Jared Floyd

Professor Sarah Boyd

English 129

27 April 2018

Get Out: The Black Experience in a Racist Society

 Does racism still exist in the current so-called progressive society? Even though the white majority may claim that the country is currently in a post-racism stage, many subordinate groups claim otherwise. On February 24, 2017, the movie *Get Out* aired for the first time which spurred conversations about the racism that still permeates throughout the American culture. Jordan Peele, the director of *Get Out*, was born to a black father and a white mother which caused him to be immersed in the racial issues of the day. Peele considers *Get Out* to be a social thriller where the society acts as the villain for the purpose of exposing to racist undertones of the American culture (Jordan Peele Biography). Within the film *Get Out* directed by Jordan Peele, Peele discusses the black experience within a racist society through the glorified expression of the black body, the dramatized differences of white and black culture, and the controversial issues of police brutality on the black community.

 Throughout *Get Out*, Peele demonstrates how the black experience is greatly influenced by the whites’ glorification of the black body. During the gathering at the Armitage’s house, one of the guests comments to Christ that “Fair skin has been in favor for the past what, couple of hundreds of years, but now the pendulum has swung back, black is in fashion.” Peele utilizes this encounter to reveal selfish nature that drives white culture. Over time, Peele reveals that whites have been able to thrive without the threat of other cultures in America; however, as African Americans in America gain equality, the white culture is put in danger which causes whites to desire to adopt the black culture as their own. Whenever Chris is eating dinner with the Armitage family, Jeremy converses with Chris about Judo claiming that “With your frame and your genetic makeup, if you really pushed your body… you’d be a fucking beast.” Through this statement by Jeremy, the innate assumptions that white people make with regards to the physical superiority of blacks are exposed. Peele suggests that the way whites view the black body creates an unreachable physical standard that the black community is “supposed” to reach. As Chris watches a video about the cult that the Armitage family is involved in, the narrator claims, “You have been chosen because of the physical advantages you have enjoyed your entire lifetime.” Chris has been chosen to receive the brain transplant based on his physical privilege in life. Even though this statement may glorify the black body, it demeans the black brain. The leader of this cult suggests that a black body with a white mind would result in the perfect human. As seen throughout *Get Out,* Peele reveals how society dehumanizes the black body in order to maintain control over black culture which significantly influences the black experience in America.

 Over time, different societies and cultures have had differing views of black people which have permeated the current societal ideology of the black body and its physical stereotypes. Early on in American history, owners of plantations in the South viewed their African slaves merely as bodies that followed commands and executed the hard tasks on the plantation. This belief that black people are simply bodies that function instead of humans still infiltrates our society today. Even though the white’s view of the black body may certainly be overdramatized in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out,* the core belief that whites have standards for African Americans is true. Because African Americans in today’s society have this standard that has been created by the white majority, the black community is constantly under scrutiny if they do not meet the standard. These standards created by the white community is the belief that all black people especially black men are stronger, faster, or cooler. Jordan Peele critiques this idea by making the white racist society the villain in the movie. Even though Jordan Peele portrays the white community to be extremely racist in the way they view the humanity of the black community, many of the foundational themes about the stereotypes of the black body are true in today’s society.

 Even though there have been increases of equality between the white and black culture over time, *Get Out* reveals many of the key differences in these people groups. During the first encounter with Dean Armitage, Rose’s father, Dean comments regarding deer that “They are taking over like rats, … I see a dead deer on the side of the road and I think that’s a start.” The constant symbols of deer that are seen throughout the film represent African Americans. Mr. Armitage is subtly suggesting that the world would be much better if African Americans did not exist at all. The reason the Armitage family utilizes black people as bodies for the transplant is due to their view that black people are infecting society. Even though many white Americans do not believe that black people are an infection to society, some try to connect cultures by striving to relate or partake in the differing culture. This is exemplified at the Armitage gathering when Mr. Green talks to Chris about golf and claims “I can’t swing my hips like I used to though, but I do know Tiger.” Mr. Green assumes by mentioning his relationship with Tiger Woods, he is able to partake in Chris’s culture. In addition, before meeting her parents, Rose mentions to Chris that “My dad would have voted for Obama a third time if he could have.” By inserting scenes like these in the movie, Jordan Peele is commenting on white people trying to partake in the black experience by trying to relate to them. Jordan Peele reveals to the viewers that the African American experience is being invaded by the white desire to experience alternative cultures.

