

T.C.
İSTANBUL BEYKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

**RACIAL RELATIONS IN SPIKE LEE'S FOUR
MOVIES: *SCHOOL DAZE*, *DO THE RIGHT THING*,
JUNGLE FEVER, *GET ON THE BUS***

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Tezi Hazırlayan:
MUHAMMET ŞAHİN

İstanbul, 2023

T.C.
İSTANBUL BEYKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

**RACIAL RELATIONS IN SPIKE LEE’S FOUR
MOVIES: *SCHOOL DAZE*, *DO THE RIGHT THING*,
JUNGLE FEVER, *GET ON THE BUS***

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Tezi Hazırlayan:

MUHAMMET ŞAHİN

2020028005

OrcID: 0000-0002-4727-2690

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Dilek ÖNDER

İstanbul, 2023

YEMİN METNİ

Yüksek lisans tezi olarak sunduğum Racial Relations “In Spike Lee’s Four Movie: *School Daze*, *Do The Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever*, *Get On The Bus*” başlıklı bu çalışmanın, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere uygun şekilde tarafımdan yazıldığını, bu tezdeki bütün bilgileri akademik ve etik kurallar içinde elde ettiğimi, yararlandığım eserlerin tamamının kaynaklarda gösterildiğini ve çalışmamın içinde kullanıldıkları her yerde bunlara atıf yapıldığını, patent ve telif haklarını ihlal edici bir davranışımın olmadığını belirtir ve bunu onurumla doğrularım. 12.05.2023

MUHAMMET ŞAHİN

T.C.
İSTANBUL BEYKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
TEZLİ YÜKSEK LİSANS SINAV TUTANAĞI

08/06/2023

Enstitümüz *İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı* Anabilim Dalı *İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı* Programı yüksek lisans öğrencilerinden 2020028005 numaralı **Muhammet ŞAHİN**'in "*Beykent Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim – Öğretim Yönetmeliği*"nin ilgili maddesine göre hazırlayarak, Enstitümüze teslim ettiği "*Racial Relations In Spike Lee's Four Movies: School Daze, Do The Right Thing, Jungle Fever, Get On The Bus*" konulu tezini, Yönetim Kurulumuzun 30/05/2023 tarih ve 2023/22 sayılı toplantısında seçilen ve Beylikdüzü Avalon yerleşkesinde toplanan biz jüri üyeleri huzurunda, Beykent Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim ve Öğretim Yönetmeliğinin 29. maddesinin 3. fıkrası gereğince 45 dakika süre ile aday tarafından savunulmuş ve sonuçta adayın tezi hakkında "**OY BİRLİĞİ/OY ÇOKLUĞU**" ile "**KABUL**" kararı verilmiştir.

İşbu tutanak, 2 nüsha olarak hazırlanmış ve Enstitü Müdürlüğü'ne sunulmak üzere tarafımızdan düzenlenmiştir.

DANIŞMAN
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Di*** ÖN***
(İstanbul Beykent Üniversitesi)

ÜYE
Prof. Dr. Vi*** MA***
(İstanbul Beykent Üniversitesi)

ÜYE
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nur Em*** KO***
(İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi)

Adı ve Soyadı : Muhammet ŞAHİN
Danışmanı : Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Dilek ÖNDER
Türü ve Tarihi : Yüksek Lisans Tezi/ 2023
Alanı : İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Anahtar Kelimeler : Kölelik, Irkçılık, Renkçilik, Irksal İlişkiler, Spike Lee

ÖZ

SPIKE LEE’NİN DÖRT FİLMİNDE IRKSAL İLİŞKİLER: *SCHOOL DAZE*, *DO THE RIGHT THING*, *JUNGLE FEVER*, *GET ON THE BUS*

Bugün ırkçılığın bilimsel bir dayanağı olmadığı bilinen bir gerçektir. Irkçılık, hakim ideoloji veya ırk tarafından sömürülen bir ırkı ayakta tutmak için kullanılan adli ve ekonomik bir propaganda aracı olmuştur. Irkçılık var olduğu sürece toplumun birçok kesiminde farklı travmalar yaratacak ve toplumsal ilişkileri birçok yönden olumsuz etkileyecektir. Bu tez, Spike Lee'nin dört filmine odaklanmakta ve Amerikan Toplumunda ırkçılığın sosyal ilişkileri nasıl etkilediğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu filmler *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever* ve *Get on the Bus*. Bu Tez, kölelik, ırkçılık ve renkçilik gibi olguların ırklar arasındaki sosyal ve duygusal ilişkileri nasıl etkilediğini gösterirken, aynı ırk içindeki sosyal ve duygusal ilişkilere de odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, siyahi aile yapısının çöküşü, beyazlara yönelik önyargı, polis şiddeti ve nefreti, siyah kadınların görünmezliği, içselleştirilmiş ırkçılık, çeteleşme ve suça yatkınlık gibi siyah toplumun yaşadığı sosyal zorlukları da Kritik Irk Teorisi ışığı altında ele almaktadır.

Name and Surname : Muhammet ŞAHİN
Supervisor : Asst. Prof. Dilek ÖNDER
Degree and Date : MA / 2023
Major : English Language and Literature
Key Words : Slavery, Racism, Colorism, Racial Relations, Spike Lee

ABSTRACT

RACIAL RELATIONS IN SPIKE LEE'S FOUR MOVIES: SCHOOL DAZE, DO THE RIGHT THING, JUNGLE FEVER, GET ON THE BUS

Today, it is a well-known fact that racism does not have a scientific basis. Racism has been a judicial and economic propaganda tool used to keep a race exploited by the dominant ideology or race. As long as racism exists, it will create different traumas in many parts of the society and negatively affect social relations in many ways. This thesis focuses on four films by Spike Lee and aims to show how racism affects social relations in American Society. These movies are *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever*, and *Get on the Bus*. While the thesis demonstrates how the phenomenon of issues such as slavery, racism and colorism affect social and emotional relations among races, it also focuses on social and emotional relations within the same race. In addition it highlights the social challenges experienced by the black community such as, the breakdown of black family structure, prejudice towards whites, police violence and hatred, invisibility of black women, internalized racism, ganging, and propensity for crime, in the light of Critical Race Theory.

CONTENTS

Page No.

ÖZ

ABSTRACT

SÖZLÜK.....	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
1. REFERENCES TO SLAVERY.....	3
2. COLORISM AND INTRA-RACIAL RELATIONS.....	9
3. RACISM AND INTERRACIAL RELATIONS	15
4. RACIAL ROMANCE	24
5. SPIKE LEE AND OTHER SOCIAL TRAUMAS.....	36
CONCLUSION	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44

SÖZLÜK

Colorism: Prejudice or discrimination especially within a racial or ethnic group favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin.

Racism: A belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

Miscegenation: A mixture of races especially marriage, cohabitation, or sexual intercourse between a white person and a member of another race

Internalized racism: "A form of internalized oppression", the "internalization of racial oppression by the racially subordinated." Internalized racism involves both "conscious and unconscious acceptance" of a racial hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above people of color.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): Is a cross-disciplinary intellectual and social movement of civil-rights scholars and activists who seek to examine the intersection of race, society, and law in the United States and to challenge mainstream American liberal approaches to racial justice.

Critical Race Theorists (CRTs): Legal scholars, lawyers, and activists who develop and support alternative legal theories and frameworks for combating racial inequality through the light of Critical Race Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Spike Lee is neither the only person nor the first person writing novels, stories or shooting films about racism, but what sets him apart is his neutrality and the way he presents racism. His simple and realistic style makes Spike Lee's films both works of entertainment and sources for the researchers to study. His films have already received many awards. Moreover, his films *Do the Right Thing*, *Malcolm X*, *4 Little Girls* and *She's Gotta Have It* are protected in the National Film Registry by the Library Congress. As for the eye-catching aspects of Spike Lee's films, his references to slavery, racism, colorism and their traumas, internalized racism, the breakdown of black family structure, and the exclusion of people who belong to outer groups are the primary focuses. All these issues are presented to the audience in the most rigorous and memorable way. It would be appropriate to say that Lee has been quite brave and honest while presenting these issues.

The purpose of this study is to highlight how racism or acting racist affects social relations, hence how it weakens the reasoning ability of individuals through the analysis of Spike Lee's four films, *School Daze*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever* and *Get on the Bus*. The films deal with issues such as racism, colorism, interracial romantic relations, black family structure, police hatred and violence and the situation of gays and women in the period between the late 80's and 90's. These issues have been examined in the light of Critical Race Theory, which uses literature, cinema, storytelling, psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, law, social and political texts as methods and resources. How Spike Lee presents these issues and proposes a solution have been also analyzed.

Spike Lee addresses the issue of racism in all its aspects in these four films. *School Daze* is a very significant film for the black community in terms of internalizing colorism, racism, pushing women into the background and criticism of adopting the values of the colonizer. While black individuals who are hostile to each other due to colorism are shown, how unnecessary hatred harms individual relations is presented as well. Thus, that some black people cannot unite even in their own world is one of the main critical focuses of the film. Apart from this, pushing women to a secondary level and not understanding that they deserve equal respect with men is another stunning theme covered.

The movie *Do the Right Thing* basically shows how racism has taken society into an abyss. Racism creates a lot of dilemmas for everyone, and these dilemmas combine and make societies hostile to each other. Institutionalized racism, which exists for blacks on the basis of the state and society, leads them to defend their rights. On the other hand, black racism against white racism also creates new contradictions, since it deprives blacks of their rights. In addition, trying to solve problems through violence makes the already weak black community even more powerless.

Jungle Fever, in contrast, focuses on the long-standing theme of interracial relationship. It shows how the rules of miscegenation that existed during slavery have led to a stalemate in romantic relationships for both blacks and whites. Black women do not approve of a black and white relationship because they are humiliated, and it is humiliating for whites to be with a black person. The movie *Get on the Bus*, on the other hand, is basically about the men participating in the Million March. Themes such as the exclusion of other minorities such as gays and women, the damage to the family institution, and irresponsibility are meticulously examined dealt in the film.

This thesis consists of five Chapters. In the first chapter, references to slavery as the roots of present racism, colorism and other racial problems are presented. In the second chapter, colorism and intra-racial relations from different perspectives is covered. The third chapter deals with racism and interracial relations and their effects. In the fourth chapter, interracial romance and its hardships are analyzed. The fifth chapter of the thesis presents the racial problems and Spike Lee's solutions to these problems.

1. REFERENCES TO SLAVERY

In his films movies, Spike Lee deals with racism, colorism, and interracial relations (miscegenation), none of which is independent of the issue of slavery and all have been a part of American culture. Therefore, it is inevitable to understand racial matters without their reference to this painful experience lasting more than 200 years. Three and a half million black people were sold into slavery between 1600 and 1800. Throughout the years of slavery in the United States, they endured various forms of suffering and humiliation. Numerous black women were victims of rape. As a result, slavery, which was based on the notions of white superiority and black inferiority, started in the most humiliating way and continued in the most suffering way from the moment they were enslaved (Radburn, 2016, p.ii). While the white plantation owners in the United States had unrestricted assistance, slaves received no compensation for the labor they served. They were made to feel as helpless as possible and coerced into harsh labor. In addition, their status did not significantly change after slavery was abolished. They were subjected to inferior justice systems and harsher punishments with fewer rights and protections, specifically in the South (Muhammad, 2019, pp. 59-64). Briefly, all social injustices blacks have been exposed to root back to slavery. Thus, Spike Lee refers to slavery in every movie to remind the audience the root of the problem; thus, in this part of the thesis, I will deal with the references to slavery in four films of Spike Lee.

