

Racism in society essay

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The movie *Crash* is about several different scenarios of everyday people from different racial backgrounds in Los Angeles. *Crash* was “ the only movie that is not afraid to tackle the themes of race and ethnical tension in today’s American society. ” The film compelled people to examine their own prejudices. (Orbe & Kinefuchi, 2008). Within a two day period, the characters will come in and out of each other’s lives and show the racial interaction between them thru “ collisions”. Two black thieves rob an attorney and his wife; attorney’s wife is racist against her locksmith, who also changes a Persian mans locks; a black detective who is working on a case with the attorney and whose brother is one of the thieves; a racist cop who molests a black woman and cares for his father; a black health insurance lady who has to put up with the racist cop; a black director and his wife get pulled over by the racist cop; a Persian store owner has his locks changed and blames the locksmith when his store is vandalized.

The movie shows collisions of these characters and the stories that lead up to the collisions (Kinefuchi & Orbe, 2008). I think what Paul Haggis, the co-writer and director of *Crash* wants us to believe that all types of racism are part of all of us and illustrates the reality of it among our society in the movie. *Crash* examines the racial interactions between several ethnic groups through cleverly constructed scenarios. It also identifies individual struggles with racial prejudice and how it affects choices they make in their personal and professional lives. In reality, we think we are unaffected by racial prejudice by avoiding certain encounters. We pretend we are invisible to its effects.

But if we were placed in a particular situation, we would be forced to deal with our prejudices. Only when we recognize and admit our prejudices can we begin to deal with racism in our society. Some of us are aware of this and are not afraid to expose it, while others go to great lengths to conceal it.

Some people are not aware of their prejudices at all. Sooner or later, we are all confronted with our prejudices, and how we choose to react to them is what really matters. Racism is prejudice or animosity against people who belong to other races and includes both attitudes and behaviors. It is a complex issue that stems from a simple concept: Ignorance. We are ignorant about other races and this lack of knowledge causes us to be fearful.

Instead of trying to find out or exercising tolerance we embrace the stereotypes. We choose to hate the things that we fear instead of exploring the fear. Because people want to believe it doesn't exist anymore. Its effects are far reaching and can leave the race on the receiving end with a sense of hopelessness so profound that they are driven to do just about anything (Matthews, 2005). People attempt to live their lives evading racism and prejudice, yet they are trapped.

We have to realize that we are in this world together and we must understand and work together against these racial problems since we are all capable of negative stereotypes, racism, and prejudice. Crash addresses the unspoken prejudices and biases that are embedded in our collective unconscious and until we confront and examine these harmful and dangerous issues, we will not overcome them. It portrays many acts of racism and social injustice that may be conscious or unconscious (Ahlquist

and Milner, 2008). We need to face our own prejudices and confront feelings of self-hatred that are typically unspoken, but are very much vibrating below the surface of our conscious mind. The movie covers the reality that people do hold stereotypes about others that drive us consciously or unconsciously to live out in sort of a love-hate duality (Taulbee, 2006).

Crash very effectively equates and replaces the term “ race” with the term “ prejudice”, and then argues that everyone is a little prejudiced. This is a very effective shifting of terms that supports the dominant racial mythology in the US, especially for those who do not want to be identified as “ racist” but can accept the idea of being “ prejudiced,” since the film argues that everyone is (Middleton, 2007). Racism and prejudice are a widespread social problem and mainstream media and entertainment play a crucial part in shaping out ideas about racial prejudice. Prejudice can be in the form of racism, manifested verbally, unconsciously or deliberately.

We have racial prejudice when we experience an upsetting situation the makes us form a bias against someone. The film implies “ Don’t worry, everyone’s a little bit racist! Many of the people whom we assumed would be on the receiving end of racism, namely the non-white characters, are shown to be racist themselves: Anthony calls a Korean man a ‘ Chinaman’; Graham flings an insulting stereotype of Hispanic people at Ria; Ria mocks an Asian ladies accent (Silvey, 2009). Ebert said that the film enabled an audience to reflect upon their own prejudices, while encouraging the tolerance and acceptance of the differences of others: “ Not many films have the possibility of making their viewers better people; anyone seeing it is likely to leave with a little more sympathy for people not like themselves” (Ebert, 2005). The <https://assignbuster.com/racism-in-society-essay/>

movie engages what audiences of nearly every racial and ethnic kind feel, in part because the joke is on all of us, but largely because the movie dares to express the prejudicial sentiments we harbor in our hearts. Behind every white person, there is a racist, or vice versa.

Perhaps the true racists are those who act rather than speak against the other. Crash complicates the moral aspects of ethnic and racial biases while simplifying the material structures that cause and perpetuate these biases (Holmes, 2007). Crash is loaded with racial tension. The film's insight is that everyone is racially prejudiced and experiences of racism can happen to anyone, " everyone is, or can be, racist! " It tends to reveal the true racial deceit of Crash, and how it manipulates viewers into believing that racism is a matter of personal prejudice (Sharma, 2010). I found that even though nobody wants to admit it, everyone is racist whether it is a lot or a little and how we show it, is what matters. Method For this study, I critically analyzed the movie " Crash" by Paul Hargiss. I choose this film because I noticed that it dealt with racism and how we deal with it in everyday situations and thought it would be a great example.

To find all the information I needed, I watched the movie with an open mind and each scene intensely. Through the different scenes I watched each character and thought about how they expressed racism. I also thought what it would be like if I were in their shoes. I then choose eight characters and assessed the roles of them that I thought showed the most racism and then one by one, I determined how they were racist and how it affected them.

