

Disney princess

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Maegan Cherry Dr. Walker Composition I 15 November 2012 The Princess and the Frog Princess Diana once said, “ Being a princess is not all it is cracked up to be. ” This is a true statement in some instances such as Disney’s 2009 film The Princess and the Frog. The film is based in the 1920’s in New Orleans, Louisiana. The 1920’s was a time period of segregation, and it was not uncommon to see a black person working in a white family’s home. Southern states were more segregated than others, so the film being in Louisiana plays a very important role.

Most black people were not as wealthy as white people; therefore they did not have the luxuries of the families they worked for. They tended to live in small houses, and they had to take the train or walk for transportation. Tiana’s family was no different than any other 1920’s African American family. Tiana’s mother, Eudora, worked as a seamstress and a caretaker for “ Big Daddy’s” daughter, Lottie. “ Big Daddy” is a wealthy white man who spoils his daughter, and gives her everything she wants. Eudora took Tiana with her to work where she became friends with Lottie.

Lottie grew up with fairy tales, and wanted her life to be nothing short of one. Tiana, on the other hand, did not believe in fairy tales. She believed hard work would get you where you need to be. Tiana had a dream of owning her own restaurant, but she faces many challenges that keep her from achieving her dream. Many people believe that Disney has focused too much on race and the time period, rather than making Tiana a princess. Moon Charania and Wendy Simonds wrote an article titled “ The Princess and the Frog” explaining the different stereotypes presented in the film.

Ajay Gehlawat also wrote an article titled “ The Strange Case of The Princess and the Frog: Passing and the Elision of Race” explaining the stereotyping of the races in the film. I think Disney did a great job of relating the time period to the characters. The film may have been stereotypical, but it was relevant to the setting. To make the film less controversial I think Disney could have made Tiana a princess in a different time period, so there would not be any stereotyping of the characters. The biggest stereotyping was between the white family and the black family.

Being Caucasian in the 1920’s meant you lived a very fortunate life, and you did not experience the hardships that other races may have faced. In *The Princess and the Frog*, “ Big Daddy” was a typical wealthy Southern man, who gave his daughter, Lottie, anything she wanted. Lottie was portrayed in the film as a spoiled girl. She wanted to marry her prince charming, and live happily ever after. Just like in the fairy tales she grew up with. Charania and Simonds stated, “ Lottie, on the other hand, is a caricature of conventional Disney princesses” (page 70).

I agree that Lottie is portrayed as a typical princess, and I can see how people would think Disney is stereotyping. Since Lottie fits the normal Disney princess characteristics it seems like Disney is making her more of the princess than they are making Tiana. Gehlawat shows more of how Lottie is stereotyped in the white family. Gehlawat stated, “ When Lottie, Tiana’s childhood friend, asks her to prepare a couple hundred of her famous beignes.... and drops a wad of bills in her hand” (422). This statement shows that Lottie’s family had lots of money, like a stereotypical white family did in that time period.

I agree that Disney does portray the white family in a stereotypically way, but I also think that it was appropriate to fit the time period. Just like the white race the black race also had characteristics that can be put into a stereotypical way. Tiana's family was very poor and her mother, Eudora, worked as a seamstress for "Big Daddy". Tiana and her father had a dream of owning their own restaurant. After, her father died Tiana worked as a waitress to make the dream a reality. By Eudora working for a rich white family it brings back the idea of slaves, which is another way of stereotyping the African American race.

Tiana had to work very hard for everything she wanted in life; it was never handed to her on a silver platter, like it was for Lottie. Tiana lived in a much smaller house than Lottie, and they were very close to their neighbors. By Disney making Tiana a frog for most of the movie, some people have argued that it is degrading to the black race. Gehlawat stated, "What becomes lauded in the process is the representation of a black girl as an animal, or the conflation of blackness with bestiality" (418). I disagree with Gehlawat's statement. I think that Tiana being a frog was taken out of context. Her being a frog as just a fun aspect to the movie, and was not intended to be a racial attack on the African Americans. Another way the film stereotyped the black race, was by the real estate brokers telling her that since she is black she should not have such big dreams. Charania and Simonds stated, "When, Tiana, as a young adult dreaming of opening her own restaurant, is told by the real estate brokers of her dream property that "a women of her background" should not strive so high" (70). I think that this is a stereotyping

comment that is made in the movie, but I do not think this comment was made in direct to blacks in today's society.

I feel that any stereotyping made was fitting to the time period the film was set in. In today's society being stereotyped in some way is a common thing that people need to learn to live with. The 1920's was a sad part of history, but it did happen. It is not a bad thing to remind people about what things were like in history. Disney made an effort to show how far America has come since the 1920's, by making an African American princess. They could have just made Tiana a princess, like the past Disney princesses, and that might have made the film a little less of a controversial issue.

Everything and everyone will be stereotyped at some point in life. It is how the people respond to it that will make the difference on the future generations. Works Cited Charania, Moon and Wendy Simonds. " The Princess and the Frog. " American Sociological Assosiation. 2010. Vol. 9. No 3. 69-71. Print. Gehlawat, Ajay. " The Strange Case of The Princess and the Frog: Passing and the Elision of Race. " Journal of African American Studies 14. 4 (2010): 417-431. AcademicSearch Complete. Web. 14 Nov. 2012. The Princess and the Frog. Dirs. Ron Clements and John Musker. 2009. Walt Disney Video. 2010. DVD.