

Avon Scholarship Awards Essay Contest 2022

Second Place Winner

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Essay:

- 1) Why you think this particular film matters
- 2) How has film impacted your life

King Richard

Through history, people have cultivated storytelling to reveal broad themes about life and give perspective to personal experiences and revelations. Film is a relatively new expression of this portrayal and is used to broadcast and connect people on a more global scale. Film creates tangibility and allows for visual representation of past, current, and future events from the creativity of a certain lens. Movies have been used to influence the nation, bring justice and awareness to certain issues, or draw out the emotions held within large audiences to unify people to recognize more sentimental meanings of life.

King Richard is an example of a film that projects success and hard earned victory through the African American perspective. It touches on ideas of hardship, determination, and perseverance and the prevalence of racism faced by the Black Americans based on true events and real people.

Determined to give his daughters a better life, Serena and Venus's father, Richard Williams extensively plans out his daughters future's for greatness using tennis to bolster his agenda. Tennis becomes a key element within the film and its significance to *King Richard* because it tackles the lack of diversity and the new concept of the

emergence of black women in sports. The seclusion and unfamiliarity of an unknown sport dominated by white people gives Richard a gateway to capitalize on Venus and Serena's success and black individuals who confidently show their presence in a new surrounding. Many times within the film, when Richard tries to reach out to other experienced coaches and captains for advice and guidance, they neglect his offers and do not take him seriously. This diluted persistence shows how discouraged Black Americans are from exploring new fields or making headway in "white" crowds. This dismissiveness of Richard that appears multiple times in different scenes creates parallels to present times. Although it is not as prevalent Black Americans still face racism and are discouraged from entering certain spaces because of a dominating demographic. Richard was also asked in the movie why he did not choose to enroll his daughters into basketball, in response to his attempts to enroll Venus and Serena into the tennis lessons. This comment of subjection also proves to hold importance because it shows mental limitations and microaggressions targeted towards Black individuals as it pertains to what they are capable of. Objecting this rhetoric, Richard ensured that he kept his daughters educated both academically and physically and always reinforced their priorities.

Another important theme which the film King Richard brings out is the idea of a functioning Black family dynamic. Many times, stereotypes around Black people cause their portrayal to the public to be violent and broken. In contrast to this, King Richard exemplifies a strong family support system where family is incorporated into every step of Venus and Serena's journey. The nurturing relationship that is shown between Venus and Serena represents the byproduct of what love and genuine trust

within relationships can do long term. King Richard also touches on a variety of key aspects in Black culture and its correlation to self esteem. Throughout the film, Venus and Serena grow up in Compton, which has a high concentration of gang affiliated activities and poverty. The focus on the Serena and Venus in the film collides with this environment but doesn't take away from their character.

Black femininity and its demonization have a gruesome history and are usually negatively associated with “ghetto” connotations. However, in the film of King Richard, during Venus's Professional Debut she proudly wore white beads in her hair, which is a traditional black hairstyle celebrated within the Black Diaspora. This symbolic statement targets young black girls, and sends a message of maintaining individuality and self love and appreciating every aspect of what makes you unique.

Personally, this film has taught me to appreciate who I am, to celebrate and embrace culture, and to challenge obstacles that lie before me. To show no fear when approaching something new and hold yourself to the highest of standards is important for not only achieving success, but also maintaining it with organization. Being true to myself and not shying away from what seems unattainable tie back into my sense of identity and validation. As a young black woman, embracing who you are and reaching goals can be rough and discouraging, but refocusing and remembering those around me who believe in me, help me to be a better version of myself every single day.