Results Jean Cabot, who is white and the wife of a politician (Rick), makes very pointed racial remarks within earshot of Daniel, the Hispanic locksmith

changing the locks in her house after she experiences a carjacking by two black men. She stereotypes Daniel as a gang banger because he's Hispanic, has a shaved head and tattoos and tells her husband that she wants the locks to be replaced again tomorrow. Next, she gets upset when she sees her dishwasher has not been emptied by her Hispanic maid (Maria).

But later in the movie, Jean sprains her ankle falling down the stairs. When Jean calls her good friend, she is too busy getting a massage and Maria helps her and takes her to the hospital. Jean hugs and confides that Maria is her best friend. Jean shows that racial prejudice of hers becomes apparent after she is carjacked by two black men (Anthony and Peter) and then takes it out on Daniel and Maria.

Ryan is a white cop who is racist against minorities because his father lost everything when the city gave contracts to minority owned businesses. He pulls over an African American man driving a luxury vehicle when he sees a “white” woman performing sexual activities on the driver while operating a vehicle. When he finds out it's an African American couple, a movie director (Cameron) and his wife (Christine), he molests the woman (Christine) and makes fun of the husband for allowing his wife to mouth off to the officer. In another scene, Ryan insults Shaniqua, the woman handling his father's medical case, implying she is incompetent because of her African American ethnicity. Later he responds to a burning overturned car. It is Christine, the woman he molested. When she sees him she screams hysterically and does not want him near her. He saves her and she seems to be in disbelief that he would do that especially after molesting her.

Ryan thru out the movie shows how racist he is. I think that it was through his actions that he realized he shouldn't have been racist towards Christine or Shaniqua. If he treated Christine with respect, she would have done the same during her accident.

If he would have treated Shaniqua better, she would have given his dad a break with the insurance. Anthony and Peter are two young African American guys who feel that people are racist against them, even those of their own kind. They are in a restaurant and their Black waitress serves the White customers over and over before them. When they leave the restaurant they noticed a White couple walking, when the woman (Jean) sees them, she automatically clutches to her husband.

Anthony feels she is being racist and so he and Peter put a gun to the couple and carjack their vehicle. In another scene, the guys try to carjack the Black director's vehicle and don't succeed; the director tells Anthony that he is an "embarrassment to the black race". Throughout the movie, Anthony tells Peter how people are racists of blacks.

He says busses have the big windows "to humiliate the people of color who are reduced to riding on them". I believe that Anthony has issues and feels victimized because of the way he interprets situations in life. And since he feels that way, he basically shows the reality of why white people are racists toward him. Farhad, a Persian shop owner, feels like a victim of racism from people of other ethnicities. In the first scene, he is trying to buy a gun from a White store owner, who gets upset and makes a racial remark because he thinks that Farhad is Iranian and feels that the Iranians came to America to

destroy his country, then kicks Farhad out of the store. In the next scene, Farhad has a locksmith (Daniel) come over to fix the lock. Daniel replaces the lock and finds that the door needs to be replaced instead.

When he tells this to Farhad, he gets upset and thinks the Daniel is cheating him. In another scene, Farhad's business is vandalized and thinks that Daniel is the blame since he didn't fix the "lock". Farhad, then takes the gun he bought and goes to Daniel's house and shoots his daughter with a blank bullet. I think that Farhad is a victim; however, he is also racial profiling as well towards Daniel. Cameron, a successful African American producer, was raised with a white family and therefore does not feel like he was accepted into the black culture. He also shows that he is not accepted by the white people who he encountered, such as the cops.

His wife Christine, who was molested by the cop, gives him grief throughout the movie for not being "black" enough and not standing up to white people when he feels they are doing wrong. In another scene, Cameron is directing a movie, and his boss says that one of the characters, who is black, is acting too white and to get rid of him. Cameron again, does not stand up to the boss, just does what he says and goes on with making his movie. Later in the movie, Cameron does become the racist by stereotyping the police based on the prior incident. He stands up to the cops during a second incident when Peter and Anthony try to hijack his car. I think Cameron was so upset that he let the cops get away with the stuff they did before and people saying that he wasn't "black enough" that he became prejudice towards whites in the end.

Graham is a black detective whose brother is a thief and mother who is a drug addict, becomes racist towards whites. He has a detective partner, Ria, who is his girlfriend as well. He tells his mom that she is a Mexican, when actually she is a Latino. In one of the scenes, a white cop shot a black cop because the black cop was up to something suspicious, and the white attorney, who is for blacks, gets Graham to agree with a story to blame the white cop instead in order for Graham's brother to have his criminal charge dropped. Hansen, the racist cop's partner, tries to tell Ryan not to pull over the black couple because they did nothing wrong and tries to stick up for them.

In another scene, Cameron is pulled over again and Hansen tells his fellow officers that Cameron is clean, he has no guns. As Hansen is off duty, he picks the other carjacker hitchhiking (Graham's brother) and adopts the racist idea that blacks are criminal. After a conversation seems to be misunderstood, Hansen shoots and kills the hitchhiker.

After realizing he made a mistake, he then covers up the incident by dumping the body and setting fire to his car. Hansen during that scene becomes racist, he assumed that Peter was a criminal since he was black and thought he was pulling a gun, when it really was just a statue like Hansen's. Conclusion The movie Crash has expressively and effectively communicated to the viewers how people clearly show racial prejudice to each other.

It displayed how one character can become the offender at one time and then the victim in another racial situation. This just shows how each one of us has a prejudice over someone or something. Movies like this, try to

communicate the harsh realities to provide us the awareness and awaken us to bring out improvements in whatever we fall short of in a personal level as well as in the community. From my research, I found that racism, even racial prejudices is in our everyday lives, whether we choose to believe it or not.

The characters alone each showed this in their own personal ways and their actions not only affected them, but others as well. References Ahlquist, R. & Milner, M. (2008).

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