

Resistance Against Injustice: A Comparative Analysis of Film Representations

Across the annals of cinema, numerous films have endeavored to portray the motif of opposition to diverse manifestations of inequity, annexation, and subjugation. The present essay aims to examine the portrayal of resistance in six cinematic works, namely "Moolaade," "Salt of the Earth," "Bread and Roses," "The Spook Who Sat by the Door," "Deacons for Defense," and "Ali, Fear Eats the Soul." Through a comprehensive examination of the factors contributing to resistance, the manifestations it assumes, the structural underpinnings of its agents, its efficacy, the dialectical process of conflict and resolution, and the filmmakers' viewpoints on fortitude and activism, as well as their directorial objectives, we can acquire valuable knowledge regarding the potency of resistance and its societal ramifications.

Various factors contribute to the emergence of resistance in each film. The film "Moolaade" by Ousmane Sembene portrays the emergence of resistance in a West African village due to the entrenched practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). The resistance depicted in Moolaade is motivated by the imposition of patriarchal and oppressive norms on women. Collé, the main character, contests the oppressive tradition by resisting the patriarchal authority. She organizes a collective of women to safeguard adolescent females from undergoing this detrimental custom, promoting the principles of physical self-determination and gender equality. Collé's resistance is rooted in her personal experience and her recognition that the practice of female genital mutilation perpetuates gender inequality and poses a threat to the physical and emotional well-being of girls and women. The cinematic work depicts the

entrenched cultural conventions and the power structures present in the community that drives opposition to the injurious custom.

The etiology of resistance portrayed in Herbert J. Biberman's film "Salt of the Earth" differs from other depictions. The film narrates the account of Mexican-American laborers in the mining industry who initiate a work stoppage in response to inequitable working circumstances and discriminatory practices. The emergence of resistance in the film is attributed to the exploitation and discrimination experienced by the labor force. The mining corporation's failure to offer sufficient compensation, safety protocols, and fundamental entitlements catalyzes the subjugated miners, who band together to advocate for their honor, equitable treatment, and the welfare of their loved ones.

Ken Loach's film "Bread and Roses" depicts resistance among workers confronted with challenging socio-economic circumstances, including inadequate remuneration, extended working hours, and insufficient protection of their fundamental labor rights. The protagonist, Maya, assumes leadership in the resistance movement, emphasizing the importance of collective bargaining and advocating for equitable treatment and respect. The film "The Spook Who Sat by the Door," helmed by Ivan Dixon, revolves around Dan Freeman, a former CIA agent who transforms into a community organizer. The film highlights the systemic police brutality, institutional racism, denial of equal opportunities, and pervasive oppression that contribute to the development of resistance among the African-American community. Freeman initiates a militant underground organization to instruct and enable fellow African-Americans to achieve freedom from institutional discrimination and racial injustice in response to the dearth of opportunities and the exploitation of authority.

The film "Deacons for Defense," helmed by Bill Duke, portrays the emergence of resistance in response to the increasing violence and intimidation inflicted upon the African-American community by white supremacist organizations. In response to a perceived vulnerability, a cohort of African-American males established the Deacons for Defense and Justice, employing armed self-protection measures to safeguard their families, localities, and civil rights advocates against acts of bigotry and racially motivated aggression. The movie emphasizes the pressing necessity of self-protection and accentuates the continuous endeavor to attain civil liberties.

The film "Ali, Fear Eats the Soul" by Rainer Werner Fassbinder addresses the societal opposition to an interracial relationship between Emmi, a German widow, and Ali, a Moroccan immigrant worker. The factors contributing to the emergence of resistance in the film pertain to xenophobia, racism, and cultural intolerance within a traditional German community. Emmi and Ali encounter ostracism and prejudice, which poses a challenge to the deeply entrenched societal norms and biases.

Forms of Resistance

The variances in the circumstances that give rise to resistance in each film correspond to the distinct manifestations of resistance that emerge. An active protest is a form of resistance that is observable in these films. The films frequently depict vigorous protests as a prevalent mode of resistance. The movie "Salt of the Earth" shows a labor strike initiated by mine workers who engage in picketing and demonstrations to advocate for their rights. Likewise, within the context of "Bread and Roses," the custodial staff orchestrates public demonstrations and participates in

group negotiations to contest their employers. Engaging in active protest functions to challenge and interrupt the existing state of affairs while also asserting the protesters' demands.

