

Introduction to Africana Studies: The Global Black Experience

Emmanuel Kebede Martey

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During the past week, the class movie that I have had the most connection with, reflected carefully and critically thought about is Sarafina. The movie Sarafina is 1992 musical drama that tells the story of a young South African girl fighting for freedom during Apartheid. Her fight against the racist government revealed a lot about South African history and the thing they went through as a people before gaining independence. In this journal, I would highlight and briefly discuss my findings in the movie and how it draws me closer in understanding the global black experience.

First of all, the movie does not hide the role of black women in the struggle for freedom. Some men generously gave their lives for the struggle. Their contributions were followed by rewards and consequences that led to their freedom. Nevertheless, it does not mean that women did not play a role in this same struggle. Women took care of their children, worked for the colonial masters as maids just to earn a living and feed their children. It may not seem much but the contributions of women in this little way to preserve the lives of their infants, who would end up becoming the future of the country, was the most heroic thing they could have done in the struggle for freedom.

Secondly, the movie does not falter in representing the white man as ruthless in their ways to achieve colonialism and control over the black people. In the movie, Mary Masombuka, Sarafina's teacher, was killed because she tried to teach the students about history that was not part of the recommended teaching. They wanted to change the ways of the black people in what they

did and how they acted. They also tried to brain-wash them by giving them education that they thought would favor them. The white man was fixated on letting the black people forget who they were. This was a way to colonize their minds, since they had already colonized them physically.

On the subject of Mary Masombuka, her contribution in the struggle for independence is another representation of the role women played in attaining freedom. In the movie, we realized how her words were deeply rooted in her students and changed their perspective of the world. Her teachings made the students understand that freedom can be achieved if they work as one people. Unfortunately, it led to the murder of a couple of students. Nevertheless, each event played a role in making the African people more resilient to fight for their freedom.

Another thing I recognized in the movie and had more clarification on, based on comments in class, was the similarity between the movies *Sarafina* and *Sankofa*. In *Sankofa*, we see the colonial masters make some other black men herdsmen. The herdsmen would sometimes be asked to inflict pain on their fellow black people. In doing this, the white man made sure there was no distress over a possible rebellion since they would mostly go for strong and able men. In *Sarafina*, we see a similar situation at play. Since the 1980s were more advanced years in terms of technological and infrastructural advancements, rather than herdsmen, some black men were made to join the police/military. These people would end up beating and harassing their fellow black people as well during the apartheid. For these people, being black was not a struggle because they were in the military. They did not feel oppressed. However, that feeling gave them the motive to oppress others.

Once again, we see the colonial masters find their way in disuniting the people of South Africa. Aside from disunity, one thing the colonialists did was to normalize violence and abuse in South Africa. The people had become used to the violence so much that killing was not a problem

for them. In the movie, there was a part where a black policeman was lynched because he was helping “the enemy”. This violent crime was not done by the adults of the community, but rather, the teenagers and children in the community. In latter scenes, we see a part where the children were arrested, including Sarafina. The warden of the prison they were sent to interrogated Sarafina and asked her what she thought about the killing. Her response was “nothing”. Her response highlights the fact that most of the young people in the movie saw killing as another way of life, as a way to get rid of someone they did not like. This violent nature also gave the colonial masters leverage to kill people rampantly, and hence, reducing the population of the people.

Finally, the movie shows one of the types of colonial ways used by the white man. The colony used in South Africa was a settler colony. In my opinion, I think the settler colony was a way to establish total dominance in the country. Aside from that, the use of a settler colony as well as bringing their families to the country shows how much they wanted to establish themselves in the country.

The movie Sarafina tells a lot about colonialism and the struggle for freedom in South Africa. The movie helps us understand what they were fighting for, and why their independence was so important to them and the whole of Africa. It illustrates the Apartheid and what was happening in all regions in the country.