of course, I have been stereotyped (as a black woman, it’s easy to be considered “loud and ghetto” before you have a chance to prove yourself). I found that I also have my own stereotypes about others that does stem from fear and past experiences but am happy that I know enough to calm myself down and to keep my actions and mannerisms in check. I don’t wish to offend anyone, just to keep myself safe.