Collective action is the form of resistance observed in *Moolaade*, *Bread and Roses* and *Salt of the Earth*. This is the second point to consider. The film *Moolaade* depicts the unification of women in their defiance of the oppressive tradition of female genital mutilation (FGM), thereby demonstrating the potency of solidarity. Similarly, the miners depicted in the film *Salt of the Earth* engage in organized strikes, underscoring the importance of collective action in response to oppressive labor conditions. The formation of a union by the janitors in *Bread and Roses* highlights the potential for transformation through collective action, as they advocate for equitable treatment.

The film "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" portrays resistance through the utilization of subversive and guerrilla tactics. The group led by Dan Freeman utilizes clandestine tactics to resist the oppressive system, leveraging their expertise in CIA methodologies to counteract their oppressors. The aforementioned cinematic work showcases the notion that opposition can manifest in atypical and covert manners when confronted with formidable opponents. *Deacons for Defense*, on the other hand, examines the utilization of armed self-defense to resist racial violence. The establishment of the Deacons for Defense and Justice represents a transition from pacifist demonstrations to proactive self-preservation, underscoring the imperative to safeguard individuals and societies from acts of bigotry.

The protagonist Maya in "Bread and Roses" highlights the significance of educating and empowering laborers to combat exploitation. The individual in question arranges and facilitates meetings while providing her peers with knowledge regarding their entitlements, thereby

cultivating a sense of consciousness and mobilization. Education functions as a mechanism for resistance, empowering individuals to contest oppressive structures and promote transformative action.

The film *Fear Eats the Soul* depicts the concept of resistance through the portrayal of affection and unity between the characters Emmi and Ali. The relationship between the individuals in question presents a formidable opposition to prevalent societal norms and biases, thereby asserting against racial prejudice and discrimination. Nonconformity to societal norms can be viewed as a mode of resistance, highlighting the significant influence of love and acceptance in bringing about change.

Character Organization

In these movies, the shared interests and ideas of the characters serve as the foundation for character organization. The characters in *Moolaade* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* group together based on shared experiences. In *Moolaade*, Collé, the lead character, rebels against oppressive customs and defends a little girl seeking safety beneath her moolaade. This motivates other women affected by FGM or who have seen its harmful repercussions to join the struggle. Similarly, the characters in *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* group together depending on how societal injustice and prejudice affect them. Former CIA agent Dan Freeman founds a violent underground organization. To combat institutionalized racism and racial injustice, this group seeks to educate and empower other African-Americans.

Mexican-American mining employees band together in *Salt of the Earth* because of their shared identity and the injustice they experience. Esperanza Quintero is a well-known organizer who creates a union to fight for justice and dignity. Similarly, *Bread and Roses* centers on

immigrant Los Angeles janitors who band together because they all see how they are being exploited economically. The characters establish a union with the assistance of a labor organizer named Maya to advocate for equal pay, better working conditions, and job security. Their shared experiences of poor pay, hard hours, and the degrading treatment they get as outcast laborers form the foundation of their group.

A similar character organization is explored in *Deacons for Defense* based on a common desire for self-defense against racial violence. In reaction to increasing violence and threats from white supremacist organizations, African-American males created the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Their shared sense of the need to protect is the organization's foundation.

Finally, the characters in *Ali*, *Fear Eats the Soul* arrange themselves based on love and solidarity despite differences. Despite prejudice and persecution from society, a friendship develops between Emmi, a German widow, and Ali, a Moroccan immigrant.

Effectiveness of Resistance

Throughout the flicks, resistance has varying degrees of success. In *Moolaade*, the fight against FGM succeeds because Collé's defense and the emergence of a group resistance motivate other women to reject the custom. The practice of FGM has significantly reduced due to the local elders' forced change of heart. In *Salt of the Earth*, the miners' unyielding will and jarring strikes lead to better working conditions, equitable pay, and a newfound empowerment. Their coordinated action puts the mining firm under strain, finally resulting in real triumphs for the workers. The efficacy of resistance, however, is more complex in *Bread and Roses*. Although the janitors' organizations and strikes draw attention to their condition, employers and the government firmly oppose them. The movie emphasizes the complex reality of labor conflicts

and the limits of their fight in the face of solid foes. However, their opposition encourages worker communication and unity, setting the stage for later transformation.