Spike Lee refers to slavery in his every movie or conveys an important message with a reference to slavery. Accordingly, the movie *School Daze* starts with a black spiritual called “I am building me a home”:

When you hear me praying I am building me a home.

This earthly house is going to soon decay and

The soul has to have, oh Lord, somewhere to stay.

There is too many dangers, toils and snares I have already gone

But his grace fills my heart with fear

And I know he is going to bring me home.

(Lee, 1988, 00:00:40 - 00:03:23)

For Black spirituals, the Blacks question “destiny, and injustice while establishing “a sanctified space” and ‘home’ between themselves and God.” As Dr. James Norris asserts the black person “had to sing about his condition. He had to sing [to keep] his mellow bearings” (McClain). At the beginning of the movie, the spiritual is accompanied by the images of numerous African-American historical figures who contributed to the intellectual history of America and the advancement of Black people, including black activists, writers, and leaders. These pictures demonstrate how black people have been a part of America's history in becoming itself from the Civil War to the present. Africans are said to be constructing spiritual homes, where they feel safe, free, and happy, for themselves in the song. Thus, the Spiritual may refer to the role of blacks in building America, as also their home, where they want to be safe and happy. In light of this, the spiritual songs can be seen as a historical allusion to the contribution of Blacks to American history. In this sense, I claim that Spike Lee implies that every black person has a home in America despite attempts to exclude them from this house and the fact that they had already contributed to every brick. By claiming a sanctified space, they also claim their identity, which was ruined in the course of slavery. As Delgado and Stefancic stress that despite all of the challenges, the African slaves, who were brought to America in chains and subjected to cruel treatment, have managed to become an integral part of the country's economic, cultural, and political fabric today (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. 40).

Lee's other reference to slavery in *School Daze* is when the group called Gammites performs a dog dance—in the schoolyard. The Gammite dance is like a reenactment of slavery; thus, it stands as a metaphor, since people are chained and there is a constant sound of chains in their dance. The leader of the group with a nailed baseball bat represents the master and the dancers represent the slaves brought by ships from Africa. In the scene, the slave representative's head is often bowed and his eyes are lowered or closed, which indicates how powerless he is. When he looks up, he faces the master holding a whip, and he looks as if he is begging for his life. The eyes of the master, on the other hand, are usually focused on the black body from above. “Whether or not he is physically positioned above the slave in the image (which he often is), the raised whip, as an extension of his own body, provides him access to that aerial view. The meaning of the visual message is straightforward: slavery's cruelties

are violently oppressive and the slaveholder's power, both physical and scopic, is absolute” (Goddu, 2014, p.18).

Additionally, internalized racism, which is also a direct result of slavery, can be seen when a black student plays the role of the slave owner. As Karen Pyke asserts white racism has existed since slavery and contributed to internalized racism. As white skin color has been acknowledged as a sign of superiority, blacks with lighter skin color have been considered privileged ones. Eventually, blacks with lighter skin believe they are more attractive and beautiful. The condition is present not only in African Americans but also in other races living in America and, regrettably, has permeated American socio-cultural life. On the other hand, blacks with darker skin develop a mistrust toward whites and blacks with lighter skin (Pyke, 2010, p.553).

Do The Right Thing serves as another example of the reference to slavery, when all those slaves toiled their lives away. In the film, when Mookie stops by his house to take a shower and he chats with his sister, Mookie is accused of being irresponsible and lazy. Mookie says that the days of slavery are over and he will no longer work like a slave (Lee, 1989, 00:54:38 - 00:55:34). The scene is crucial, since it demonstrates how blacks are tired of racism, acknowledge hardworking as akin to slavery and, as a result, reject participation in the economic system requiring hard work. Similarly, Mookie equates concepts like hard work with slavery in general, which is an indication of how slavery has had long-lasting negative effects on Blacks. In fact, this condition is a goal and a trick of institutional racism, which only promotes black invisibility in economic life (Gordon, 2009, pp. 42-43). In America, black people were mistreated for a long time. They have not been given a way out of the system. Leaders like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to change this course and instill confidence in black people in all facets (Kortenaar, 2017, p. 123). Therefore, it is no accident that these two leaders are also featured at the end of the movie with their quotes. Furthermore, Lee demonstrates how many people in the black neighborhood talk a lot but do not do much. Their lack of a strong entrepreneurial spirit is evident in the way they frequently criticize the system. This mental structure is known as learned helplessness in psychology, and it is self-defeating because the individual does not believe that s/he will succeed and is of the mindset that someone will undoubtedly hinder him or her. Black people did not have the chance to rebel, use force, bear arms,

or flee during the slavery era, and little changed after it ended. They were denied the ability to vote and take part in politics. The result was that black people always felt hopeless and desperate (Foner, 1994, pp. 870-872).

In his films, Lee demonstrates that blacks face a long-standing discrimination continuing from generation to generation, and it is hard to defend themselves against the established white values. In *Jungle Fever*, Angie Tucci is introduced as Flipper Purify's new secretary. Flipper Purify is a black architect who wants to have a black secretary. His superiors contend that requesting a black secretary would be discrimination. Flipper questions why he is the only person of color in the organization, and his bosses respond that their hiring policy is to select the best applicant for the position regardless of gender or race. There is no doubt that blacks' psyches have been permanently damaged by the racism rooting back to slavery. By Flipper asking for a black secretary it indicates that he would feel more comfortable if he worked with a person from his race.

Another movie Lee refers to slavery and the dilemma brought about by slavery is *Get on the Bus*. In the opening of the movie, we see Smooth is handcuffed to his father because he has been caught stealing; thus, a court order has him handcuffed to his father with a lengthy chain. Smooth does not want to get on the bus, but he is forced to do so (Lee, 1998, 00:00:50 - 00:03:42). It is important to depict a black person who is chained when discussing slavery and the traumas associated with it. The chain is a symbol of slavery, which disrupted the family unit and encouraged black people to commit more crimes. Smooth's involvement in crime at a young age and his strained relationship with his father are also results of the shattering experience of slavery in the long term.

The chain image becomes prominent as a reference to slavery when Smooth tries to escape. Everyone starts running into the forest to find Smooth, and the chase of Smooth evokes the times of slavery. A group of men chase a teenage boy, and one of the men holds a shackle in his hand to re-chain the runaway. The sounds of chains, remind us of the chained slaves who are on the run. Clearly, the scene is an allusion to the chase of a slave fugitive. Smooth becomes the symbol of thousands of slaves escaping from their owners for their freedom. When Evan jumps on Smooth to stop

him, he asks why he runs away. Smooth replies he is maybe more similar to him than he thinks by referring to his father leaving his family behind and running away from his problems and responsibilities. Evan is stunned and tells his son that he was unemployed and broke when Smooth was born, and he had a child with a woman he did not love. The conversation between them makes Evan realize the problem is not his son but himself. His father states that the situation will not improve overnight, and he will never run away again in his lifetime. He promises that he will now take responsibility and become a better person and a father (Lee, 1998, 01:28:55 - 01:34:10). Certainly, a father is responsible for his son, so when this responsibility is taken in a broader sense, I argue that it is quite possible Evan symbolizes America, which does not fulfill its duty as a protector.

The discrimination among blacks, or colorism, is also a direct result of the phenomenon of slavery. Light-skinned black people were regarded as black by the exploiter so that they could be used as slaves on the plantation; however, "Heavier fieldwork was left to the darker slaves" (Jones, 2000, p. 1510-1511). Biracial people shared the same status as black people in the North and Upper South in the middle of the 19th century. In the Lower South, variations in skin tone served as a proxy for social status. White people also agreed with the biracial hypothesis, which holds that light-skinned black people are more intelligent because they have white ancestry. In *Get on the Bus*, the dialogue between Flip and Gary sets a very good example of colorism among black people. Flip claims that because Gary's mother is white and he possesses white genetics, he does not have a problem with the white driver. However, Gary maintains that he does not choose to love or hate anyone based on their skin color. Gary would be regarded as black, would live and eat with black people, and would ultimately be a slave, according to Jeremiah, the elderly and wise man on the bus. When Flip says to Jeremiah that Gary would become a house slave, eat the best food, live in the attic, take a bath, and not work like them, Jeremiah responds that what Flip said is incorrect because the domestic slave eats corn and if he started acting a little too loosely, he would be lynched (Lee, 1998, 00:36:35 - 00:38:11), which indicates that any black person with any tone of skin color is punished, or treated by whites in the same way.

In brief, in his movies, Lee shows the everlasting effects of slavery. Even though slavery is no longer practiced, black people continue to suffer from the socio-cultural trauma caused by this inhumane practice. They have grown hatred to those who are different from them due to their inferiority complex, which has led to discrimination within the black community. For many black people the color of their skin has long been a barrier to their advancement. Even though there is a strong anti-discrimination movement in America today, racism is still an inherent problem.



2. COLORISM AND INTRA-RACIAL RELATIONS

Spike Lee presents black issues impartially and presents matters in every respect. When he deals with racism, for instance, he does not take a part and portray all the whites as the White Devil but presents a variety of characters with different opinions from different races. Therefore, colorism, discrimination within the black community, is another issue he deals with in his films. Camara, who sees colorism as a part of internalized racism, claims Colorist people do not believe in their abilities and their worth. They put limits to their full humanity, their dreams, their right to self-determination, and self-expression. Colorism appears as “embracing ‘whiteness’ (hair straighteners and bleaching creams, skin-tone stratification within communities of color, and ‘the white man’s ice is colder’ syndrome), self-devaluation (racial slurs as nicknames, rejection of ancestral culture, and fratricide), and resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness (school drop-out, voter nonparticipation, and risky health practices)” (Camara, 2002, p. 11). According to Matthews and Johnson (2015), the primary characteristic that separates the dominant and non-dominant groups is skin color in American society (p,249). The framework of cultural identity, inclusivity, mobility, and social acceptance are hindered in African-American community by European beauty standards. Since the era of slavery, the skin color was the source of constant trouble and distress within the Black communities. Certainly, race relations in American society has a complicated past, but color gets more attention than other significant issues.

Lee’s *School Daze* is a movie examining how colorism, rooting back to slavery, affects relationships in the black community in both overt and covert ways. As it portrays the racial, cultural, and economic conflict and disagreements in a fictional all-black school, the movie examines the racial ways in which students express themselves. The audience is presented with students of all different skin tones, viewpoints, and attempts to become black people in American society (Wilson-McCormick, 2004, p. 3). Thus, in the film, the institution known as Mission College constitutes a miniature black community. The internalization of stereotypes and self-hatred are depicted in *School Daze* in various ways. Appearances like hair and skin tone are emphasized quite often. Matthews and Johnson state that the ideology of colorism is based not only on skin color, but also on all very important physical

characteristics like hair texture, eye color, and facial features (Mathews, Johnson, 2015, p. 249).

