

# Essay on born on the fourth of july

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## Born on the Fourth of July

The film *Born on the Fourth of July*, as directed by Oliver Stone captures the characteristics of war film within the understanding of Belton. There are elements of dangerous situations that demand exceptional heroism on the part of the lead actor. Allusions to historical situations and renowned personalities are used together with fictional situations to capture the themes of choice and achieve the element of realism. There are also mistakes that happen in the battle field. For instance, this can be illustrated in the instance in which the lead character Kovic and his team kill scores of innocent Vietnamese civilians whom they had mistaken for combatants. Further Kovic accidentally shoots and kills a colleague in the battle field. The film also explores aspects of hierarchy between the Americans and the Vietnamese. Generally there is a consistent trend in which the American soldiers are portrayed as humans with a high sense of morality and dignity (Belton 116).

On the other hand, the Vietnamese people are portrayed as lacking in the finer attributes of civility. In some respects they are captured as brutish and inhuman. On the same level of Cartesian distinctions, the American soldiers are portrayed as people with higher skills than the Vietnamese soldiers. The warfare and the military hardware that the Americans use in the battle field are portrayed as advanced as compared to the ones possessed by their foes. In a considerable sense therefore, this film follows in the conventional footprints of the American war film which tend to celebrate the culture and progress of Americans as extremely superior. They are shown as having limitless potential to vanquish their hapless and uncouth enemy through the

power of knowledge and technology (Belton 121).

In this regard it might be argued that the thrust of this film is anchored on the theories of cultural relativism that privilege the American super power image beyond and above that of the people who come into conflict with them.

An analysis of the character of Ron Kovic, the lead character must be understood within the context of shattered dreams and false hopes. As a young boy, he buys into the American dream that comprises of heroic war marines who are able to render a selfless service to their country on the battle field (Oliver). The film traces the turns and twists that take shape in the growing young man as he explores the seemingly limitless scope of his dreams. However, at the point when things ought to have brightened up, Kovic begins to confront the ugly side of reality. This consists of the world of hardships, mistakes and terrible accidents. He loses the use of his limbs on one of the battle field confrontations. From that moment events in his life force him to question the ideals he has pursued all his life.

The gravity of reality forces Kovic to debunk the idealized form of heroism he had hoped to get in his military career. At the supreme moment of this awakening, he confronts the ugly side of warfare and eventually joins the fold of the people opposed to war. In a sense, Kovic is portrayed as a man whose psychological state of mind experiences rapids and twists in the futile search of self. He reconciles with his conscience and seeks amends with all the things that have burdened his conscience. One of these things involves the forgiveness he extracts from the family of the fellow marine he accidentally killed in battle. This film might be understood as a critique of the

seemingly glowing profile of military career. The underlying meaning revolves around the fact the external psychological stability of marines might be a façade that conceals the real struggles with conscience that are burrowed underneath.

## **References**

- Belton, John. Movies and mass culture. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1996
- Oliver, Stone. Born on the Fourth of July. 1989.