 Throughout the current day society, there are obvious cultural differences; however, the white majority has been striving to invoke their own culture upon subordinate groups for centuries. *Get Out* reveals how white culture is always searching for the best experience even at the expense of other cultures or people. Throughout history, it is evident that white Europeans and white Americans believe their culture is superior to all others which are especially exemplified in the colonialism era. As seen in the opening scene of 2 Dope Queens, the black community has needed the approval by the white culture in order to be recognized as legitimate. Peele critiques this societal flaw throughout his film and advocates that the black community must be recognized as legitimate without the approval by the majority. In addition, *Get Out* assesses the issue that white people may desire to experience black culture; however, they do not yearn for the negative implications that come with being black in today’s society. During the gathering at the Armitage house, one of the guests asks Chris “Do you find being African American has more advantages or disadvantages in the modern world?” This question was designed to cause a conversation about the cultural appropriation that is occurring in today’s society. Within the movie *Get Out*, Peele shows how white culture has always been striving to destroy subordinate cultures throughout society by inserting their own culture or striving to partake in other’s personal cultural experience.

 In order to address issues relevant to today, Jordan Peele discusses the controversial topic of police brutality against the black community within his film. During the car ride to Rose’s house, there was an encounter with a policeman after Rose hit a deer. The policeman asks for Chris’s identification even though he was not involved in the accident. Peele utilizes this moment to show that the black experience is constantly filled with fear due to the unequal treatment with regards to law enforcement. Even though it may seem that Rose is standing up for Chris when she reprimands the police officer for asking for Chris’s identification, her true motive for standing up for Chris is so there is no record that Chris traveled to her house. Peele is revealing that many people in the white culture may seem harmless by their actions to support the black community through the struggles of police brutality; however, there may be ulterior motives that are driving their “altruistic” actions. Within the movie, the “sunken place” is referred to multiple times which consists of a dark hole where the hypnotized people’s consciousness resides. In the sunken place, the person can see and hear what is going on but cannot control their bodily functions. Peele uses the sunken place as a symbol of a prison where its inhabitants are locked up and have no influence on their future. This symbol was intended to represent the unequal amounts of African Americans that are incarcerated over the years(Grant). At the end of the movie, Chris is standing over Rose’s bloody body whenever a police car arrives. Rose starts to cry out for help which creates the image that Chris is at fault in this circumstance. This event was intended to represent how a white victim always has priority over a black person even if the white person is at fault. Jordan Peele reveals the corrupt issues of police brutality in America very bluntly in order to show how police brutality has drastically altered the black experience in today’s culture.

 Even though Jordan Peele exaggerates some of the other racial struggles in his movie *Get Out*, the issue of police brutality is fairly represented. According to the NAACP, “Though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately 32% of the US population, they comprised 56% of all incarcerated people in 2015(CRIMINAL JUSTICE FACT SHEET).” This fact shows that it is necessary for the racial inequality in America must be addressed. Jordan Peele utilizes his power as a well-known comedian and now director to start these conversations about race in America to bring about change. As a white male, it is difficult to understand the everyday fears that the black community faces with regards to unequal treatment; however, it is important to understand and accept the mistreatment in order to make reforms to society. The scene where Rose cries out to the police officer represents the case of Emmett Till(Formo). This case is still very powerful because it exemplifies how the white opinion is seen as valid even if it is misleading. Emmett Till has had a lasting effect on society which has led to different racial reforms. Jordan Peele’s goal of *Get Out* is to put the white person in a black man’s shoes in order for them to fully experience the hardships that the black community face with regards to law enforcement inequality.

 The film *Get Out* directed by Jordan Peele is merely a documentary of the life of an African American in today’s society. Peele discusses the construed view of the black body, the cultural issues between black and white people, and the prevalent police brutality issues in order to expose the true black experience. *Get Out* not only demonstrates the black experience but also it reveals the racist undertones that drive this society. By being a black man himself, Jordan Peele understands the difficulties that the African American community faces every day. To many, *Get Out* may simply be a fantastic horror movie that is both thrilling and funny; however, the purpose of the film is to spark conversations about race relations that will eventually lead to solutions in this broken society.

Works Cited

“CRIMINAL JUSTICE FACT SHEET.” NAACP, NAACP, [http://www.naacp.org/criminal- justice-fact-sheet/](http://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/). Accessed 24 April 2018.

Formo, Brian. “Let’s Talk About That Brilliant ‘Get Out’ Ending.” Collider, Complex Media

Inc., 28 Feb. 2017, <http://collider.com/get-out-ending-explained/#images>. Accessed 24 April 2018.

Grant, Jasmine. “We Need to Talk About All of the Symbolism in Get Out.” VH1 News, Viacom

International Inc., 3 Mar. 2017, [http://www.vh1.com/news/303784/get-out-movie- symbolism/](http://www.vh1.com/news/303784/get-out-movie-symbolism/). Accessed 24 April 2018.

“Jordan Peele Biography.” The Biography.Com, A&E Television Networks, 15 Mar. 2018,

 <https://www.biography.com/people/jordan-peele>. Accessed 24 April 2018.

All Quotes from:

Peele, Jordan, director. Get Out. Blumhouse Productions, 2017.