At the beginning of *School Daze*, Lee shows the speech of a student group, consisting only of dark-colored black students, fighting for black rights especially the apartheid in South Africa. While they represent conservatives, the other group called Gammities represent a wider range of people with different skin tones and points of view. The Gammities seem to have no problem with racism and throughout the film, they seem to be against the activist group. The activist group with darker skin color is more severe in the fight against racism and even criticizes the other side for their insensitivity to these issues. Racism, according to Hochschild and Weaver, is treating people differently based on their race. Colorism, on the other hand, involves prejudice and mistreatment among Blacks based on different skin tones. In contrast to dark skin and African features, fair skin and European features are regrettably valued and regarded more beautiful (Hochschild and Weaver, 2007, pp. 645-646). Indeed, both racism and colorism use the same hierarchy. As Thompson emphasized colorism was an outgrowth of white racism, which had its roots in slavery, and it caused division and discrimination in their own communities. Despite the Black Consciousness movement of the 1960s, affirmative action is still practiced in the black community in favor of people with light skin (Thompson, 2001, p. 337).

Interestingly, in *School Daze*, we see no white character from beginning to end. The only possible time to see people of a different race is the football game, but the players of the visiting team do not appear on the screen. In other words, Lee does not destruct black integrity in the movie. When the black team loses the game, the black fans clash. I argue that they lose the game, ending with black fans fighting with each other, is a good lesson for the audience to see the oppressor has culturally and pathologically set the oppressed against each other so that the oppressed dealing with each other will be too busy to struggle with the oppressor. As the whites are not shown in the film, there is no longer a need for whites to fight or drag the blacks down. They create their own oppressed and oppressors within the same community. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire asserts that the more inhumane the oppressed feel, the more they fight back against their oppressors. The greatest risk for the oppressed, according

to Freire, is to oppress others by modeling the oppressor (Freire, 200, p. 43-47). Thus, sometimes blacks may not need a white oppressor within their own community.

Lee also provides the viewer to look at colorism from the angle of women in *School Daze*. It could be observed that the racism of whites against blacks is mentally internalized by blacks. In the movie, two female student groups come face to face. The two groups make fun of each other's racial aspects and use racially degrading expressions towards each other. In particular, the group with more African features accuses the other group of looking like whites. They criticize them for dying their hair and wearing colored contact to look like white people. The racially diverse group, on the other hand, accuses the other party of being ugly and jealous. They use insulting words like "Barbie doll", "jigaboo", "high-yellow heifer", "tar baby", and "wannabe White", which were used by whites to insult blacks. The argument between the black females shows how fixed beauty concept leads to exclusion of others. Indeed, it is a crime against humanity to impose a single image of beauty through the media or otherwise, especially when the media does it in a racial way. As expressed in the musical performance in *School Daze*, colorism is meaninglessness and they all should appreciate who they are:

But how many times have you wished
you were some other someone than who you are?
Yet who's to say that if all were uncovered
You would like what you'd see?
You can only be you as I can only be me
(Lee, 1988, 00:42:34 -00:45:22)

Indeed, every person with a certain genetic heritage can only be himself or herself, no matter how much s/he likes other people or other races. Thus, belittling darker or lighter blacks, or trying to be like white people, does not solve racial problems.

The perception of beauty imposed on or by women is quite striking and is a significant theme dealt with in *School Daze*. In the musical scene, the phenomenon of beauty among black women is discussed through black and white racial characteristics. In addition, stereotyped features on beauty among women become the subject of discussion between the two parties. Just as there are black and white troubles among people in America, there are hardships and racial insults among blacks because they

have darker or lighter skin. Another example is the dark skin group singing a song resembling the insulting game of dozens through the end of the film. They sing:

Your hair is straight 'cause you pressed it last night.

Your eyes are blue but you ain't White”

Don't you check the local zoo?

We spent the other day

At the local zoo

They had a big, nappy beast

And it looked like you

And when we looked up at the cage

It said "jigaboo." (Lee, 1988, 01:15:33 - 01:16:03)

As Mathews and Johnson point out, we are aware of what other people think of us much like how we see ourselves reflected in a mirror. Similar to men, African American women also practice what they learn from society and are influenced by it (Mathews, Johnson, 2015, p. 257). It is a challenging and arduous struggle to eliminate racism, fight against it, and work to improve black people's quality of life when institutionalized and accepted racism is present and permeates their minds.

According to Freire, creating an oppressed class involves two key concepts; his own language and authority. The oppressor uses his own language and authority to invalidate the voice of the oppressed, then forces him to give up his cultural heritage. Therefore, in order for the oppressed to gain any measure of control at all, they must learn to use the language of the oppressor (Keller, 1997, p.417). In *School Daze*, there is a student march, and the activist group joins the march with their own banners. However, the other student group, the Gammities, is disturbed by this situation and intervene. In the discussion between student groups, the activist group calls the other group wannabes and the Gammities call them jigaboos. At the end of the discussion, the student president ends the discussion saying “I am sick of the niggers” (Lee, 1988, 00:50:42 - 00:51:29). Lee, in fact, demonstrates such colorist insults from the

beginning to the end of the movie to indicate that colorism is the greatest obstruction for blacks.

In *School Daze*, Spike Lee depicts the psychopathological state of colorism quite well. For instance, Rachel calls Dap color-struck, and accuses him of being discriminatory or prejudiced against fair-skinned blacks. He rejects her accusation and claims that light-colored ones have a negative attitude towards him. Dap states that he admires octoroon and quadroon mulattos and states that they are not pure. Rachel tells Dap that it is funny that he believes he is pure because his own ancestors were once slaves and the owners raped them: "Massa was in your ancestors' slave quarters just like everybody else," but Dap says "No, no, no, no. No white blood in me. My stock 100%, pure Zulu Masai" (Lee, 1988, 00:41:05 -00:42:14). Colorism is openly criticized by Rachel because conditioning a person to love someone who is racially similar to himself or herself also wears out the reality of love, which is one of the elements that holds humanity together. Spike Lee touches upon this subject and wants the viewer to understand that colorism kills true love. This blinding feature of colorism becomes quite explicit with Rachel's words: "You know, Vaughn? I've often wondered if the only reason you're with me is because I'm one of the darkest sisters on campus. Good for your all-the-way-down, pro-black nationalist image" (Lee, 1988, 00:47:29 - 00:47:41).

Unfortunately, racism and colorism undermine intra-racial relations. In *School Daze*, when Dap and his friends go to a restaurant downtown to eat chicken, a few locals taunt and insult Dap and his friends. The local group criticizes students for having come to their city to show off; moreover, to steal their jobs and leave them unemployed in their own city. They state that they are not educated, but they are not scumbags either; however, university students treat them like scumbags. The two black groups mutually insult each other. The local black boys state that Dap and his friends are white wannabes, they have lost their blackness, and one day they will realize that they are niggers just like them (Lee, 1988, 01:06:51 - 01:09:55). Both groups are black, but everyone accuses each other of not being black enough and sees the other as less black. According to Park and Jones, Blacks are exempt from what might be considered as intra-racial hate crimes. After all, the majority of crimes committed against Blacks are done so by black people in most cases. (Parks and Jones, 2008, p. 1343). Briefly,

colorism in black society is demonstrated by the fact that racial relations are more significant than other factors in influencing Blacks' beliefs about racial unity and solidarity (Shelton et al., 2016, p. 95).

That colorism being an obstruction against black solidarity is also dealt with in *Get on the Bus* by Lee. When Flip asks Gary why he joins the march, Gary reacts to such an exclusionary question, and insists he sees himself as biracial and black. These questions are actually a sign of being obsessed with skin color, which will make relations worse. The conversation between Flip and Gary demonstrates how a community can become a monster that harms itself when it adopts racist or colorist views. Thomas compares racial prejudice to a disease to be avoided. Racism is the cause and result of discrimination. Racism breeds paranoia resembling narcissistic personality disorder, which causes the racist to verbally or physically attack on the target group (Thomas, 2014, p. 26, 27). Consequently, racism in America has broad-reaching and disastrous effects on the entire black community, not only physically but also emotionally and socially (Poussaint, 2002, p. 4).

Briefly, colorism, a result of slavery, negatively affects Blacks' relationships and drags them to a pointless dispute. Colorism disrupts the unity of the black community, and constitutes an obstacle for them to obtain their rights. In a society where there is colorism, there is no need for an outside oppressor anymore, since it creates disharmony at all levels of relationships, from male-female relationships to neighborhood relationships, from employee relationships to student relationships, and makes the black community feel more inactive and incapable.

3. RACISM AND INTERRACIAL RELATIONS

One of the most significant Spike Lee movies dealing with racism is *Do The Right Thing*, dedicated to black people Eleanor Bumpurs, Michael Griffith, Arthur Miller, Edmund Perry, Yvonne Smallwood, and Michael Stewart—five of whom were killed by police officers (Casarae, 2017, p.183). The movie is set in Brooklyn in the course of a single day on the hottest day of the year, which is expressed with a metaphor of “Bed-Stuy Do or Die Neighborhood.” The racial conflicts and the tension are presented through different characters and various points of views, appealing to human emotions and thoughts. The film is still controversial and causes people to be disturbed about racial issues, even years after its release. As Finnegan argues:

Although Lee’s body of work is at times problematic, in particular with regard to its pervasive heteronormativity and its often-troubling representation of women, *Do the Right Thing* remains a film to be reckoned with. The film continues to engender acute discomfort among audiences raising a number of questions about why its confrontation what Lee calls the single most pressing problem in America—race and racism—is so threatening to generally held assumptions about race in America (Finnegan, 2011, p.75)

Lee, as a black person knows the power of music in his community. Henceforth, his movie *Do The Right Thing* starts with the song “Fight The Power,” whose rhythm is the same as N.W.A's “Fuck Tha Police,” but the lyrics are different. Both songs express the racial issues in such liberal rhetoric that is full of curses. The former, written in 1988 to criticize the racist attitude of the police, “was a product of popular culture as it challenged the norm imposed by the dominant white culture and touched on political messages, demonstrating that popular culture is a political field and therefore goes beyond mere entertainment” (Almedia, 2021, p.12). Lee also uses this song and its lyrics to criticize the dominant white male stereotype, which has nothing to do with black identity. Lee depicts that the male and female protagonists shown in the cinema do not constitute an idol for black children and even affect them negatively. These white male idols established by the dominant white culture and neither accepted nor recognized by the Black community:

Elvis was a hero to most
But he never meant s- to me you see
Straight up racist that sucker was
Simple and plain
Mother f- him and John Wayne
'Cause I'm Black and I'm proud.

(Public Enemy, 1988)

Certain idols like Elvis Presley or John Wayne cannot represent every single individual in the multi-racial America, hence fail as idols. Therefore, African American community rejects to recognize the so-called King of Rock & Roll and sees him as “simple and plain.” In turn, the song makes indirect references to the real heroes of the African American community, such as the Black Panther’s slogan “Power to the people” and James Brown’s song “Say it loud, I’m black, and I’m proud.” Thus, the idealized white heroes contrast with black icons, who “appear on no stamps.” (Almedia, 2021, p.13)

Consequently, it is no coincidence to see Smiley selling photos of black leaders Martin Luther King and Malcolm X following the song at the opening of *Do The Right Thing*. He says those two people are dead now but they still have to fight as stressed in the song “Fight the Power.” Although Martin Luther King advocated pacifism and peace while Malcom X advocated violence, both are acknowledged as the most prominent black leaders in the course of Civil Rights Movement. Thus, *violence* and *peace* are the most important issues raised in the movie and left unresolved. Lee leaves the answer to the audience through the words and pictures of these two leaders at the end of the movie. Moreover, Lee uses stuttering Smiley as an outstanding symbol of black people being silenced and ignored, and reminds them they should not give up fighting for their rights.

