

Symbolic interactionism in glory road

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Summary

The movie 'Glory Road' was set in El Paso, Texas during the Civil Rights Movements of 1966. The movie starts with Coach Don Haskins of Texas Western College trying to recruit players of any race to his basketball team. At this time, many basketball teams had almost all white players. After being declined by a majority of the people he was attempting to recruit, he decides to go on a different route. Coach Haskins and his partner Jerry Armstrong go cross-country looking for black players for his team. In the end, he has seven black players and five white players – something very different for the time period. Coach Haskins puts his players through tough training and figures out where they fit and do their best on the court. Once their places and duties are decided, Texas Western begins to win almost every game. The more they win, the more racial discrimination is thrown their way due to the amount of time black players are given on the court. While on the road, a player is beaten up in the bathroom. After that, they agree to go in pairs wherever they go. When they get back to their hotel room, racist things are written all over the walls, but the team gets through it. Texas Western makes it all the way to NCAA Championships. Coach Haskins tells the team that only the black players will be starting the game. At the end of the game, they are forced to go into overtime. Texas Western is about to win when Kentucky scores a goal, but it's called a foul, causing Texas Western to beat Kentucky 72 – 65. The team arrives back to El Paso to a loud crowd.

Symbolic Interactionism

Glory Road is an excellent example of symbolic interactionism due to its multiple aspects. However, I choose to illustrate symbolic interactionism because it is the perfect example of how people respond to symbols, and how symbols create a social structure, by “guiding behavior” (Henslin 2012, p. 14). Symbolic interactionism is “a theoretical perspective in which society is viewed as composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop their views of the world, and communicate with one another” (Henslin, 2012, p. 14). Glory Road is a movie that shows the true symbol of inequality and racism.

Inequality

The movie Glory Road took place in 1965 after Brown v. Board of Education (1954), when the Supreme Court outlawed segregated public education facilities for blacks and whites at the state level. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 superseded all state and local laws requiring segregation. Glory Road symbolizes many things but one symbol that really stands out is inequality. When Coach Haskins started his search for basketball players the game was dominated by white players, and there was so much inequality in the game. As Coach Haskins goes to recruit players, he notices this and decides to recruit black players. During Coach Haskins recruiting, he received backlash about white players being smarter, and black players being unable to win at the highest level. “You wanna talk to Bobby Joe Hill? Son, you can’t win playing nigger ball. Sure, they can jump, but they can’t lead. Can’t handle the pressure. Don’t have enough intelligence. That boy in particular.” this quote represents the extent of inequality during this time.

Black people weren't considered as equal to whites during this time mainly because of their racial background, and fake assumption about intelligence.

Racism

Second, one of the major issues in the movie Glory Road was racism. Racism means prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

Basketball separated blacks and whites along social lines in ways which helped to keep racism in sports as it existed in society. As the players talk in the locker room " You think basketball is everything. Coach. And that's easy for you to say. But you don't have rednecks in your face all the time. None of you white boys get it because you don't have people breaking into your room or shoving your head in toilets. It's not us. White is white. Green Acres. and that means you too. Yeah. I'm white. And you've never been able to see past that! We're not like them!" this quote from Glory Road represents the hardships the black player endured. The symbol racism was so strong during this time that people found it hard to see past color.

Conclusion

In conclusion symbolic interactionism is in every relationship. We learn the ways we are supposed to act around people based on their symbols, and based upon what is culturally accepted within our society. For instance, as the Texas Western started to win games and won the NCAA people in Texas began to change their symbolic assumptions of them change. In today society it doesn't matter what color you are, or what you look like, but that they should be treated equally. In the Glory Road, people did not treat others

equally, but Don Haskins does, and he does not see race. “ You gonna let a black player play from the get-go? I don’t see color. I see quick. I see skill, and that’s what you have. And that’s what I’m putting on the court” this quote represents Coach Haskins opinion on race and inequality.