
Literature

Of Mice and Men

In this American classic, written by John Steinbeck, prominent examples of social injustice are shown. Social injustice is mainly seen with how the stable buck, Crooks, is treated and spoken of by the other characters. In the novel, Crooks revealed to Lennie in chapter four, “I ain’t wanted in the bunkhouse... They play cards in there, but I can’t play because I’m black” (68).

In this chapter, Crooks explained how mistreated he felt while being the only African-American on staff. He explained how his word didn’t mean anything on the Ranch saying, “If I say something, why it’s just a nigger sayin’ it” (70). Being the token black man on staff, he can’t stand up against an army of white men.

Earlier in the novel, it is mentioned by Candy in the second chapter, how the boys had fun with Crooks one Christmas. Throughout his story of drunken battles and fun, Crooks is never referred to by name. Instead, he is known as “the nigger.” It is as though he is not even a person, but rather an interesting specimen.

Of Mice and Men is read by high school sophomores all around America. While children read this, they receive a glimpse of how much more prominent discrimination was around the time of 1937, but can also learn the feelings of others who are mistreated. But of course discrimination is still noticeable today. Popular groups, such as the well known Klu Klux Klan are still thriving and trying to force their ideas on the general public.

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Discrimination in Literature and on Screen



The people who come from or those whose heritage comes from the continent of Africa face persecution. Times have changed and discrimination is not as evident as it was before, so is it still seen in social environments? Yes. Discrimination against the African and African-American community can be seen everywhere, but namely it is noticed in literature, cinema, and society.

Cinema

Hotel Rwanda

In the 2004 film Hotel Rwanda, discrimination is the center point. The Tutsi tribe is considered cockroaches and an abomination, as an attempt to wipe them out is gruesomely displayed. Through this massacre, Paul (Don Cheadle) tries to convince the members of the United Nations to help the surviving Tutsi members.

After asking for more men to guard the Hôtel des Mille Collines, something terrible is explained to him by Colonel Oliver (Nick Norte). He told Paul the world will not intervene in this tragedy, saying “You’re black. You’re not even a nigger. You’re African.” Of course he later explained these were not his personal viewpoints however, they were those of his employers.

Earlier in the film, Paul talked with a cameraman named Jack (Joaquin Phoenix). He told Jack he was glad he had filmed the great tragedy in Rwanda and asked if the American viewers would help after seeing it on their TVs. But no help came of this as Jack predicted, “I think if people see this footage they’ll say, ‘oh my God that’s horrible,’ and then go on eating their dinners.”

You might think this was all just film fiction, but actually this film was based upon the true story Paul Rusesabagina. He saved many lives during the terrible Tutsi genocide of the late 90s. Those who are old enough to remember the Rwandan war should also remember the lack of urgency to help the victims. To understand why, we should look back at the quote from Colonel Oliver. Is this really how we should see our fellow man?

Think about it...

There are many different tribes in Africa that have survived for a very long time. The Berber tribe is thought to have begun in 3000 BC and it is still existing today. African-Americans share so many traits from their cultural heritage, so much more than skin color. There are many different traits and cultures we as humans still need to discover about one another. How can we do this when we are constantly shutting social or racial groups down?

No longer should we judge those based upon a certain aspect they hold. We shouldn’t base a whole group of people on stereotypes or for who we think they are. In the same way the majority or group sees another as different, they too may see the majority as strange.

It’s all about perspective and we as Americans seem to have a hard time realizing this. Until we do how are we to see the light at the end of the tunnel? How are those who feel different supposed to truly feel safe out in the open? The fact is, they won’t.



Information

Africans

There are about 3 thousand different tribes in the African continent. Of these 3 thousand, the majority is made up of black men and women. With the majority of the continent being black, one would think segregation would simply be a joke. In the country of South Africa starting in 1948, a special kind of segregation was introduced.

Apartheid was a sort of system where the Caucasian population was considered superior. The system required people to register their ethnicity when voting and were not allowed to marry inter-racially. These are only a few examples of the various laws set in place until its abolishment in 1994.

Though there are no longer laws set in place against ethnic groups, ethnicity can still be considered a social issue in the richest country of Africa. Where there is money many think of progress, but socially they are still behind.

African-Americans

With information from the United States Census Bureau, we know African-Americans take up 13.4% of the American population alone. They are in themselves a minority to the 76.6% of the white population. As is well known, segregation was a regular way of life up until the mid 1900s. Since then life for the average black man and woman has grown more equal to those of the majority, but can they truly be considered equals?