Radio Raheem is another important character, who sparks the riot in the movie. He walks around with a huge stereo tape recorder, playing rap, hip-hop, and RNB representing the black culture, and he hardly speaks. These types of music genres are very important to black culture since they are a means of self-expression for Blacks,

hence Radio Raheem constitutes the representative of black culture throughout the film. The problem with him is he plays the music too loudly. Eventually, Sal asks him to turn the volume down, which leads to a dispute and then a riot at the end of the film. Moreover, the loud music is not only the thing that triggers the riot but the demands from Radio Raheem about putting up some pictures of black idols, which is rejected by the white restaurant owner, Sal. The insistence of Radio Raheem on both the loud music and the black idols indicates that he rejects to be silenced even if it causes his death as a black person. It seems both Sam and Radio Raheem are involved in a personal quarrel, but as the quarrel gets bitter, race enters the picture and the parties are split along racial lines. Sal, who is always kind and often offers a discount to his regular black clients, gets furious and sees the incident as a racial case as well (Christensen, 1991, pp. 582–583). This quarrel, which is at the heart of the film, serves yet another example of how harmful racism is to all people.

Pyke claims that deep hatred towards other races is only spoken in secret. Few people are overt racists while most of them are covert racists. At a family or neighbor meeting, a racist person may vomit his grudge against other races if he has people with the same mindset around, which indicates people's hatred for the other race reveals in a social interaction (Pyke, 2010, pp.554-556). For instance, When Sal and his sons talk about whether the mechanic will come or not for the broken air conditioner, Sal says that the mechanic will not come around unless he has a police escort (Lee, 1989, 00:08:57 - 00:09:01).-Even if he seems to be in good relationship with those black people in the neighborhood, when he is alone with his own sons, he does not hesitate to refer to black neighborhood as an insecure place.

On the other hand, racism is not one-way street. As Lee depicts in *Do the Right Thing*, there are racist attitudes of Blacks against white people. For instance, when a white passerby accidentally steps on Bugging Out's Jordan trainers, which is identified with Blacks, he becomes very irritated. The white person is ridiculed even if he has apologized to Bugging Out. Later, this insignificant accident turns into a heated argument with provocation from his black friends. Then Bugging Out asks the white man why he lives in a black neighborhood. Bugging Out is startled with the answer "America is a free country and anyone can live where s/he wants" (Lee, 1989, 00:35:06 - 00:36:26). For a white American, the word *free* may mean America and democracy,

but it may sound strange for a black American, who is exploited, abused and excluded from the system. Thus, the words have different connotations for different groups of people (Bowser, 2017, pp.579-581).

Indeed, racism can be likened to a contagious disease for all races. When Mayor shops at a Korean-owned grocery, he behaves racist to the owner and says: “This is not Korea” (Lee, 1989, 00:14:30 - 01:07:47). Mayor, who is already a marginalized and excluded person in American society marginalizes the people he sees as strangers. Similarly, Radio Raheem goes to the same store to buy some batteries, openly mistreats Koreans, and racially insults them for being Korean and having bad English. Eventually, Blacks can be racist while they complain about racism. As Osler & Starkey argues those who are exposed to racism exclude and despise anyone who is not like them after a while. That is why; racism is like a grenade that collapses society from within. It is not clear where and when it will explode, but it can emerge as an element that undermines the harmony of the society at any moment, anywhere. Moreover, the nationalization of a society may be hampered by it, or it may even be the main cause of its collapse on a larger scale (Osler & Starkey, 2002, pp.149-152).

Glasgow argues that a racist person does not respect a black person and finds them either stupid or evil. Moreover, he claims they are not reasonable, and cannot be trusted (Glasgow, 2009, pp.77-83). Similarly, in *Do the Right Thing*, Pino gets very angry with Vito since he gets some advice from Mookie, a black person. He uses Italian slur for Blacks and ask how he can listen to a *shagamay*: “You gonna listen to this shagamay, listen to him tell you to smack me, your older brother?” (Lee, 1989 00:36:46 - 00:37:52). Pino definitely does not approve of the younger brother taking advice from a black person. As a racist person, he links the issue to race and does not see Mookie as his equal. By using the Italian derogatory word he insults black people, belittles Mookie's personality and intellect in his own way. Without any logical reason, Pino as a racist person refutes the success and good sides of Mookie. He even goes further and asks Mookie how black people can be so retarded, hence, they start to argue. Mookie asks about Pino's favorite players, athletes, etc. Interestingly, all Pino's favorite players are black and he tries to clarify himself: “Black players are not black, they are different. They are black but not black like the other blacks. They are black but more than black” (Lee, 1989, 00:38:02- 00:38:52). According to Bowser, this is

exactly what racism is. The achievements of people of different races are ignored, regardless of their success; they are humiliated and their contribution to society is ignored. Those racist people just obtain benefits from Blacks but still claim they or their work is below what is expected (Bowser, 2017, p.586).

Lee also shows that social jingoism harms relations among people and sustains discomfort within the society. When Radio Raheem goes to Sal's restaurant to get a pizza, he again has the music on full volume. Sal is disturbed by this scene and asks him to turn the volume down. His sons also say that nothing is understood. A small-scale discussion ensues in the restaurant. When Radio Raheem goes to an Italian restaurant, he does not even think about whether other people are disturbed or not, he disrespects the other party. Casarae defines this phenomena as *social jingoism*. The main purpose is to rebel against the imposed stereotypes and make a sound. The purpose here is not to violate the law, but to disturb it. This is an effort to be more visible by saying "I am here, even if you do not like it" (Casarae, 2017, p.195). It is a form of protest, but the problem is whom we disturb. It is understandable to offend law enforcement or clearly racist groups in this way, however, to offend Sal and his clients is irrational; moreover, it undermines black-and-white relationships.

Lee also shows that those who are anti-racist are most affected by racial confrontation. For example, Sal and Pino have a father-son talk. Pino states that he hates the restaurant since his friends laugh at him. He believes blacks should live with blacks and whites should live with whites. Therefore, he wants the restaurant to be sold. Sal, on the other hand, states that he is proud of his job and restaurant, he has seen no harm from black people, he knows everyone there and it makes him happy that people love his pizza. On the other hand, when Bugging Out organizes a boycott for Sal, Mayor says he has not experienced any harm from Sal and does not want to deal with such black nonsense. When he tries to stop the boycott, they do not listen to him. Ironically, Mayor is a drunken character in the movie, but he seems the most sensible and levelheaded person. Similarly, Jade also states that boycotting Sal due to the pictures on the wall will have no contribution to the black community, and they need to do more beneficial and positive things. Clearly, Lee presents impartial and logical white and black characters from both sides, which indicate race, language and culture do not matter in building firm friendships. Sal is respectful to black people

throughout the movie and has done no harm to them; thus, he is defended by some other Blacks.

Similar to Sal in *Do the Right Thing*, Paulie in *Jungle Fever* constitutes a white character who is not prejudiced against Blacks in Lee's films. He lives with his father and runs a shop where Italians come every day. He seems more intellectual than the people in his community. All the people coming to his shop are racists but Paulie has to get along with these people. One day, while he was reading a newspaper, a regular customer named Vinny comes to his shop and asks him what he has been reading. Paulie states, "Around 1899, some Italian employers gave equal rights to black workers in their factories and the whites lynched them for it" (Lee, 1998, 00:36:24 - 00:37:11). His regular customers say that men deserved this situation and such rights should not be given to black people. Paulie is subject to aggression and social oppression by his own community. Racism is accepted by some people as the normalcy of life, and they raise difficulties to non-racist people like him. In *Jungle Fever*, the only place Blacks and Whites coexist is the building where drug addicts of both races use drugs and hang out. When Flipper looks for a missing brother, he enters the building, which is full of hundreds of white and black drug addicts helping each other. Lee shows the audience two things; first, people of different races can only exist illegally, and second, these people of different races can be together only when they are cut off from reality, and stripped of their mental faculties. Systematic racism, which is imposed by society, family and law, is not seen in this place where people have lost their thinking faculties.

In *Do the Right Thing*, Lee demonstrates that established racism is everywhere and the solution is to take responsibility; however, people direct their hatred towards each other instead of taking responsibility. In the film, people love Sal and his pizza, and his pizzeria is a place where all blacks in the neighborhood eat in or have take-away. Sal has good relations with black people. He stresses that he sees Mookie as his son. Towards the end of the movie, when Sal and his sons close the pizzeria, Ahmad and his friends come and insist on ordering pizza. Sal tells Mookie to let them all in because people love his pizza, of which he is quite proud. Soon after Bugging Out, Smiley and Radio Raheem with his loud radio, arrive. Sal gets annoyed with the loud music and smashes it. The radio is identified with Black music and culture; therefore,

it initiates a great fight, and eventually police arrive. In the course of the struggle between the police and Radio Raheem, the police officer chokeholds Raheem and causes his death, which leads to a riot. This riot is the most significant moment in the movie because everybody vomits his or her anger and hatred. As the extreme heat makes people nervous, extreme biased people cause great indignation in the film; one person dies, another is injured, and the pizzeria is set on fire.

After the riot, the camera shows a picture, in which an Italian boxer is beating a black boxer. Nevertheless, in real life, the white cops kill a black man, Radio Raheem. The tension gets high and everyone blames Sal for the death of Radio Raheem. Thus, the public directs their anger to Sal's restaurant. Mookie grabs a trashcan and throws it on the restaurant window to direct the public's anger towards the restaurant. Mookie's act of directing the crowd's anger from Sal to the restaurant is a sudden and well thought out move. It is very clever of Lee that he does not let black people take an eye for an eye revenge but let them set the pizzeria on fire, which prevents a big racial fight (Bartley, 2006, p.15). Moreover, the Korean shop has its share of their anger. However, the Korean owner defends himself, his family and his shop and tells the angry crowd that he is *black* too, which indicates that he sees himself as a minority like Blacks.

Lee repeatedly tries to indicate how irrational racism is and how it dynamites all social relations once again. Lee presents that racism creates different mental mechanisms, perceptions and defense mechanisms in everyone. Bugging Out's request to hang a picture on the wall is absurd. He has no right to make such a request, but systemic racism makes him protest in such a way. That the picture of a black idol is not hung on the wall, or the demand of extra cheese not being met make him feel humiliated or excluded as a black. Sal is someone who does not have any problems with blacks, but he cannot have sympathy with Bugging Out or Radio Raheem since he is not familiar with the burden of being a black person, who has been humiliated and discriminated for years. Sal has worked hard all his life and founded that restaurant. He has the right to decide what to hang on his wall. Nevertheless, blacks cannot empathize with him, either. Each occurrence has its own right and wrong. Alternatively, either side may be correct or incorrect; however, shifting the focus away

from the issue and the solution, and focusing on race will only lead to more future social unrest and polarization (Solorzano et al, 2000, pp.61-63).

While describing the police hatred in America, Feagin states that since slavery, the police have always been a part of institutional discrimination and racism against blacks has been considered quite normal among the police force. Moreover, he identifies ongoing police violence as one of the biggest obstacles for Blacks to accept America as their own country. Thousands of cases of racial profiling are present and common (Feagin, 2006, pp.23, 24, 48,129). In several scenes of *Do the Right Thing*, we witness the hostile and furious gaze of the cops. In the scene where the fire brigade comes and tries to put out the fire, people shout slogans “Howard Beach.” Lee uses this scene as a reference to police violence and commemorates the black victims of racial violence.

