

We completed a unit in my film and culture class entitled The African American Experience. We discussed the abolition of the slave trade, the Jim Crow era, the beginning of the civil rights era, and present day gang culture in depth. Along with the class discussions of said topics we watched the films Amazing Grace, The Great Debaters, Eyes on the Prize, Disc 1 and Crips and Bloods: Made in America. We were assigned related articles and records of each topic we discussed. The most pivotal part of this whole learning experience was living with the fact of our country's wicked bigotries.

Going into the subject of slavery and the other topics we discussed I had this very disconnected feeling about what happened in our country and the kind of impact it had on the African Americans after they had been granted their freedom, from Jim Crow etiquette and segregation and all that crap that came with it. I mean people really just felt the fear of the unknown and were not willing to open their hearts to give mutual respect to these poor folks. They truly felt as if they were inferior beings.

One giant thing I saw in the films with respect to the bigots is that you can just see them full of fear and anxiety. The group in power refused to let someone else (seen as different) share the freedom that they had; share the wealth that they had, or share the opportunity they had. While there were those who stood up to the segregation that came with the Jim Crow laws it was not supported by the majority and no one wanted to be the one to stand up and fight. All those who did stand and fight were killed. Malcolm X, Dr Martin Luther King, and most all that would speak out about it would just be silenced by the fearful. Thanks America, now not only are Black Americans still paying for it, but all Americans are too. We live in cities where gangs and violence are the answer. If one does not have an opportunity then well he will steal and hurt to get what

he needs. We cant even park our cars on the side of the road and feel safe about it. Every home has an alarm system and bars on the windows to keep these people that have been screwed over out of our lives.

After I watched the film Crips and Bloods: Made in America, I finally got the feeling that I was a part of this subject, that it was relevant to me Jim Crow and all of it. I came to see that the decisions that was made my grandparents generation is really a big part to play in the U.S. today. The streets of South LA and other oppressed places in the U.S. there are places where opportunity and freedom was not fully shared with the African American culture of the early 20th century. This could be a direct reason why gangs and other forms of crime has raised up from the ash of hatred in America. While I do not remove the personal responsibility that each and every one of us has for our actions, I do also see that under certain circumstances these people have been forced into the dire state they are in. With no way out the problem has gotten bigger and bigger, who knows what will help this problems find its solution. But through this unit I have gained an understanding for its causes.

Even though we may not have been there at the docks in the West Indies, or part of the slave trade or owned a slave, we are all part of the fabric of America where we are free to live free or die and free to make our society into whatever we want it to be. This much our founding father gave to us. But what has been done with that power has not always given unto all equally and has to be made right. I believe that we are in the forgive and forget time in America, where the past sucked and that was all fine but now lets just get on and try to forget about it. This can be very hard for the pour mothers of the gang members who are killed before they can even drive. These mothers and others who live in these ghettos and low places have been born and raised there only to die with not chance of escape for their families. What are we going to do, can only be asked after we all answer what can I do.