

Example by StudyDriver

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Blind Side Movie Review Example

Have you ever wondered why so many films portray the story of a poor, abused, homeless, colored person that is eventually rescued by a smart, rich, white person? Every few years, there is a new film made that captures this same story, but the way the viewer is affected by the representation of race changes quite often. This idea gets old to many viewers who may agree with the idea of race being addressed in film, but not in the same way all the time. When a rich, white, republican family in the South takes in a homeless black boy to live with them, they struggle with the disapproval of society and their own insecurity. The Blind Side, a Hollywood film released in 2009 by director, John Hancock, represents the idea of race in this conventional, racist fashion.

The Blind Side, based on a true story, is about a seventeen year old, large, physically distinguished black boy, Michael Oher, who grew up in the projects in Memphis. This movie captures his disturbing life. Out of circumstances which include Coach Cotton's belief that he would advance the school's football team based mostly on his size and the way he moves, Michael is accepted into Wingate Christian School - an exclusive white private school - despite his disturbing 0.6 GPA. After Michael starts attending Wingate, most of his teachers believe there is no way to teach him except Mrs. Boswell, his science teacher; she begins to understand that he learns

differently from the rest of the students.

Believing he has no one to help him, Leigh Anne Tuohy- mother of Wingate students, Collins and S.J. Tuohy, and wife to Sean Tuohy, franchise owner of several Taco Bells - invites Michael to stay in the Tuohy's expensive home for the night. But that one night slowly turns into weeks, then to months, and becomes more emotional as the Tuohys begin to treat Michael like part of the family. This leads to Leigh Anne fully understanding Michael as a person so that he can fulfill his potential, including being a left tackle. Some problems include Michael's poor grades which may stop him from participating in activities like football, his learning disability which may change other parts of his life other than his schooling, whether he actually can play football, and authorities questioning all of the Tuohy's motivations in inviting Michael into their home and family.

The Blind Side retells this conventional white savior story in such a way that the viewer can automatically identify the storyline within the first 30 minutes. This film portrays the same story that gets told over and over again about black individuals because white people see this as part of their everyday lives; a story where people of different colors are poor, need help, light-skinned people arrive to help them, redemption is had, and everything ends as a fairytale. The relationship between races is something Americans are deeply uncomfortable with; neat stories like this help them realize how it is alright for both races to interact harmoniously. So, we retell this story where the nice white savior comes in to help the poor, unhappy, abused black kid turn his life around. Like most, this film embraced the simple story and took every opportunity to play up the racist idea that being a person of color is the same as poverty, violence, and addiction.

The problem with this film is its representation of the black race. It did a good job at the portrayal of whites; Leigh Anne's friends are regularly racist like most people around them, while considering themselves good Christians. Most assume a black family won't be able to pay tuition, that's why all students at the school are white. Leigh Anne is unsure about her feelings towards a poor, black kid, even though she wants to help him. When she first invites Michael into her home, she does so naturally, although later wonders whether he'll steal anything. She shuns her friend for suggesting there's something inappropriate about having a "large, black boy" sleep in the

same house with her teenage daughter, then immediately goes home to ask her daughter if having Michael around makes her uncomfortable. The white characters are allowed to have doubts and fears whereas you would never see it the other way around.

The idea that Leigh Anne's friends were frightened of her taking in a black boy off the streets started to help me understand the mentality of whites in the South. Leigh Anne brought in this underprivileged boy despite what others thought and helped him achieve his full potential that he couldn't have done without the resources she provided; the moral of the story is to do what is right, even it goes against what you believe and you are standing alone.

The black characters, on the other hand, are not given that kind of courtesy of a positive representation of their race. Although it is a story about a black teenager, no one could declare that the movie is about the character of Michael. It would be difficult to try and tell a movie about a poverty-stricken black boy without the use of a white savior. The Blind Side essentially retells the story of the white savior rescuing the poor black person, helping out when the story makes a wrong turn, focusing less on the colored person as the main subject. Michael is never a fully accomplished character; many of his actions don't make sense and we don't see things through his perspective. Throughout the film, he's treated as a child: his white tutor tries to scare him into not attending Tennessee with ghost stories, he doesn't fully understand football until Leigh Anne explains it to him in dumbed-down terms, and even little SJ has to teach him how to act around children as to not scare them. In addition to this portrayal of what should be the main character, the way whites see black people is revealed. We view scenes of Michael's crack addicted mother and gang-bangers drinking and smoking. In addition, at the end, Leigh Anne mentions all the kids dying in the projects, and says her son Michael was just like them until she saved him. Essentially, this is just a universal story of black poverty and white charity.