At the end of *Do the Right Thing*, Lee proposes two different solutions; either to solve the problem peacefully as Martin Luther King suggested, or with violence as Malcolm X advocated. After the fire is put out, Smiley enters the ruined pizzeria and hangs a photo of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King on the wall of fame, and we read the words of both leaders. Martin Luther King stresses that violent counter attacks are temporary results and never leads to permanent peace. Moreover, rather than solving the problems, the violence creates more and complicated ones:

Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

Malcolm X, on the other hand, claims racist white people have all the power and prevent the advancement of Blacks. Therefore, if it is necessary, there should not be any hesitation in applying violence:

Because this is the situation, you and I have to preserve the right to do what is necessary to bring an end to that situation, and it doesn't mean that I advocate

violence, but at the same time I am not against using violence in self-defense. I don't even call it violence when it's self-defense, I call it intelligence. (Lee, 1998, 01:52:00 - 01:53:25)

Furthermore, Radio Raheem's rings with the words engraved LOVE and HATE is another reference to opposite arguments of these two significant black leaders, the racial issues in America and the solution. In other words, the pictures of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King representing violence or non-violence are replaced with HATE and LOVE. While love and hate present interracial enmity and understanding in this context, the scene displays an emotional and spiritual side of the phenomena besides all this political debate (Sklar et al, 1990, p.39).

In conclusion, the only important structure where people can take refuge is the law. Law should exist as an institution that eliminates racism. However, if the law enforcement officers and prosecutors, who are part of the law, fail to fulfill their duties, racism will continue to permeate society. Indeed, the formation of the United States alone is full of human rights violations. This overt racial discrimination and hypocrisy is evident not only against blacks, native Indians, Arabs, but also in foreign policy as well (Boyle, 1989, pp.73-83).

4. RACIAL ROMANCE

It is a well-known fact that white people severely abuse and abused black people in terms of economy, sexuality, culture, and psychology. Even though black women were raped and used as a sexual object, an official relationship of Blacks and Whites was strictly forbidden until recent history. Specifically in the course of slavery, interracial marriages were out of question. After the abolition of slavery, there was a law preventing interracial relationships and marriages, and the penalty for breaking it was death. Even after these laws were overturned, intimate relationships between members of different races led to deaths, particularly for black men, and the exclusion of white women from society. In the following years after the abolition of slavery, those who saw black and white marriage as normal were labelled as black lovers. Even in those years, so-called anthropologists argued that races were unequal, and mixed children were not intelligent. They even based their arguments on the Bible and claimed interracial marriage would damage the genes of whites and their next generation (Miscegenation, 1864, pp.116-121). Therefore, they created the word *miscegenation*, representing the threat of interracial relationships and marriage.

In Colonial America, white people made an effort to stop racial mixing after the first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619. According to a document from 1630, Hugh Davis was a white man who had been severely beaten for having an affair with a black woman and defiling his body. The first law banning marriage was enacted in Virginia in 1662, and other colonies quickly followed. These laws, enforced by white men, forbade all unions and penalized white mothers of mixed-race children (Lay, 1993, p.165). The term, *miscegenation*, was created in the United States by Confederacy supporters and opponents of abolitionism and black liberation. White racists and subsequent race pride activists see hybridization (referred to as such by white supremacists) as a theological, biological, and political threat to their existence. Those who opposed interracial relationships saw interracial relationships as equally immoral and an ugly thing, since it was likened to the sexual relationship between humans and animals; therefore mixed-race children were regarded as freaky and tragic (Sundstrom, 2011, p.146). As Dewulf claims racial theorists viewed miscegenation as a form of racial regression or degradation in many Western societies. They claimed that it damaged particular human and moral qualities like physical fortitude, integrity,

and even fertility. The miscegenation laws implemented during the segregated era in the United States, and racist organizations continue to oppose mingling (Dewulf, 2022, p.209). Fortunately, today we do not use the word *miscegenation* and have different attitudes towards interracial marriages but in the past, it was a great suffering for those of different races in love and they had to pay its price.

Especially after the 1950s, there was an increase in racial romance and marriage rates. Race did not become less important as a result; on the contrary, it became one of the main topics of social interaction. Some parents disowned their children because of their close relationship with children of the other race. Due to the attitudes of the families, it was observed that the emphasis on race was greater than the emphasis on the individual. This cultural and demographic situation gained additional dimensions, particularly after the Second World War. Many white people in those countries did not approve of black soldiers' getting married to white women. This was an absolute nightmare for the white nationalists. The fact that blacks and their children who married whites could inherit a share was a major economic concern for white racists who supported all forms of segregation. Many black people also started to voice their concerns about marrying white people who never accepted and respected them after the civil rights movement (Sokol, 2007, pp.106-108).

Jungle Fever by Lee depicts the oppositions to interracial relationships existing in the 1990s, how racism affects the inner world of people, and creates an inferiority complex. In those years, a great number of people saw interracial relationships or marriages as immoral. Many of Spike Lee's films address race and color-based romantic relationships, but *Jungle Fever* is the one where he specifically addresses the contradictions of interracial relationships. Like *Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever* examines the interactions between Italians and Blacks in New York's outer boroughs. The murder of Yusuf Hawkins in 1989, a black teenager who was allegedly dating a white girl and was attacked by Italian youths in Bensonhurst, served as the real-life inspiration for Lee's story (Wehrle, 1992, p. 88). The relationship of Blacks and Whites were not approved, and it was seen as an attraction to a different race, which is called "Jungle Fever." It has the same physical symptoms as a physical fever, including an abnormally high body temperature, fainting, and nervous excitement, but this

particular fever is characterized by a different kind of sexual attraction to the forbidden fruit (Sundstrom, 2011, pp.146-147).

Jungle Fever begins with Stevie Wonder's song with the same title: "Jungle Fever." The lyrics both explain what the movie is about and give the audience a space to think about racism and love.

I've got jungle fever, she's got jungle fever.

We've got jungle fever, we're in love.

She's gone black-boy crazy,

I've gone white-girl hazy.

Ain't no thinking maybe, we're in love.

She can't love me, I can't love her.

Cause they say we're the wrong color.

(Lee, 1998, 00:00:52 - 00:03:47)

Spike Lee uses the song to clearly say that race is a dead end to a romantic relationship in American society. The expression of *wrong color* is outstanding because it is known that there is no such thing as a *wrong color*. Every color is true and beautiful; this is not even a matter of discussion. However, the song clearly explains that racism is a reality for that period. In addition, people of two different races jeopardize their love because of their race. In the classical sense, in many literary works, the impossible love of two people suffering from family feud or two different people who come from different economic classes are handled. In the film, the impossible love of people from two different races is handled; hence race has replaced class and blood feuds. Race becomes so significant that the reason for the break-up of Angie and Flipper turns out to be *race* and the fact Flipper is married is even ignored.

Lee in *Jungle Fever*, firstly introduces the background of Angie and Flipper, and shows that they have similar backgrounds even if they have different cares. The audience firstly finds the opportunity to observe the Italian neighborhood, Bensonhurst. Angie does everything to make her father and two brothers happy. Despite their complaints, she continues to serve them. In terms of division of labor,

the male members of the house are lazy and they put the entire burden on the female character. Angie is both a sister and a mother, and her siblings and father are the types who act like children. We observe a traditional, Catholic family dependent on their values. Being white Italian is important to these people. On the other hand, Flipper has a traditional black Protestant family. His father is a retired pastor. When these two houses and naturally their upbringing are observed, it is clear that the two families have the same values but belong to different races. They are both religious, traditional, and patriarchal. Race is important for both families. Both are part of the same nation but they have become hostile siblings to the same nation and cannot show common national characteristics due to racism. If racism did not exist, maybe they would be the best neighbors in the world, and possibly related by marriage. Clearly, skin color becomes a cause for a feud between the two families.

In the scene in *Jungle Fever*, Angie especially goes home late because she is tired of cooking for her siblings; therefore, she and Flipper have a chance to get closer and learn more about themselves. While they talk, Flipper says, “As a black, I have heard all kinds of racist slurs since my childhood” (Lee, 1998, 00:24:29 - 00:32:53). They both live in the same city, but live in racially segregated neighborhoods. Neither of them have had a chance to date or flirt with people other than their own race. As the two eat together, they do not hesitate to open up to each other. Towards the end of the scene, they secretly make love in the office, which is also a covert criticism of racism because these two people have not been given the chance to get to know each other in the normal way, but have been given the chance to get to know each other by betraying the two people in their lives in an office corner, secretly. In other words, if these two people did not stay alone in the office late at night and have dinner together, maybe they would not have met again in their lifetime.

Only after Flipper and Angie have sex, we hear the police sirens as a reference to historical legal obstruction or involvement of the authority. Even if the police do not interfere legally, we just hear the sirens, hence the fear of the police become influential. Racism prevents people of two different races from meeting under normal conditions. In other words, people of two different races could only come together and get to know each other in an illegal or immoral way. In the next scene, one of the regulars of Paulie’s shop says that he is sure that his girlfriend, who has dumped him,

is with a blonde, blue-eyed man. Hearing this, Frankie says “damn Italian women do not want their own kind; they are all same.” (Lee, 1998, 00:37:13 - 00:39:50). He even humiliates women of his own ethnicity due to the possible dating of men from different ethnicities. While their discussion is ongoing, Orin, a black woman, enters. Paulie, who likes Orin, welcomes her and talks friendly, which makes all the white customers uncomfortable. After Orin gets out, someone says that she is not bad for a black girl, while the old man says; “no, she's a very beautiful girl” (Lee, 1998, 00:37:13 - 00:39:50). Interestingly, while they do not prefer their women dating with someone from a different ethnicity, they feel free to use sexist and racist discourse for a black woman. The racist expressions directed at Orin, a beautiful and educated woman, are actually to cover up people's sexual or emotional interest in a black woman. All of the men there are interested in Orin, but instead of glorifying her, they humiliate her to cover up their desire.

The film clearly depicts that a couple of different races are perceived as committing a social crime and shame, even if it is not written in the laws. In this respect, the scenes of Angie and Flipper explaining their relationship to their close friends are also quite significant. When Flipper tells his friend he is having an affair with a white woman, his friend gets up and yells that he is crazy. He even likens the situation to the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb. Similarly, when Angie tells her friends about her relationship, they are disappointed as well. One of the girls takes racism to a higher level and says that it is a disgusting situation and she will never have sex with a black person. She questions the fact why she dates a black man as she is beautiful and there are so many other alternatives (Lee, 1998, 00:44:03 - 00:48:46).

Clearly in *Jungle Fever*, the coexistence of blacks and whites is only reacted to negatively, and they are belittled and humiliated, which is definitely avoided today. Blacks see a black person as a traitor to their race; the white woman becomes an inferior woman for whites. In addition, if necessary, the black man should be killed to get rid of this ugly situation. Briefly, racism in the society divides the two societies in every sense. Moreover, if there is such a relationship, it should be out of sight and kept secret. Otherwise, it will only bring destruction to those two people who love each other. Certainly, in those years, race stood as an obstacle for two people in love, but it

can also be argued that the romantic relationship of Angie and Flipper does not go beyond just a “jungle fever” as the title suggests.

Clearly, we see again Lee does not act biased but treats his characters quite fairly by showing racist views of both races. Like white racist people, some blacks act racist equally. Flipper's wife Drew is a very significant example, performing racist attacks. When she meets with her friends to open up about the post-breakup with Flipper, the first thing she says is that her husband has left her for a low-class white trash (Lee, 1998, 00:58:27 - 01:03:21). The main issue is that a man commits adultery, which is both immoral and illegal. As a woman, Drew puts all the blame on white women and does not hesitate to take a racist attitude while doing this. This relationship is considered not simply an act of adultery, but a betrayal of a black man of her own race by a white woman, which clearly indicates her hatred for the other race. She cannot face even the smallest reality due to the imposed racism. Instead, she looks for racial underpinnings; however, her basing the issue on racial grounds does not change the fact that her husband has cheated on her.

