

Analyse a media text  
documentary film  
called 14 days in may  
essay sample



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This documentary film is about a black man on death row in the Mississippi state prison, in 1979, Edward Earl Johnson charged with the shooting of a white police marshal and the attempted rape of a 60 year old white woman. Johnson has spent 8 years on death row appealing the case and is to be executed on may 20th in fourteen days time. The programme focuses on the last two weeks of the fight to save Edward Earl Johnson. Edward Earl Johnson says about the case: There was a Buick car at the scene of the crime. Johnson has a Buick car, therefore, Johnson was put into a police line up to identify the rapist.

The 60 year old victim already knew Johnson and said it was not him. The death penalty is not only used in Mississippi but widely used in other states of America. In the USA there are over 3, 000 on death row. Scientific studies consistently fail to demonstrate that the executions deter people from committing crimes. In this situation it is too complex and difficult to point to any single fact or argument as the most important, because there are too many issues to cover in the abolishment of the death penalty. The states that still use the death penalty are the following, Texas, California, Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Tennessee.

The directors choose Edward earl Johnson's case because he was a black man on death row in Mississippi state prison. Where the law is unfair and especially with black people. The director noticed that out of all the cases on death row Edward earl Johnson's case was not like the rest. The director asks Johnson to explain the whole story to him. Johnson says about the case: there was a Buick car at the scene of the crime. Johnson has a Buick.

Therefore, Johnson was put into a police line up to identify the rapist. The 60 year old victim already knew Johnson and said it was not him!

Johnson agreed to travel to Jackson to take the lie detector test. On the way the car was stopped and he was told by the sheriff and investigator to give them something or they would shoot him and say he jumped from the car and tried to escape. Johnson also said that they told him to repeat what they said on a tape. They wrote this out as a confession and made him sign it. Johnson did so because he was scared. He said he felt isolated. The impression that I received from the penitentiary is misjudgement of black people and their cases.

They are being wrongly accused of crimes and there is no way for them to justify themselves. My impression of the prisoner, Edward Earl Johnson is he is a very day man, who minds his own business and try's to get on with life as best as he can. Edward earl Johnson doesn't sound like murder material. This is one of the reasons why they chose to frame him as a suspect. The police needed some to blame and Johnson sounds like he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. When Edward earl Johnson was interviewed he was always behind something, for example bars, barb wire, gates etc.

This shows the audience they have no space for them to reflect or relax. There is no freedom for them, and when ever there are no bars or gates there are white police officers on horses with a gun in there hand. At one stage there was a part in the documentary where there was officers playing with guns in front of prisoners, they show us this because it is how they show there power over the prisoners and how they don't care what happens to

them. Edward presents himself as a black man who believes that justices will take place in his case (god will see that he makes it through).

A very important point I would like to mention is when the director is speaking with Johnson and he is very calm and not abrupt or argumentative with him and others, he shows a complete understanding of the situation and through out all his talks not once did he become defensive. He is ask many questions and answer quickly and clearly in simple English, his body language is very relaxed and not tense he stands tall with his head high, this shows his personality to the audience and clearly shows it is not of a murderers but of an innocent persons.

I think the director chose to make this documentary in Mississippi because he wanted to make it known to the world of the injustice in the Mississippi penitentiary is corrupted. In those days black people were sent to death row for anything but if a white person was to commit the same offence they would get away lightly. The director reminds us of slavery by showing the treatment that black and white people have gone through how different the attitude is more force full towards black men on the prison than white men.

The documentary also shows a part where there was a black lawyer who said he had to work twice as hard as his white counterparts to get where he was. And how depressing it can become. My impression of the centre is that it is a very scary place to spend the rest of your life and I would not like to experience it. The gas chamber scared the most because knowing that is how u are going to die is very scary. when the director shows us the gas

chamber he does it we can image what it would feel like knowing you are going to die in that very chair.

Then we are shown the gas chamber we see the workers laughing and joking as they test it and prepare it, I feel they are like that because they have a lot of power by knowing how to operate the machine and are happy that they won't be in it because they know how painful and dangerous it is. I think the workers should take it more seriously and not as a joke, because this is real life and someone will be dying by that machine. The director has shown us these parts in the documentary to deter us from death row because it is not a nice place to be kept in all your life.

And you will only notice it when you are in there and it is too late to turn back. As well as Edward Earl Johnson the director also chose to interview a police officer. The superintendent of the jail thinks Johnson committed the crime. He has no qualms about Johnson's guilt, he says: the system is flawed (i. e. , you need money to buy your defence in court), But it's not a fatal flaw!! He also believes there are others on death row that are more deserving of facing the death sentence ahead of Johnson who should be 18th, 9th in line.

These are also more reason to show how unfair it was in the penitentiary, to me it looks like they were rushing to get rid of Johnson so they wouldn't get found out. The priest also thinks that Johnson is not guilty and she is praying for him with the family. Another inmate was interviewed he is also a black male on death row. He understands what is happening to Johnson and is with him all the way. He doesn't believe he killed the officer; he believes he is here because he is black and was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Johnson's family is shown at length, this stirs up our feelings because we can see the family are in pain, they know time is fast approaching and they are running out of hope, but the family still keep their heads high. For example the younger children made a song for Johnson which I can say touched my heart deeply. The scene with Johnson and his family show how strong they are as a family how they coped with the problem and kept on moving. This is very touching to the audience.

This is another reason to think about capital punishment a little more and decide weather there is any point in it if they are going to abuse it and kill innocent people. The director chose to film the documentary this way because he wanted to demonstrate the pain and suffering an innocent person like Johnson has to go through just because of the colour of his skin. It also makes it more dramatic to the audience and try's help deter people from death row. The camera was with Edward Earl Johnson in his last hours, this affected me because I couldn't believe this happened in real life I couldn't believe it was for real!!

I mean you see films that are just like this documentary (Green mile). After the documentary had finished I was very emotional and thought suppose that was me what would and could I do to have fix it also being a black male. From watching this documentary I think that capital punishment should be banned in every country town and city. I believe that god should determine how a human should die not another human. Watching the documentary didn't influence my opinion on capital punishment it made me want it banned even more. I have come to the end of my Essay and I would like to end with a saying that I strongly believe in.

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