

Cultural essay crash



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For this cultural analysis paper, I have chosen to discuss the movie Crash. This film focuses on prejudice based on race, culture, social status, and personal values. It strongly illustrates how individuals are wrongly prejudged based solely upon their color, religion, or even their occupation. This work follows a number of characters and the many stereotypes, their prejudices, and the labels that are given and accepted by individuals. The stories take place over a 48-hour span in a post-911 Los Angeles, California and identify racism, bias based upon social status, religion, and even occupation.

In focusing on these main characters and the interactions between them, the audience begins to understand how widespread this negative behavior is and how these characters show their personal values, or lack thereof, in situations that bring them together in one way or another. The subtle bias of some characters is countered by the blatant outright bigotry by others within the story, and shows that not only are the individuals who are judging perpetuate these stereotypes, but one of the characters himself, by continuing to exhibit behavior that is appropriate in his mind based upon his race. In this paper, I will be looking at the encounters and the ways in which they exhibit and experience prejudice during a ??? crash??? moment, and how they create barriers between themselves and others. The first encounter involves a black police detective named Graham who is involved in a collision. He says, ??? It??™s the sense of touch. In the real cities, you walk, you know You brush past people, people bump into you. In LA, nobody touches you.

We are always behind this metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, we crash into each other, just so we can feel something.??? The driver

of their vehicle, a female police detective, gets out of the car and approaches the Asian female driver of the vehicle that rear ended them, as she is saying, "It's not my fault. It's her fault. . . . Mexicans don't know how to drive.

. . . You brake too fast." The Mexican responds with some racial-biased stereotypical comments, such as, Asian drivers who cannot see over the steering wheel, that braking is what one should do when coming up to a line of stopped cars, and how surprised she is to have been rear ended by an Asian driver. Graham and the female detective were arriving at a murder scene. Two African-American young men, Anthony and Peter, leave a restaurant as Anthony complains that no one else in the restaurant had to wait an hour and 32 minutes for spaghetti, and that they did not get coffee from the waitress, while all the white patrons got cup after cup. Anthony is stuck in his own self-perpetuated second-class citizen role as a young black man, while Peter has a more optimistic and realistic view on life, and tries to stay true to his Christian values.

As they walk down the street, they pass a white couple, Jean and Rick Cabot, who happens to be the LA DA, walking to their vehicle. Anthony notes that when the woman sees them, she takes her husband's arm. Anthony assumes that it is because she is afraid of them, while Peter says, "She's cold.

Anthony poses this to Peter, ". . . we look like two black UCLA students strolling down the sidewalk and her reaction is blind fear.

Do we look like gang bangers Do we look threatening???, trying to convince Peter of their race being the cause, and that they should be the ones afraid of the ??? trigger happy LAPD???. Why aren't they Because they have guns. Immediately after discussing the unfairness of being falsely judged as dangerous, they carjack the couple. In response to being victimized, Jean insists that they change all the locks in their house that evening so that their house keys cannot be used to break into their home.

The locks man, Daniel, is a young Hispanic male with a shaved head and tattoos. Jean is very uncomfortable with him there, and tells her husband they need to get the locks changed again in the morning and that next time they should not send someone who looks like a gang member and is concerned he will go sell their house keys to one of his gang member friends. She says all of this loudly enough that the young Hispanic man hears everything she says. After completing the job, Daniel drives home to his home and his young daughter. She is sleeping under her bed because she heard a gunshot. Daniel had just moved away from a ??? bad neighborhood??? and a bullet had gone through her room there. Daniel tells her a story about a fairy who gave him an invisible cloak when he was a child that was impenetrable and that nothing could hurt him as long as he wore it. He ??? gives??? it to his daughter in order to give her a sense of safety. Later in the movie, Daniel responds to a store run by a Persian man who wants his lock changed on a door after someone has broken in and robbed his store. He advises the storekeeper that he actually needs to replace the door, as it won't close properly. The shopkeeper, who purchased a gun after the

break in, accuses him of being a cheat so that he can charge him more money to get a door instead of just new locks.

Daniel leaves the store for no charge with the storekeeper hollering at him that he is a cheater. The next morning, the store owner arrives to find the door kicked in, his shop completely destroyed, and racial slurs of ??? Towelhead??? spray painted on the walls. The insurance agent evaluating his damage claim informs him it will not cover the damages, as he was advised by the locksmith to replace the door. The store owner is so angry that he finds the invoice with the locksmith??™s name, Daniel, and goes to his home with the handgun that he bought to confront Daniel, but Daniel??™s daughter runs out to protect her father because of her impenetrable cloak. Luckily, the shop owner had never been taught to use the handgun, and it did not fire.

John Ryan, a white police officer, is seen on a payphone speaking to a representative of his father??™s HMO. He is angry that he is not getting any help for his father, and asks to speak to a supervisor. When the woman states she is the supervisor, he asks for her name. ??? Shaniqua Johnson???, she replies. He says, ??? Shaniqua Johnson. Big fucking surprise.??? He is a very racist character and exploits his power as a police officer. Later on that evening, he pulls over a vehicle driven by a black male that matches the description of the SUV carjacked, but the license plate does not.

While behind them, he witnessed what he thought was her performing a sex act on the driver. The couple are both black, but the wife is very light skinned. Officer Ryan unnecessarily has the husband get out of the vehicle

and his wife is irate. Officer Ryan gets tired of her berating him and has her get out of the vehicle and frisks her.

While doing so, he molests her in order to humiliate her. Officer Ryan's partner requests a partner change when he gets back to the department, stating that Ryan is a racist, which is discounted by his lieutenant, who is black, because he does not want to admit there is racism within his department and advises him to ask for reassignment due to Ryan's excessive flatulence. Later in the movie, the woman he molested is trapped in an overturned car after an accident and is in peril of catching fire.

He attempts to rescue her from the vehicle, but when she sees that it is him, she won't allow him to touch her to help extract her. He shows his better side by helping her and asking her if he can reach across her lap to disengage the seatbelt. As fire engulfs the vehicle, Officer Ryan is pulled out by his partner, only to go back in to rescue the woman he had previously treated with such disrespect. He showed heroics in the face of danger to assist woman of color, regardless of his prejudice.

The ongoing theme throughout this movie is the struggle that each one of us faces on a day-by-day basis to strive to overcome prejudice that we may have learned from our family, friends, on the job, or in the military. The characters in this piece were faced with situations to choose one of two paths; the path of bias or the path of being good to our fellow man and not judge. Unfortunately, some of this learned behavior is very difficult to unlearn, and leads to many situations where a crisis situation takes a turn for the worst. I feel that prejudice based on race, creed, color, religion,

social status, educational status, or sexual orientation will continue to permeate our society because of the widespread acceptance of this behavior in order to avoid having to do anything to stop it. Even after 911, when our country supposedly came together as ??? Americans???, we still fight a civil war amongst our own.