**Movie Review: Birth of a Nation**

Student’s Name:

Institution:

Course:

Date:

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**Content**

The story revolves around two families residing on opposite ends of the Mason-Dixon Line. They end up growing close together after their sons enrolled in the same school program. The Northern household resides in DC, and they also have a holiday home in Pennsylvania. Austin Stoneman is the provider and ruler of his family of three children. On the other hand, the Southern household, the Camerons, live on a farm in South Carolina, where they plant and harvest cotton with the help of slaves. The family has five kids, and one of them, Ben, becomes the protagonist. He protects the identity of the South through all means (YouTube [James Buck], 2018).

Ideally, the director divides the film into two main sections; The Civil War and Reconstruction (YouTube [James Buck], 2018). The prologue establishes the liability of the Civil War on the arrival of Africans in America, setting a controversial theme for the entire film. The film depicts how the oncoming war in the South divides both families, leading the eldest brothers in one-on-one battles. Most importantly, two Stoneman family members witness the assassination of Abraham Lincoln at Ford’s theater. In the second part, the film assumed that all African Americans who weren’t “faithful” after the postwar era engaged in theft and other social evils, thus degrading the dignity of the South. The Reconstruction section also narrates the birth of the KKK and Night Riders movement in the South following retaliations from a dreadful election day. Next, the film shows a series of wars and lynches between the Klan and Black Militia, showcasing the on and off relationship between faithful Blacks and Whites. Overall, Birth of a Nation showcases how marriage can restore unity and how Whites relentlessly used intimidation approaches to siphon power from Blacks.

**Historical Significance**

Despite being widely original, Birth of the Nation is rated among the most racist films. Griffith’s work sets Blacks as people whose only value came from labor, while most of their participation during the Reconstruction period was abusing Southern Whites. The movie also narrates the establishment of the KKK as a means of protection for the Whites. White sheets and depriving Blacks of voting rights were seen to deliver justice and bring order to the South. Birth of a Nation sparked debates among civil rights groups, policymakers, and religious leaders. The film intensified violence against African Americans in many cities, given the themes highlighted in the storyline (Brody, 2013).

Regardless of his initial intentions, Birth of a Nation depicts the director's pro-Confederacy ideology. For example, guests walk into the Cameron residency in one scene, gliding down the cotton field where slaves worked tirelessly. The scene inadvertently depicted how the slave's hard work in the fields enabled the Southern lifestyle. Griffith did not intend to create the idea though the effect resonates with every viewer. Despite the director's ideas, Klan members pointing guns at innocent Black people who wanted to vote was cruel. Most of the actions which Griffith intends to depict as "just" appear horrifying and outrageous.

**Personal Reflection**

Despite the controversies and juxtaposition surrounding Griffith’s intentions and effect, I find Birth of a Nation quite informational. Also, despite the historical inaccuracies, the film paints a rough idea of the events following the Civil War and Reconstruction. Further, Griffith narrated the story of Radical Republicans who fought for the rights of Black people. The element showcased the origin of hate on the Republicans, who are labeled as rapists. I got to understand where the controversial historical fact stemmed from. Nonetheless, it's important to highlight that the film rebirthed the KKK movement, increasing attacks on Black people in many cities.

References

Brody, R. (2013, February 1). *The Worst Thing About “Birth of a Nation” Is How Good It Is*. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-worst-thing-about-birth-of-a-nation-is-how-good-it-is>

YouTube [James Buck]. (2018, December 4). *The Birth of a Nation 1915 1080p* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGQaAddwjxg>