

Racism in the "crash" essay

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



People are all alike despite their slight evident differences. However, their diversity is to a large extent, the root cause of all their conflicts. The fact that people vary in terms of their personalities, race, language, skin color, among others, is a clear implication that their interaction is subject to violence. Paul Haggis' 'passion piece' Crash, set in Los Angeles proves this right. In his works, Haggis depicts an interaction of characters that differ in all senses; race, origin, skin color, just to mention but a few.

This is why statements like, 'white shooter', 'Persian man', 'Hispanic locksmith' stand out in the character's conversations to mark their differences. It is from these divergences that the film's title Crash is derived to imply the violence that results when two or more 'different' people interact. It is worthy noting that, all the characters in the film are victims of crashes and none is free of sympathy. Racism stands as the basis of these evident crashes.

As a way of developing the theme, Haggis strategically uses characters that fit themselves into the shoes of racists. Virtually, all the film characters portray crashes build on their racial differences. As a result, they end up jumping into conclusions based on race where they gain insights, not only about themselves, but also about the race itself.

Clashes stand out in the 36-hour encounter of the movie's various characters like Ria. As the movie begins, the results of car crash involving Ria, Kim Lee, and Waters are no more than clashes. Ria and Lee abuse each other depicting their differing racial backgrounds. Lee referring to Ria says, "Why?"

Not my fault! It's her fault! She does this...Stop in the middle of street!
Mexicans! No know how to drive" (Crash).

These two portray their differing places of origins and each is in support of hers. Following the accident, none admits to be the cause. They end up arguing of the cause even after the motorcycle cop intervenes. Ria, a race-driven character attempts to fight Lee back since she (Lee) is a Mexican unlike her. Ria says, " I'll give you a lesson...My father's from Puerto Rico. My mother's from El Salvador. Neither one of those is Mexico" (Crash).

This collision is a package, sufficient to pass Ria for a racist. However, following the crash with Graham as a result of the phone call, Ria's reactions shows that, though people may be different, racial collisions can be avoided, only if people treat each other as brothers and sisters. She tells Graham, " That's just where I begin to get pissed. I mean, really, what kind of man speaks to his mother that way, huh?" (Crash) This follows from racial trait that Graham portrays when he refers to her a white woman.

As she describes the composition of her family, she pictures the diversity of her parents but despite it, they are at peace with no racial crashes. In fact, she tells Graham that, could she be her father, she would punish him. In other words, racism is an offence and ought to be sternly punishable. Graham is a racist who seems to have learned a lot about racism through his collisions with people around him.

Though racism forms a good portion of peoples' lives like Graham, they can in turn fight it based on the lessons they learn from the crashes attached

therein. Graham is a racist. He knows what it means by racial collisions. He has experienced crashes with quite a number of people.

His racist nature stands in his crash with Ria as discussed above. For instance, as he is with Ria, he receives a call and through his response, racism is evident. He says, "...I'm having sex with a white woman" (Crash). According to Bell, there are some other instances where the racist characters, after learning the consequences of racism, try to cover them as much as possible (23). Graham is not an exception.

Though his racist nature is evident, his collision with Flanagan depicts him as an anti-racist, a situation that, based on insinuations, arises after he learns that racism is bad. For instance, Flanagan in an abusive exchange declares, "...black people, huh...more black men are incarcerated than white men" (Crash).

These abusive race-rich words are directed to Graham. Does Graham reflect racism in his response? Not at all! Graham is a changed man viewing racism from another angle. He replies, " What did you just say... all I need to do to make this disappear is to frame a potentially innocent man" (Crash). The ' disappearance' referred to by Graham is that of racism. He believes that racism can be arrested if people change their mind sets about others.

Therefore, according to Graham, racism is a real practice carried out by people like him, but based on his personal experience, that is, the experience of racial crashes, racism can be arrested if people like him,

purpose to stop it. Rick is another victim of racism as the following paragraph elaborates.

Rick, a racist, as the story unfolds, has a story to tell concerning the subject of racism. He has encountered collisions, founded on race, with people like Karen and Jean, to mention but a few. For instance, as he collides with Karen, his racist character stands out. Their interaction, as Robert says, "...ended into quarrel and they disgusted each others ' race" (12).

In their crash, Rick says, " Fuck! Why do these guys have to be black?" (Crash). In this scenario, Rick pictures his racist nature. However, his view of racism changes as he converses with Jean. It is deducible that he has come to realize that all people, whether black or white, are all the same and for them to unite, they need to fight back the enemy that has caused that falling apart of things; racism. He assumes the front line in the campaign against this.

For instance, when Jean is angered by James on the issue of locks, Rick enters to calm the crash. He says, " Shhh It's ok. Just go to bed, all right... You lower you voice!" (Crash). These words are heavy laden with symbolism. The lowering of voice is no more than Rick's efforts to minimize the issue or racism. According to him, racism is bad as it is the root cause of all the crashes he, among others, has gone through.

In conclusion, Haggis' masterwork successfully pictures the subject of racism, as it stands on the ground. He employs characters, who strategically fit themselves into the shoes of racists. He symbolically gathers people who

differ in all senses, origin, color, race, among others. Among them are Ria, Graham, and Rick.

All these stand as racists, who crash with one another as a result. However, they later come to learn that, with racism in their minds, crashes will never end. Through their personal experience, they begin a campaign against racism and this is evident through their reactions as they encounter race-driven people.

As the movie closes, all these characters viz. Rick, Ria and Graham, have not only gained insight about themselves, but also about race. They realize the difference between a black and a white person is only skin deep; beyond that, all people are the same. Haggis successfully drives home his lesson through these characters. According to them, and through their experience, they have learned that racism is a fuel, rather than a solution of crashes.

Bell, Rahel. Racism in the Crash Movie. New York: Mavin Publishers, 2008. Print.

Crash. Dir. Paul Haggis. 20th Century Lion Gate Film Productions, 2005. Film.

Robert, Keith. Race: The Crash Movie. Mabros: HINN Publications, 2006.