**Introduction**

I always enjoyed movies and theatre, but with a childhood history of acting and classes during adolescence, I didn’t enjoy acting. At the age of 9 I participated in a short film with a local summer camp, but I remember being constantly aware that it was all pretend—it never felt authentic to me. My own attempts at playing a character didn’t fit the high expectations I had for myself based on stunning performances I’d seen in the past.

I tried to stay involved in my high school’s theater program, but I found myself frustrated because I didn’t think I was as good as some of my fellow student actors. What I loved about the mainstage ensemble was watching someone play a character, knowing that the character and the person remain two separate entities. One afternoon during rehearsal, I watched as our director attempted to consult a struggling student with her lines. He tried to explain to her the kind of emotion she was supposed to convey through the way she said her lines, but she wasn’t understanding. As I listened, I found myself naturally providing instructions in my head that I felt might be clearer. At that moment I realized I’d rather be a director in this industry, and soon left the mainstage ensemble at my school.

I shifted gears in my sophomore year of high school from theater to documentary filmmaking. I joined a non-profit organization that allowed student interns to create a project every year about a topic of our choice. With almost complete creative control, my fellow interns and I collaborated each year on topics of gun violence, queer teenagers, and sexual violence. These projects are some of my proudest accomplishments, because I remember how much work went into them and how dedicated we all were while working on them. Finally, I learned how much I love filmmaking, which lead me to my choice in major.

My love for the film world inspired me to research the racial polarization that exist in the American movie industry. I specifically wanted to focus on the presence of overwhelmingly white casts with one or two characters of color and vice versa. Yet with further consideration I found that I could too easily explain how this separation came about, given the wealth of information on the exclusion of black actors and filmmakers from the mainstream American film industry. I decided to take a critical look the role race plays in modern films with casts of mixed backgrounds. Specifically, the presence of characters of color based on stereotypes in films that fail to contextualize the circumstances with historical and institutional oppression. I arrived at the proposition of how “post-racial” narratives in mainstream American films perpetuate racial stereotypes and colorblindness. Post-racialists would most likely cite the increased media representation of people of color as evidence of their claim. This paper aims to disprove that notion through the analysis of several recent films that still feature largely racially motivated themes and stereotypes, despite many of them highlighting the actions of characters from mixed racial backgrounds collaborating toward a heroic goal.