

Get out: illustration of
the enduring yet
elusive psychology of
slavery



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As James Baldwin asserts, “ People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them”, highlighting the recurring notion through history in that humanity is incapable to detach or learn from their past in order to create a newer future. Humanity holds onto particular ideas and repeats these mistakes instilled in them through past occurrences. In the film *Get Out*, director Jordan Peele expresses the idea of modern slavery and systemic racism through the satirical portrayal of racial exploitation and suppression. The film focuses on Chris Washington (Daniel Kaluuya) and his strange encounters through a weekend with his white girlfriend’s family, the Armitages, in upstate New York. The bizarre encounters with the groundskeeper and the maid unravel a complex scheme involving hypnosis and brain surgery, which are aimed at prolonging the lives of weak white people in the bodies of robust black people. By manipulating their black victims into the “ sunken place” to allow for the transfer. Bearing in mind accounts in history, the notion that drove white abolitionists were not necessarily that all races are equal. But rather the mortification and repulsion towards the dehumanizing nature of slavery by the so-called civilized societies. Hence this easy sense of repulsion from an objective perspective did not and does not require an individual to contemplate or address the underlying ideology of racial dominance that does not adhere to the traditional sense of slavery. Thus, Peele’s *Get Out* captures and addresses the presence of slavery mindset in racial fetishism and the racial power dynamic in contemporary society that still fosters racial exploitation and suppression of black people.

Through satire, the film illustrates the racial exploitation of black people through the commodification of their image and physical attributes. Dean Armitage utters to Chris “ You have been chosen because of the physical advantages you have enjoyed your entire lifetime” (Peele). Alluding to the desire the white candidates have towards the black body which possesses better or rather desirable attributes from its physical prowess. As Jim Hudson asserts “ People want to change. Some people want to be stronger...faster... cooler. Black is in fashion” (Peele). The notion of fetishizing the black physique is a common occurrence in contemporary times which the film depicts as a subtle form of racial exploitation. During slavery, black people were considered as ‘ perfect’ candidates for forced labor and were purchased and owned like commodities. In modern times, through sportsmanship in various realms of athletics, black people and their physique are a selling point due to their successes in these institutions that are ironically run by the elite and rich white populace. In the film, Peele satirically demonstrates this notion through the desire and repurposing of black bodies by white folks for reasons such as strength by Jeremy Armitage, speed by the groundskeeper, and also as sex slaves. Despite the concepts not being slavery in the traditional sense, these aspects in society satirized by the film suggest the psychology of slavery that drives them.

Henceforth, Peele demonstrates the enduring yet subtle slavery psychology fostered by white supremacy that still persists in the post-slavery world. Dean further asserts, “ With your natural gifts and our determination we could both be part of something greater. Something perfect” (Peele). His assertion alludes to the professed intelligence of white people that stem

from involuntary white supremacy notions that only intends to benefit his own race while exploiting the other. Peele does not portray the Armitage family as overtly racist white supremacists but rather as the liberal whites who profess their belief in racial equality. Thus through this setup, the film shows how even those who claim to check their white privilege foster the structures that intend to subjugate minorities. Peele illustrates the persistent psychology of slavery in the instincts of the white populace that either deliberately or involuntarily, obviously or subtly nurture the oppression of black people.

Consequently, the film shows the concepts of racial suppression among black people through its satirized sunken place. After hypnotizing Chris, Missy Armitage asserts, “ Sink. Now you’re in the sunken place” (Peele). The sunken place symbolizes the subjugation of minorities through the systemic racism structured by the white-centric society. Peele depicts the multi-stage procedure that starts with hypnosis to subdue their victims, and culminates with lobotomy that completely shuts them out to repurpose their bodies as an allegory to modern slavery. For instance, the prison-industrial system falls into this subject as a form of modern slavery in that it lobbies for tougher laws to subsequently enable more inmates in privately owned prisons for financial incentives. Racial oppression has transformed from traditional slavery to a systematic regime of rooted decrees that result in domination of minority races. Furthermore, the sunken place also represents the issues faced by black cultural expression and the challenges faced by black people in their daily interactions in a white-dominated civilization.

Accordingly, the film *Get Out* addresses the presence of slavery psychology in systemic racism and racial fetishism in contemporary society that foster racial exploitation and suppression of black people. The satire demonstrates the exploitation of the black populace through the fetishizing and commodification of black physical attributes. Subsequently, it illustrates the subtle notions of white supremacy that nurtures this exploitation even in some whose white privilege is checked. Moreover, Peele utilizes the sunken place as a metaphor for the subdual of black identity and modern slavery in a white-dominated society. The film intends to express the persistence of archaic ideologies in our modern civilization despite the perceived assumptions of progress.

Work Cited

Get Out. Dir. Jordan Peele. Perf. Daniel Kaluuya. 2017. Web.