In The Blind Side, Michael's story is only told on occasion. We see short clips of the most traumatic event in Michael's life but it isn't really explained until the end. His mother is a drug addict, his siblings are nowhere to be found, and the kid who got accepted at private school along with Michael is a gang member. We don't even know

Michael's perspective on the Tuohy family. The only thing The Blind Side director, John Lee Hancock, offers from Michael are small lines like "It's nice, I never had one before." This is more obvious when you think about the accommodations Michael would have had to make; we are rarely shown what it was like for Michael to live in an all- white community.

We see short scenes of Michael by himself and scenes where racist remarks are being thrown to him at the football game, but Michael never responds to it. Instead, we see Leigh Anne's difficulty as her friends start to question her actions. Even when the film changes at the end and Michael's future is in jeopardy, we are still shown the Tuohy's perspective of the issue rather than Michael's.

According to Claudia Puig in USA Today, 'But this sports drama about Michael Oher never strays from the surface, parading a series of kind acts by Leigh Anne and Sean Tuohy but never delving into the ramifications of their actions or exploring more complicated socioeconomic and racial issues.' (Puig). This means that Ms. Puig agrees with the idea that the film captures more of the Touhy's life than Michael's life, which shouldn't be the case. If it were a rich, black family taking in a poor, homeless, white boy which most likely wouldn't be the case in films, the story would most likely be centered on the life of the white adolescent. Why would this be the case? A large amount of people that enjoy movies of this sort relate more to the 'white perspective', so the directors want to keep the audience interested in the film.

Along with Ms. Puig, many other critics of the film agree that Michael should be the main focus including Perry Seibert as explained in his article 'The Blind Side' in the TV Guide. But, along with this idea, he feels that 'The movie is very familiar -- you've seen it all before' (Seibert). Most of these types of movies are based on the same storyline, so I couldn't agree more with him here. It's all about the 'white savior' who shows up out of the blue and all of a sudden, the person of color's life becomes the best it could possibly be. This represents race because it is saying that whites are superior to any other race and are a part of life to fix everyone else's problems.

Another critic, Perri Nemiroff, explains in an article on cinemablend.com: 'At first, it's hard not to dismiss The Blind

Side as just the story of a wealthy white woman helping a poor black kid that you swear you've seen before... Michael might as well have been a giant teddy bear. No, seriously. He doesn't say much most of the movie, and when he does, it's as contrived as a talking bear that says 'I love you' when his stomach is pressed" (Nemiroff). Here, Nemiroff is trying to explain that Michael should have just been an inanimate object with a voice box that has an automated message since he spoke very seldom. Also, because of this, she feels that the film didn't capture Michael's true story as most of the film was based on his actions, not his words. The basic idea all these critics are trying to get across is that this movie tells the same old story and should be focused more on Michael than the Touhy family. Overall, they agree that this movie is racist and focuses too much on the white man being in charge of and controlling the colored man's decisions.

Not only does Michael's life story take a back seat to the Tuohy's, but Michael is portrayed as a child with disabilities. Michael doesn't have the best reading skills, but is an excellent writer and can remember information when tested verbally. Despite this, we are still shown scenes where Michael needs to be taught the ways of everyday life. There is even a scene where Leigh Anne needs to point out how to buy clothes- it's not like Michael's never been to a clothing store. Michael may be poor, but he is not the simple-minded child that the film makes him out to be. If the story was reverse, I highly doubt the white child would be portrayed in this way. Some, including myself, thought that the tale told was worthy of being on film. But, along with many other films out there, its racial representation stereotyped blacks as lower humans than whites. Because of Michael's portrayal as a simple-minded child and the fact that once again white man had to step in to save the day, *The Blind Side* expresses race in a way that is especially negative towards blacks.