Another example of racist attitudes of Blacks is depicted in the restaurant scene. When Flipper takes Angie to a black restaurant, the waitress deliberately does not take orders. She mistreats Angie, makes fun of her and tells Flipper to take her white meat and show off elsewhere. When they insist on eating at the restaurant, the black waitress recommends he order the *blackened* fish. Moreover, there are two women sitting at the other table. One of them says, “She is White” (Lee, 1998, 00:51:55 - 00:53:38), which indicates that they also find this dating inconvenient. Briefly, black and white racism in society may fuel polarizing for both parties, but they have no right to destroy their formerly ongoing relationships. Normally, if a person wants to end a relationship, s/he ends it in good manners and then starts to have a relationship with another person.

Lee repeatedly shows how color unnecessarily invades people's minds and lives, hence romance and male-female relations. That people always have race in their minds overshadows all other thinking faculties, and everything is viewed on the basis of race. The scene where Flipper goes to meet his wife again is another example depicting how race and color-based biases destroy communication and relationships.

Flipper apologizes to Drew with flowers in hand, but Drew refuses and states she is not light enough for him. She claims that Flipper has a weakness for white women since he has always dated fair-skinned women before her. Even though the skin color has no significance in betrayal since it is a crime no matter what race commits, Drew blames him for being obsessed with light skin: “You have racial obsessions because you're dark black and that's why you're with a white woman.” (Lee, 1998, 01:06:08 - 01:08:23). The racism that resides in people's minds not only prevents them from seeing truths, but also hinders them from thinking rationally.

The interracial relationships may become more traumatizing for the darkest-skinned black women. Due to the fact that black men have been chasing lighter-skinned black women, a black woman may have the notion that she is not beautiful. Evidently, racist mindset may make a person too blind to see the reality. Kreager outlines the reasons why black women in the USA have opposition to black men marrying white women. The first is that historically, black women have been treated as a commodity and have been sexually assaulted by white men. The second reason is that the racist system has historically portrayed black women as being less attractive and inferior to white women. The idea that a black man who marries a white woman is rejecting the black community and black women's beauty is the third justification. The fourth reason is more financially motivated; specifically, the isolation and abandonment of the black family, which is already surrounded by poverty and has fewer economic opportunities than whites. Consequently, black women who perceive such intimacy as a threat may object to this kind of romance in order to uphold their racial and feminine pride (Kreager, 2008, pp.889-890).

Critical Race Theory looks at this situation by accepting the existence of race. Because there is race, there are different stratified racisms in the society and it will exist somehow no matter what we do. A study called *Angry Black Woman*, which evaluates the reaction of black women to this phenomenon, summarizes the issue as follows: Interracial dating and marriage have received considerable attention from social scientific studies, the media, and to a lesser extent popular culture. However, Black women's experiences and opinions have been largely disregarded, and black women have generally been portrayed as angry and opposed to interracial relationships with little attention given to the root of such anger and opposition. The data

demonstrate that black women's opposition to interracial relationships is not motivated by envy or hostility towards white women, as is frequently suggested, but rather by what such relationships mean for black women and by what black women are worth. The general opposition of black women to interracial relationships stems less from a belief that white people are better or more desirable than black people or racism. The statistics demonstrate black women have fewer suitable Black male partners due to higher rates of interracial dating among black men and white women, and fewer opportunities for interracial relationships for black women. Black women blame society for undervaluing them as women and men of their own race becoming accustomed to this negative stereotyping. Black men flirting with white women are viewed as embracing white femininity and rejecting black femininity. Additionally, some black men consider white women to be more suitable as they advance in their careers. These findings demonstrate that interracial relationships are not seen as unique human connections, but rather as a sign of a lack of economic and cultural ties to black communities. "Relationships between black men and white women, despite being based on love, respect, and commitment, are seen as a harm to black women, the black family, and the survival of Black communities" (Childs, 2005, pp.557-558).

As mentioned earlier, Lee is not a partial person who always criticizes the other. In *Jungle Fever*, we have the opposition of both families to the relationship of Angie and Flipper. Angie's father beats her with his belt, slaps, kicks and insults her in the worst way. He says he prefers her to sleep with a child rapist or a serial killer but "not with a fucking black nigga." (Lee, 1998, 01:14:24 - 01:15:40). He shouts that her mother turned over in her grave and they have raised her to be a good Catholic. She is a disgrace to her family. He kicks Angie out of home saying, "I wish your mother had lived but you had died". (Lee, 1998, 01:14:24 - 01:15:40). His daughter, however, is the same person. Sleeping with a white or black does not change the fact that she loves her father and family. However, as her father said, being with a black person is a disgrace because their racist circles will shame them, gossip about and humiliate them. Eventually, social racist pressure creates a gap between a father and a daughter and ruins the bond between them. The mental state created by the racist social pressure has pushed her father to take a stand against his own daughter, to beat and humiliate her.

Poussaint stresses “Racial delusions can occur as a key symptom of other psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder” (Poussaint, 2002, p.4) These illusions are usually negative or discriminatory in nature, but can also have a broader meaning. If these delusions increase, they may even try to hurt or even kill members of a group they despise. Even if we do not see at that level, we witness how hatred for other races can lead to a violent act in *Jungle Fever*. In the film, Spike Lee shows a third party always involved in the romantic relationship between two races. The third party constantly stigmatizes the couple in this relationship as a disgrace. When his father finds out that Paulie has a date with Orin, his father suddenly goes crazy. The father states that Paulie cannot go out with a black woman, and a black woman can never enter their house. He leaves the house despite all the objections of his father. Then, his Italian friends, who are also customers of his shop, see Paulie walking on the street. They both insult him and Orin racially and tell him he cannot date a black woman. They even attack Paulie physically (Lee, 1998, 01:51 - 01:54). Clearly the friends regard this dating as disgracing. Race obsession leads people to see people of other races as monsters. One may be beaten because s/he loves someone of a different race. However, despite all kinds of physical and psychological violence, Paulie reaches Orin's door and proves that he is brave enough to take responsibility for his relationship.

Therefore, in *Jungle Fever*, racism emerges as a tool that interferes with private life, and it not only interferes with private life, but also destroys relations. When Paulie, Angie's fiancé, finds out Angie's being with Flipper, his white Italian friends supposedly calm him down, but their aim is to humiliate him. They say that Angie has gone to Catholic school for years but has cheated on him with a black man. Vinny even goes so far as to say that Paulie should beat Angie (Lee, 1998, 01:15:54 - 01:20:19). The racist point of view not only creates interracial hatred, unrest and strife, but also creates intra-racial conflict and enmity. The racist friends of Paulie interfere in his private life as if they have a right. Eventually, Paulie alienates himself from white Italian friends. Vinny's derogatory comment about Orin and other black women is a clear indication of his deep-seated hatred.

Similar to Angie's father, we also witness the disapproval of Flipper's father to their relationship. When Flipper's father invites Flipper and Angie to dinner, he

states that in the past, white men glorified their wives and treated them like a unique flower. However, when the night came, the white man chose the black woman. In this way, fair-skinned blacks emerged, but such an involvement was out of the question for a white woman. If a white woman was with a black man, the man would be lynched and the woman was to be killed (Lee, 1998, 01:27:09 - 01:31:19). It is obvious that Flipper's father, good reverend Doctor Purify, has been exposed to racism at its worst. Even if he is a clergyman, all the racist bad experience he has gone through has eventually made him a racist too. Even if he does not approve of the lover that his son brought with him, there is no need for him to use such humiliating language, and bring the issue to racism. Moreover, calling his own son a pimp is actually an expression of his hatred of white people, because in his mind, his son has left his wife for a white woman and he expresses this in a very contemptuous way.

Smith notes that proponents of slavery had to look to the theories of black inferiority and white superiority for moral support. Some people held the view that slavery was necessary to tame black people because they were inherently "savage". Murders against black people increased as a result of the widespread belief that they were genetic sex animals (Smith, 1980, p. 298). Therefore, it is quite natural that Angie and Flipper flirt in the street after a meal is misinterpreted as an attempt of rape by prying eyes. Shortly after, a police car arrives to the scene and immediately points a gun on Flipper's head. Frightened Angie cries out several times that they are lovers. Angie and Flipper experience an incredible fear. Only after do the cops realize they are misinformed, they leave (Lee, 1998, 01:31 - 01:34). Unfortunately, everyone has the right to interfere and disrupt the relationship between a black man and a white woman including families, friends, environment, society etc.

One of the other factors that disrupt or destroy the romantic relationships between blacks and whites is police violence. Flipper's words express the terror created by the police: "Why are you saying that we are lovers, do you want to have me killed?" (Lee, 1998, 01:31 - 01:34). Even many years after the Civil Rights Movement, he subconsciously feels the risk of being punished for being with a white woman. The incident negatively affects both Angie and Flipper in different ways, which leads to the end of their relationship. In the past, white men and black women were allowed to engage in sexual activity, including rape, while white women having sex with non-

white men was subject to harsh punishment of the black men. (Kendall, 2006, pp.2-3). Therefore, it can be claimed that the old terror of lynching still haunted black men even in the 90s.

Knowing the difficulties of being black and a fair-skinned black, Flipper never wants biracial children. When Angie brings up the question of having children, Flipper disagrees, and says he never wants to have a mixed-race and fair-skinned child (Lee, 1998, 01:48:23 - 01:50:31). Sitting with their backs to each other, Angie is on the dark side and Flipper is on the bright side of the room. They resemble Ying Yang representing balance. Nevertheless, they look rather two opposites that are constantly at war. Angie, who thinks they can beat racism, tries to convince Flipper. It is contradictory for Flipper to call Angie's parents racist while he acts racist. He has accused his wife of being obsessed with color before, but indeed, he is also color-oriented.

Another movie in which Lee deals with interracial relations and its reactions by the member of the races is *Do the Right Thing*. At the end of the film, Jade, a black girl, comes to Sal's Italian pizza restaurant. Sal's expression changes as soon as Jade enters, because he really likes her, but his sons are quite uncomfortable about their father's interest in her. Sal offers to cook a special pizza for her. They sit at the same table together, and Sal compliments Jade, which annoys Mookie, the brother of Jade, so he takes Jade out and admonishes her (Lee, 1989, 01:05:40 - 01:16:35). Pino, the son, is also annoyed because Jade is black. Mookie, on the other hand, may be displaying a protective attitude. Alternatively, he could be hiding his inner racism in the guise of protectionism. It is obvious that racism naturally harms not only male-female relationships but also family relationships.

