Film Reviews

Ava DuVernay, dir., *13th*. Streaming (Los Angeles, CA: Kandoo Films, Netflix, 2016).

Ava DuVernay, an Academy Award nominated director and screenwriter, chronicles the emergence of mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex in her critically-acclaimed documentary *13th*. The film begins with the shocking statistic that the United States which has five percent of the global population but is home to twenty-five percent of the world's prison population. DuVernay explores how the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, banning slavery, included a clause that changed slavery from being an economic business model into a legal punishment for criminals. During Reconstruction elites in southern states began to exploit the clause in the Thirteenth Amendment to criminalize free blacks. The documentary contends that the stereotype of black criminality is a direct result of the Thirteenth Amendment.

The Thirteenth Amendment furthered the criminalization of people of color and which is reflected in the aggressive legislation that resulted in the egregious lynching of many African-Americans from the post-Civil War era to the 1950s. According to historians and scholars of Pan-African studies Jim Crow laws and terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were responsible for the exodus of African-Americans from southern states and sought refuge in western, midwestern, and northeastern states in the 1910s. The emergence of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s sought to challenge social inequality that divided the nation during the first half the 1900s. A profound idea of the Civil Rights Movement was to appropriate the fear of criminality and transform it into to a symbol of resistance and honor.

Although the Civil Rights Movement was successful, media tarnished its legacy because the movement was linked with a rise in national crime rates in the 1950s.

By the 1970s The United States entered into the era of mass incarceration. The documentary explores how the Nixon and Reagan presidencies declared a War on Drugs, which saw the increase of militarization in law enforcement targeting impoverished communities of color. The presidential election of 1988 was critical because the outcome determined the federal government's stance on how to treat criminals. Republican candidate George H.W. Bush portrayed himself as the tough and uncompromising candidate who fought to keep criminals in jail and off the streets. However, during the 1990s, Democratic President Bill Clinton, did more damage to communities of color through an unprecedented increase in law enforcement and praising states passing of "three strikes" law. Clinton's policies had enormously impacted families of color because adults were sent to jail for minor offenses resulting in the separation of many families.

Corporations added another dimension to marginalize people of color further. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an exclusive corporate lobbyist and political group comprised of powerful companies, such as Corrections Corporation of America and Wal-Mart, coalesced and suggested legislation to politicians. ALEC lobbied for legislation that creates a pipeline for the criminalization of people of color and profiting from their very criminalization. Contemporary examples of ALEC legislation include Florida's "Stand your Ground" law, which proves to have lethal repercussions such as in the death of Trayvon Martin. In this capacity, corporations use the criminal justice system to ensure that they benefit from further marginalizing communities of color.

13th is a shocking and thought provoking documentary. Primary sources such as photographs, television footage, and personal interviews of people who have been victimized are included to evoke more than sympathy. They work to reveal that racism is institutionalized in contemporary United States society. DuVernay supports her argument with an abundance of distinguished scholars and activists, including Dr. Melina

Abdullah, Cal State LA's Chair of Pan-African Studies, to articulate how racial ideology has affected communities of color. *13th* does not suggest solutions to fix race relations in the United States. Rather, it is a call to action.

Carlos Carbajal