

Cry freedom: south africa during the apartheid era



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Cry freedom is effective in illustrating the prominent issues in South Africa during the apartheid era through cinematic techniques. The film title itself is an immediate indication of the the restrictions placed upon freedom, and the deprivation of basic human rights and social justice in black society. The protagonists- Donald Woods and Steve Biko- are a coinciding dichotomy that develop an unbreakable friendship through their similar ambitions of equality in society.

The film explores the discrimination against black South Africa, and the negative effects of policies such as apartheid on the social standings and lives of the sufferers. Therefore, Cinematic techniques such as camera angles and lighting are effective in portraying the prominent issues in Cry freedom. In 1945, South Africa became a member of the United Nations, but they refused to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and imposed greater restrictions on Bantus (black Africans), and deprived them from their freedom and basic human rights. Freedom is defined as the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint. The film title itself delves into the the idea of black society Crying out for freedom and justice. The protagonist Steve Biko was restricted from his freedom of speech, through his banning by the South African government. The cinematography in the scene in which Biko is captured by the police and interrogated are effective in illustrating the lack of freedom. The active fan in the background is a representation of a change.

Biko says, ' You can beat or jail me or even kill me, but I am not going to be what you want me to be! ' In reference to the symbolism of the fan, this quote demonstrates Biko's refusal to change his views, and that the fan can

continue to turn but the wind will not blow his ideas. Similarly, Woods had the freedom of speech through his job working as the editor of a widely read newspaper. After his correlation with Biko, his views changed and his sight became clear regarding the injustice occurring in South Africa. When Woods tries to expose the government, he is banned, and his situation becomes synonymous to Biko's. The cinematography in the final scene, as Donald and his family are flying over South Africa, is a long shot, showing the horizon in the distance.

He holds the bag containing the book of Biko's life close, illustrating that he is not only retrieving freedom for himself and for Biko, but as he looks down at his homeland, he is also retrieving freedom and justice for the millions of black South Africans. Thus, cinematography is effective in portraying the issue of freedom. The protagonists Donald Woods and Steve Biko exemplify the idea of opposites attracting to form a titanium strong companionship.

Cinematography such as lighting is effective in illustrating the true nature of friendships. Unlike the false friendship between Woods and Kruger, Woods and Biko develop a friendship based on truth, understanding and mutual respect. In the initial meeting of Biko and Woods, a close up shot with natural backlighting is taken of Woods and Biko shaking hands. Only their handshake is shown, and its purpose is to convey trust, balance, and equality. The significance of shaking with their right hands was that during the time of chivalry, shaking with your right meant you weren't carrying weapons, therefore meant no harm, so shaking with your right hand is symbolic of peace. Furthermore, friendship is illustrated in the football scene with Biko.

When his friends see a white person, they immediately try to protect him, saying " get in the middle, well cover you Biko" this emphasises the extent of friendship and love manifested by various characters to protect and ensure each others safety. After biko is killed, Woods ventures out to seek justice for his best friend, and ensure that his true life and ambitions for a ' beautiful south africa are fulfilled' therefore, the film is effective in illustrating friendship. Racial discrimination is evident in the film through the political policy of apartheid, which was designed to separate black and white South Africans, to oppress, dominate and control blacks, and in the same breath to enrich white South Africans at the expense of the oppressed black people.

Kruger, the head of the police commission, is the ideal example of a person benefitting at the expense of the blacks. he says " this country has a special problem of its own. " initially, the audience believes that he thinks the problem is apartheid and racial inequality, however later the audience is shown that his burden are the blacks. racial discrimination is also evident through the scene of biko capturing through the use of cinematography. in the scene Biko is asked to exit the car and to see his passbook by the police, the use of the flickering red light indicates he has been caught has been caught ' red handed'. Biko is then forced to call himself ' stephen bantu Biko. ' in this scene at that moment, the idea of inferiority is reinforced through high angle shots, and Biko forcefully having to refer to himself as bantu, reminding him of his always subservient status in society.

Furthermore, derogatory terms such as kaffir and bantu are used to describe black africans which are insulting and hurtful to the blacks, as

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aforementioned, they reinforce blacks subservient roles in society. herefore racial discrimination is effectively illustrated through the use of cinematography in conclusion cinematic techniques such as lighting, camera angle and diegetic sounds, successfully portray the prominent issues in the film. Cry freedom explores human rights and freedom issues during apartheid, and the impacts of racial discrimination and inequality in society due to apartheid. biko and woods are yin and yang, they are an interaction of opposites, black and white, and together they represent a perfect interactive, striving for a perfect balance of rights in South Africa.