In conclusion, Lee conveys that racism stemming from slavery has become a primary obstacle for the interracial romance. For instance, Flipper is just as racially obsessed as anyone else and lacks the capacity to deal with racial tension, which shows how difficult it is to have a love affair in a society divided into racial poles. Flipper says that love overcomes all difficulties is a lie that can only be seen in Disney movies and they have an affair due to a curiosity in the other race (Lee, 1998, 01:54:52 - 01:57:07). As Smith stresses, *Jungle Fever* is an intense film telling the story of two

people of different races who become attracted to each other and begin to have a forbidden relationship. This controversial topic is intensified throughout the movie with some strong race and family themes (Smith, 2004, p.65) In Lee's terms, *Jungle Fever* is an unhealthy sexual attraction between two races. Lee claims that the attraction between people of different races is not always love, but rather myth and curiosity imposed by the media (Paulin, 1997, p.168)



5. SPIKE LEE AND OTHER SOCIAL TRAUMAS

Spike Lee has earned a place among those who are in charge of influencing the African-American spirit of the twenty-first century thanks to his films dealing with crime, violence, urban life, and racial and gender issues. He is a fearless filmmaker who fairly expresses his political views. Lee's political outlook logically touches on divisive topics involving African-American society. He addresses every social conflict in his films by providing a resolution, but *Get on the Bus* is the only one in which he comprehensively deals with all matters and presents definite answers. The film is about twelve black men participating in the Million-Man March on October 16, 1995, in which black women were not allowed to take part. On their trip, they argue, quarrel, and comment on their own masculinity and manhood along with colorism, interracial relations, police violence, police hatred, offensive attitudes towards out-group members, black family structure and ganging. The movie is like the combination of all the messages, which is given respectively in all Spike Lee movies. Although the film is a part of popular culture, it has taken its place in the history of cinema as a cult film in terms of the messages it gives.

In his films, Spike Lee tries to depict the American community containing racial, sexual, and ideological minorities within itself, just like all other societies. Two of these minorities are women and homosexuals. As for black women, he depicts the marginalization and the invisibility of them in different ways. For instance, in the farewell scene of *Get on the Bus*, Shelly complains about them being excluded and finds the march sexist and exclusionary. Shelly's questioning of their exclusion is a progressive move, because while trying to fight for rights of blacks, the rights and voice of black women cannot be overlooked. If black men are oppressed and marginalized by the system and racism, black women are oppressed twice. Therefore, it is unacceptable to exclude women from such an activity that matters for all Blacks. Sexism is a form of discrimination as well as racism. In her writings on black feminism, Ula Taylor claims that black women experience a greater discrimination compared to both white women and black men. She states that black women have more difficulties in their recruitment processes and are oppressed by both black men and whites. (Taylor, 1998, pp.18-21).

Another important scene referring to exclusion of black women is when Gary and Flip meet two black women saying their exclusion is not fair: “The march is exclusionary; it pushes women to stay at home in the traditional way. Women have been in the entire black freedom movement, and their role cannot be denied.” (Lee, 1998, 00:44:57 - 00:47:20). The film takes place among men, which is actually a demonstration of women being put in the background. Not only in the black community, but in many communities around the world, women's voices are not heard, which is unacceptable in terms of women's rights. Taylor contends that both black and white men view black women as marginal; therefore, the fight for black women's rights is overshadowed. The historical mystification and objectification of the black female body wounds this struggle (Taylor, 1998, pp.22-26). Moreover, due to the focus on race in the course of Civil Right Movements, gender roles have not been sufficiently discussed, and the struggle for black rights evolved into black men's movements (Langston, 1998, pp.163-164).

Lee presents a similar situation in *School Daze*. After the fight with the locals, Dap and his friends claim that the local people are ignorant. However, after a while, they verbally abuse passers-by and insult black women racially, which indicates the male hypocrisy and how black men abuse black women. This scene is strikingly successful in showing and revealing the oppression of a certain group within itself, namely women. Those who say they are oppressed do not see others as equal to themselves and do not realize that other people deserve the same respect and love. Taş claims that patriarchy oppressed black women both racially and sexually. In fact, early feminists tried to defend women's rights by comparing the social status of women with the social status of blacks (Taş, 2021, p.206).

One of Lee's solutions in his movies while addressing the women's problems is through dance, which has an important place in African American culture. *Do the Right Thing* begins with a dance of a black woman with the song “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy, and she dances throughout the song in different clothes as if representing different black female identities. Thus, Lee includes the black women in this fight but suggesting fighting with their music and dance, and showing their abilities. Indeed, the urge of dancing comes from their African roots. Ubakala dance rooting back to Africa, for instance, is performed by women for fun, for celebration

and for solving problems. The dance performance of African women is mainly performed in such occasions like entertainment, marriage, and the birth of a child. “The performance has the potential to prevent the abuse of power and bring about social change without resorting to violence” (Hanna, 1981, p.25-27).

Similar to black women, gays are double marginalized due to their race and sexual orientations. On the bus, they raise homosexual issues and discuss the matter through their journey. Gary says to Randall that he has no courage to say loudly that he loves him. At this point, everyone on the bus is shocked and everyone starts talking negatively about them because in those years LGBT rights were not promoted as it is today, and was considered shameful. As Russell stresses in the course of civil rights struggle, gay rights were ignored and citizenship rights were identified with heteronormative attitude (Russell, 2008, pp.102-103). Furthermore, Randall asserts his sexual preference has nothing to do with this march: “He called for a day of atonement. Perhaps the minister will atone for his homophobia. I am going because I am a black man. My sexuality doesn't change that.” Kyle, a former soldier, says he was shot by two homophobic soldiers, who later talk “about how they killed two birds with one stone. One nigger, one faggot” (Lee, 1998, 00:41:26-00:42:41). Another character Kyle is a person who is black, gay and republican. Although the majority of blacks on the bus are democrats, he does not hide his republican personality. He does not use a sexist and racist discourse. On the contrary, he takes an attitude against sexism, racism or different kinds of discrimination.

With his gay characters, Lee points out society should understand that people with different sexual orientation are part of this community. There is no difference between gays and heterosexuals. They can work and produce just like everyone else. Similar to racism, it constitutes another form of discrimination. In the film, we clearly see how homosexuals are even discriminated against in the black community. Flip, a black nationalist, is portrayed throughout the film as a character who degrades women, homosexuals, and blacks with lighter skin. He insults Randall; thus, Randall says “you have delusions of grandeur. Your constant references to your sexual prowess are nothing if not over compensatory and lead me to think that you are a misogynist who is very insecure.” (Lee, 1998, 00:39:00-00:40:30). Although Flip may seem a black nationalist, he would be a white racist if he were white. As Baldwin states racism and

homophobia are similar behaviors in an oppressive society (Logan, 2013, p.16). On the other hand, it is also striking that they talk about his problems, and find a solution to them in a civilized way. As they continue their bus trip, Randall and Kyle talk about their relationship. Randall states that he loves his own personality and lives his life for himself, not for others. He cannot base his life on a lie and cannot deny his identity; thus, while Lee shows that social pressure always exists, he also relays that individuals should accept who they are. So-called social norms have been formed over many years, and now they are bygone.

Another important issue Lee deals with is taking responsibility and acting accordingly. In *Get on the Bus*, Spike Lee demonstrates that solving social problems only by law is not enough and that taking individual responsibility is necessary. Before the bus departs, the old man Jeremiah asks for a collective prayer and they pray. They say in the prayer that they are not guilt-free, but they ask for forgiveness. What they pray for is after the trip, each one of them to be a better man than he was before. Lee shows with this scene and prayer that all this legal and cultural struggle of black people is also part of the individual's struggle to find himself or herself. The journey embarked on is not only an ideological but also a spiritual and psychological journey. Just as many people in religious stories go on journeys to know themselves and God, this journey will also be the journey of individuals of a lost race to find themselves. Jeremiah wishes both himself and his friends to be better individuals after this journey. Lee displays that every person should be able to stand on their own feet and take responsibility for their life, no matter what they have experienced before. Blustein writes about taking responsibility that "(t)here is a natural reluctance to acknowledge or confront specific truths about our personal past due to the emotional pain they cause us. We can be unhappy for a variety of reasons; however, one must accept responsibility for their past and for improving" (Blustein, 2000, pp.1-2).

Talking is easy, but acting is difficult. What blacks need is to do more than talk. In the movie, three black men start talking about Koreans who run a shop just across the street. They slanderously and racially criticize how Koreans can run a shop in their neighborhood in less than a year after they arrive in America; however, one of the black men states that Blacks do nothing but criticize the system. They only talk but do not take any action: "I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that. You ain't gonna do a

goddamn thing, but sit your monkey ass on this corner.” (Lee, 1989, 00:40:44-00:40:51). However, it is necessary for a person to take responsibility and try to succeed in various aspects of their life in spite of everything. Saying we are black and underrepresented and then accepting the existing situation is indeed mental slavery. As Blustein states: “Taking responsibility for one's past also has a forward-looking dimension” (Blustein, 2000, p.8). A committed person who makes the necessary corrections will definitely make great changes in her /his life.

Certainly, slavery and long-term racism have traumatized black people, but the solution to this is not to be hostile to other races or minorities. In *Get on the Bus*, when they need to change the driver, there comes a new driver named Rick, a white Jew. They are not content with a white driver, so they do not want to go to march with him. George tries to calm them: “Oh come on! We always had to chauffeur the white man. This time the white man is chauffeuring us.” Although the march is a protest against racism and all they need is a driver that will take them to the march; it turns out to be a racial issue. When the bus leaves, Jamal says; “it is a bad omen if a white man drives us to the march.” (Lee, 1989, 00:29:00 -00:35:06). Like in *Do the Right Thing*, Lee gives a very important message which is that people from any minority groups should learn how to live together. While fighting for black rights, being anti-Semitic and showing hostility to other races is inconsistent. Freire writes that the oppressed should not act like the oppressor. The main aim of the oppressed should be to liberate both himself and its oppressor. This is the universal duty of the oppressed (Freire, 2000, p.44). Racial problems cannot be resolved by fueling racial conflicts. The current conflict will not, therefore, end if the other side is always represented as evil because of the bad past. Therefore, as Dice stresses if people want to live together in a democratic way, they should learn to live with other groups and to have good relations with them. This should be one of the main purposes of the current education system (Dice, 1951, p.198).

As stated earlier, in his films Lee presents black people facing various problems, one of which is alienation. In *Get on the Bus*, Wendell forms an example of how capitalism alienates people from their essence. Wendell is a car salesperson and the only reason he joins the Million Men March is to sell cars. He continuously belittles black people, and he repeatedly calls black people “nigger” and he claims that he is

not the one. While the discussion goes on, people on the bus say that there is a notion named racism that is pushing blacks out of the system. Wendell states that there is no such thing as racism and it is a figment in the black man's mind. He claims that those who join the Million Man March are a million worthless people. The people on the bus say he is a black man too and get him off the bus. Wendell is a person who has completely lost his rationality and identity for the sake of money, which makes him alienated from his race.

Scholz argues that the relationship between human rights and solidarity is a part of social enlightenment. Every person has a responsibility and obligation to everyone on earth. In other words, each person must stand up for their own class and race while also supporting other classes, races, and genders (Scholz, 2014, pp.50-52). At the end of *Get on the Bus*, we witness the transformative power of solidarity as a part of liberation from existing problems. When the bus arrives in Washington, Jeremiah is taken to the hospital due to a heart attack. Those on the bus do not join the march even if they are too close to the gathering area; instead, they follow it on TV. They prefer to wait at the hospital to accompany Jeremiah, who has no one. Upon Jeremiah's death, George gives a speech on the bus. He says, "We came here for a purpose and we showed this in solidarity with Jeremiah" (Lee, 1989, 01:37:20 - 01:43:01). They say the prayer previously said by Jeremiah in front of the statue of Abraham Lincoln. Thus, the movie turns into a spiritual journey helping heal the mental destruction and traumas of a group of black men. As Lee stresses in his films, the solution to racial issues is not counter-racism. Instead, people should learn to cooperate, to fight for their rights without resorting to violence, to love each other without discrimination, and to be responsible.

