

Far from heaven



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Todd Haynes renders a delightful yet subtle touch to the theme of racism and heterosexuality in his 2002 award winning movie, Far From Heaven. The movie is set at the backdrop of 1957, a period when racism and orthodox feelings were at its peak in the society. The plot revolves around Cathy Whitaker who is shown as a good wife, good mother and a perfect homemaker.

Her husband Frank is an executive at Magnatech. The film starts with the scene when Cathy gets a call from the local police about her husband who happens to be on the line. He says police mistook him for someone else and they are not leaving him alone. In the sequence of scenes that follows, Frank begins to stay late at office and develops obsession with the other men while Cathy develops love with Raymond Deagan, who is their late gardener's son as well a black man.

Meanwhile Frank's relationship with Cathy gets strained, and he turns to alcohol. Soon relationship between Cathy and Raymond leads to severe relationship between him and his daughter. Meanwhile Frank is not able to suppress his feelings as homosexual and falls in love with other man seeking divorce from Cathy. In the whole film, we could see double tension perpetuating among the protagonists' desires with each scene portraying interracial romances or one or the other issue of the homosexuality.

The pool scene which appears almost near the end of the movie carries the themes of race and homosexuality more clearly and very closely entangled within the film and is beautifully fused within the whole structure of film. This scene takes place at Miami where Frank and Cathy go to rejuvenate their

married life. In the previous scene one has observed the stealthy look that passes between Frank and a handsome blond boy. In this pool scene, while Cathy is sitting just near the poolside, Frank has just finished some laps to catch his breath.

While he is sitting on steps with his legs submerged in the waters, he notices that members of the blond family are coming out and their son does not seem to be with them. Frank gets up, stretches himself, comes out of the pool and as he is going to pick up his towel, a black boy aged four or five years rushes beside him towards the pool. Soon father of the young boy runs towards him and shouts at him as other white guests are watching. Now what did I tell you about going in that pool. You know you're not allowed in there. (Far From Heaven) Boy is taken away forcefully and he begins to cry.

Though he has just been on the first step of the pool yet pool gets emptied within few moments. The atmosphere gets tensed and further increases when one white lady hysterically orders her daughter to immediately come out of the pool. When the daughter asks the reason, she retorts Because I said so (Far From Heaven). This scene shows the limit to which Americans are afraid of the blacks, and are extremely afraid of their black bodies, the bodies that can cause infection.

This misconception is so beautifully and realistically portrayed that it shows the extent to which people are engrossed in the racism and their prejudice that they can be easily carried away with the delusion that black bodies are contaminated and thus they cannot even share the pool with them. The camera shifts between Cathy's perspective who is looking out of the pool,

and then moves straight on to the Cathy herself to make the audience ignify a protecting cover to the feelings emanating from her heart.

The whole scene becomes a minuscule of the large drama that is unfolded inside the pool illustrating Cathys futile love affair with Raymond.

The stress on the black father and the white mother taming their children to remain aloof with each other is suggestive of the deeply imbedded wall that is divided between the two communities socially, psychology as well as emotionally. The scene then turns towards Frank, and camera is focused on Frank when he sees the blond boy.

At the time when the tense situation perpetuated by the racism begins to calm down, the camera moves to show the viewers Franks thoughts on racism. Close up shot is taken as camera is focused on the Franks face as he observes the body of the black child and then of a blond teenager, both suggestive of the fact that Frank is trying to sort out this whole drama as he himself is so confused at the time. At this juncture, Frank decides to move back into their hotel room to get Cathys book. Inside the room when he is looking at himself in the bathroom mirror, he feels somebodys presence behind him.