CONCLUSION

Racism is a phenomenon that has existed in societies for a very long time. Many books have been written and movies made on the causes and effects of racism. It creates different traumas for those who are exposed to it, and after a while, it dulls the mental faculties of both those who are racist and those who are exposed. Therefore, Spike Lee's movies are significant in terms of studying all aspects of racism. He knows that racism is a complicated matter and he conveys all aspects of it to the audience through his camera. As a black person, Spike Lee has been exposed to racism. However, he has tried to convey what he has witnessed in an impartial way through his movies, which is the key to his success in his career as a director. His films clearly show how racism destroys social relations and counter attacks deepen racial matters and leads to a dead end.

Lee is a realistic director and presents the matters from his political view. He gives psychological messages in conjunction with political messages. According to Lee, every person should be responsible for the current situation and act responsibly. Being responsible will enable individuals to see the problems better. Militantism or radicalism does not eliminate the problem, but deepens the problem. Therefore, instead of taking a radical attitude, one should take responsibility for both himself and the community he is in and try to change the situation for the better.

Moreover, examining Lee's films creates an enjoyable and educative situation for a researcher as well. When his films are examined in the context of psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and law in the light of Critical Race Theory, they both reveal the socio-psychological conditions that blacks are exposed to, and reveal how race-based problems affect every ethnicity and race in American society. Nearly every black person always feels defensive in some way because of racist attitudes. Sometimes this situation sparks violence, sometimes it emerges as an inferiority complex, and it stands as an obstacle to realizing one's own potential. Unfortunately, racism in America has continued for a long time legally as well as economically. As a result, many black Africans feel economically excluded from the system and do not have access to the necessary opportunities. This situation has damaged the black family structure and made life more difficult especially for black women. The rate of black men's involvement in crime is the highest among various ethnic groups, and the

rate of children raised with a single parent is higher among black individuals than other ethnicities. This situation creates a vicious circle, destroying the black family structure and leading black youth into the arms of gangs and criminal organizations.

Lee's films also focus heavily on colorism and present this phenomenon to the audience from different angles. There is a rivalry between darker colored black women and light-skinned black women, and as a result of this rivalry, a separation based on the perception of beauty emerges among women. Unfortunately, colorism affects blacks in matters such as marriage and romantic relationships. Black and white marriages or black and white rapprochement actually have a long history. Slavery period was the worst and most painful period of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, many black women were raped. In the later period, black women were seen as sex objects. Certainly, there was biracial romantic attractions and eventually opposition to mixed marriages, which caused secret relationships or violence. Lee shows the difficulties of this occurring in all its aspects. Moreover, he shows the hypocrisy of people on racial romance.

As a result, Spike Lee has dealt with the racial problems stemming from slavery and racism from various angles and has tried to show that they have a lot of social and psychological contradictions and consequences. Lee is not only a director, but also a responsible individual who tries to mirror social conflicts. He gives a "Wake Up Call" in different scenes in all four movies. Indeed, this "Wake Up Call" is not just for the blacks, but for all humans.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almeida, J. A. R. (2021). *The Universal Language of Pop Culture, Spike Lee's films as narratives of counter-memory* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidade de Coimbra).
- Bartley, W. (2006). Mookie as “Wavering Hero”: “Do the Right Thing” and the American Historical Romance. *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 34(1), 9–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43797251>
- Blustein, J. (2000). On Taking Responsibility for One’s Past. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 17(1), 1–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24354106>
- Bowser, B. P. (2017). Racism: Origin and Theory. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48(6), 572–590. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44631325>
- Boyle, F. A. (1989). The Hypocrisy and Racism behind the Formulation of U.S. Human Rights Foreign Policy: In Honor of Clyde Ferguson. *Social Justice*, 16(1 (35)), 71–93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29766443>
- Camara Phyllis Jones. (2002). Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon* (1960-), 50(1/2), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149999>
- Casarae L. Gibson. (2017). “Fight the Power”: Hip Hop and Civil Unrest in Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*. *Black Camera*, 8(2), 183–207. <https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.8.2.11>
- Childs, E. C. (2005). Looking behind the Stereotypes of the “Angry Black Woman”: An Exploration of Black Women’s Responses to Interracial Relationships. *Gender and Society*, 19(4), 544–561. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30044616>
- Christensen, J. (1991). Spike Lee, Corporate Populist. *Critical Inquiry*, 17(3), 582–595. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343800>
- Delgado R. & Stefancic J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: an introduction*. New York University Press.

- Dewulf, J. (2022). Miscegenation. In J. Burns & D. Duncan (Eds.), *Transnational Modern Languages: A Handbook* (pp. 209–216). Liverpool University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2fjwpw7.27>
- Dice, L. K. (1951). Living Together. *Pi Lambda Theta Journal*, 29(4), 197–200. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42918531>
- Feagin, J. R. (2006). *Systemic racism: A theory of oppression*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Finnegan E. H. (2011) (Still) Fighting the Power Public Space and the Unspeakable Privacy of the Other in Do the Right Thing. Conard M. T. *The Philosophy of Spike Lee*. (pp.75-94) University Press of Kentucky.
- Foner, E. (1994). The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation. *The Journal of American History*, 81(2), 435–460. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2081167>
- Freire, Paulo, 1921-1997. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York :Continuum, Glasgow, J. (2009). Racism as Disrespect. *Ethics*, 120(1), 64–93. <https://doi.org/10.1086/648588>
- Goddu, T. A. (2014). *Anti-Slavery's Panoramic Perspective*. MELUS, 39(2), 12–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44392735>
- Gordon, L. (2009). African-American philosophy: Theory, Politics, And Pedagogy. *Philosophy of Education Archive*.
- Hanna, J. L. (1981). Dance and the “Women’s War.” *Dance Research Journal*, 14(1/2), 25–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1477945>
- Jones, T. (2000). Shades of Brown: The Law of Skin Color. *Duke Law Journal*, 49(6), 1487–1557. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1373052>
- Keller, K. (1997). Prudence’s Pedagogy Of The Oppressed. *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 98(4), 415–426. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43345141>

- Kendall, F. E. (2006). *Understanding white privilege: Creating pathways to authentic relationships across race*. Routledge.
- Kortenaar N.T. (2017) Race, Colonialism, Postcolonialism. Szeman I. Blacker S. Sully J. & John Wiley and Sons. *A Companion To Critical And Cultural Theory* (pp.115-128) <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118472262>
- Kreager, D. A. (2008). Guarded Borders: Adolescent Interracial Romance and Peer Trouble at School. *Social Forces*, 87(2), 887–910. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20430895>
- Langston, D. (1998). Black Civil Rights, Feminism and Power. *Race, Gender & Class*, 5(2), 158–166. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41675328>
- Lay, K. J. (1993). Sexual Racism: A Legacy of Slavery. *National Black Law Journal*, 13(1). Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3qd7s83r>
- Lee, S. (1988) *School Daze*. Columbia Pictures
- Lee, S. (1989). *Do the Right Thing*. Universal Pictures
- Lee, S. (1998). *Jungle Fever*. Universal Pictures
- Lee, S. (1998). *Get on the Bus*. Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures
- Mathews, T. J., & Johnson, G. S. (2015). Skin Complexion in the Twenty-First Century: The Impact of Colorism on African American Women. *Race, Gender & Class*, 22(1–2), 248–274. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26505337>
- McClain, T.(2019,February). *I'm Building Me a Home: Negro Spirituals and the Fostering of Self*. Black Music Scholar. (n.d.). <https://blackmusicscholar.com/im-building-me-a-home-negro-spirituals-and-the-fostering-of-self/>
- Muhammad, K. G. (2019). *The condemnation of blackness: race, crime, and the making of modern urban America, with a new preface*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.

- Osler, A., & Starkey, H. (2002). Education for Citizenship: Mainstreaming the Fight against Racism? *European Journal of Education*, 37(2), 143–159. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1503795>
- Parks, G. S., & Jones, S. E. (2008). “Nigger”: A Critical Race Realist Analysis of the N-Word Within Hate Crimes Law. *The Journal Of Criminal Law And Criminology* (1973-), 98(4), 1305–1352. <Http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/20685022>
- Paulin, D. R. (1997). De-Essentializing Interracial Representations: Black and White Border-Crossings in Spike Lee’s “Jungle Fever” and Octavia Butler’s “Kindred.” *Cultural Critique*, 36, 165–193. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354503>
- Poussaint A. F. (2002). Yes: It Can Be A Delusional Symptom Of Psychotic Disorders. *The Western journal of medicine*, 176(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ewjm.176.1.4>
- Pyke, K. D. (2010). What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don’t We Study it? Acknowledging Racism’s Hidden Injuries. *Sociological Perspectives*, 53(4), 551–572. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.551>
- [PublicEnemyVEVO]. (2020, July 2). *Public Enemy - Fight The Power (Official Music Video)*. YouTube. Retrieved October 9, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmo3HFa2vjg>
- Radburn, N. (2016). *The Long Middle Passage: The Enslavement of Africans and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1640-1808* (dissertation). <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/60710>
- Russell, T. (2008). The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality. *American Quarterly*, 60(1), 101–128. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068501>
- Scholz, S. J. (2014). Solidarity as a Human Right. *Archiv Des Völkerrechts*, 52(1), 49–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24260785>

- Shelton, J. E., Bryant, D., & Brown, M. C. (2016). We, as a People?: Assessing the Consequences of Various Sources of Diversity within Black America. *Phylon* (1960-), 53(2), 79–99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/phyton1960.53.2.79>
- Sklar, R., Jones, J., Muwakkil, S., Davis, Z. I., Musser, C., & Kennedy, L. (1990). What Is The Right Thing ? A Critical Symposium On Spike Lee’s Do The Right Thing. *Cinéaste*, 17(4), 32–39. [Http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/41692596](http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/41692596)
- Smith, C. J. (2004). Crossing the Color Line: Interracial Couples in Films From “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” to “Die Another Day.” *Studies in Popular Culture*, 26(3), 61–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23414934>
- Smith, J. D. (1980). A Different View of Slavery: Black Historians Attack the Proslavery Argument, 1890-1920. *The Journal of Negro History*, 65(4), 298–311. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2716861>
- Sokol, J. (2007). [Review of Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage In Postwar America, by R. C. Romano]. *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 91(1), 106–108. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40584967>
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60–73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696265>
- Sundstrom, R. (2011). Fevered Desires and Interracial Intimacies in *Jungle Fever*. *Philosophy* 48. <https://repository.usfca.edu/phil/48>
- Taş, M. R. (2021). Reading Bell Hooks’s “Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism” through the lens of Triple Oppression Theory. *Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 6 (2), 203-209. <https://doi.org/10.33905/bseusbed.940584>
- Taylor, U. Y. (1998). Making Waves: The Theory And Practice Of Black Feminism. *The Black Scholar*, 28(2), 18–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41069774>

- Thomas, James M. (2014). *Medicalizing Racism*. *Contexts*, 13(4), 24–29.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24710579>
- Thompson, M. S., & Keith, V. M. (2001). The Blacker the Berry: Gender, Skin Tone, Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy. *Gender and Society*, 15(3), 336–357.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3081888>
- Wehrle, J. M. (1992). [Review of *Jungle Fever*]. *Teaching Sociology*, 20(1), 88–89.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1318555>
- Wilson-McCormick, K. (2004). *School Daze: A Reflection - Sixteen Years Later*. *Black Camera*, 19(1), 3–4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27761631>