The Spook Who Sat by the Door, on the other hand, demonstrates the success of organized opposition in addressing systematic racism. Dan Freeman develops a potent force capable of exposing unjust social institutions by educating African-American revolutionaries. Their clandestine acts demonstrate the potency of their resistance by forcing the dominant powers to recognize and react to the demands of the oppressed population. Deacons for Defense similarly reflects the value of resistance via armed self-defense, effectively preventing white supremacist organizations from attacking African-American people and communities. The Deacons guarantee their people's physical protection by challenging the impunity of hate crimes and defending their rights and safety.

Emmi and Ali's rejection of society's expectations and pursuit of pleasure in Ali Fear Eats the Soul demonstrate the power of resistance. Their relationship confronts racism and inspires others to reflect on their behavior. Their resistance highlights the possibility for personal and interpersonal transformation, which may not immediately undermine broader oppressive structures but instead as a monument to the transforming power of love and acceptance.

Problematization and Resolution of Conflicts

The six films included in this research take a different tack when framing and resolving disputes in the context of resistance. The contradiction between tradition and the need for reform regarding female genital mutilation (FGM) is explored in Moolaade. The opposition raises awareness and questions without offering a conclusive answer while underlining the possibility of further change. Similar conflicts between the mining firm and the miners are the focus of Salt

of the Earth. The opposition intensifies tensions, but compromise and unity result in a partial settlement where particular worker demands are satisfied, demonstrating the slow but steady advancement possible via group effort.

Contrarily, Bread and Roses examine problems brought on by power dynamics between janitors and bosses. The film emphasizes the ongoing nature of the battle, opening the door for more triumphs in the struggle for workers' rights. The resistance escalates these disputes, leading to confrontations and defeats. The structural prejudice that African-Americans must contend with is addressed in The Spook Who Sat by the Door, as the organized movement is actively suppressed while the resistance intensifies the fight. Tragically, the resistance is put down at the movie's end, highlighting that the battle is still open and that more must be done to fight systematic racism.

Deacons for Defense also presents racial violence-related disputes and the opposition to them. The Deacons' use of armed self-defense to defend themselves against white supremacist organizations escalates tensions and conflicts, highlighting the continuous and unresolved nature of the fight against racism and the need for continual resistance to protect people's lives and communities. Conflicts in Ali Fear Eats the Soul result from prejudice and discrimination Emmi and Ali experience due to their intercultural love. While the film recognizes the continuation of social prejudices, which leaves the conflict unsolved, their resistance confronts these issues. However, they make a strong statement against bigotry and discrimination by refusing to give in.

Necessity of Struggle and Courage

The films Moolaade and Salt of the Earth serve as prime examples of the indispensable role of perseverance and bravery in confronting oppressive structures. The film Moolaade

portrays Collé's resistance against female genital mutilation as a demonstration of the bravery necessary to challenge long-standing cultural practices and advocate for fundamental human rights. The Mexican-American laborers depicted in *Salt of the Earth* demonstrate notable bravery as they participate in a work stoppage to secure equitable treatment and improved labor standards. Both films underscore the significance of taking a stand against injustice and promoting transformation, highlighting the tenacity and resolve required to contest oppressive conventions.

Conversely, the literary works *Bread and Roses* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* explore the imperative nature of perseverance and bravery when confronted with racial and economic subjugation. The novel *Bread and Roses* portray the exemplary bravery of immigrant laborers who assert their rights and demand equitable treatment by challenging oppressive societal structures. Likewise, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* exemplifies African-Americans' bravery in establishing a clandestine movement to combat institutionalized racism. Both films illuminate the necessity of resilience and determination in the face of institutional discrimination and the liberation struggle.

Deacons for Defense and All, *Fear Eats the Soul* are two works that delve into the themes of struggle, courage, love, and acceptance within the context of the Civil Rights Movement and societal prejudice. *Deacons for Defense* underscores the valor African-Americans require to safeguard themselves against mounting aggression from white supremacists. The film "*Fear Eats the Soul*" portrays Emmi and Ali's nonconformity to societal expectations as a form of resistance. It requires bravery to challenge established norms and advocate for their right to love and coexist on equal footing. Both films underscore the significance of exhibiting bravery when facing oppression and the potency of solidarity when confronted with hardship.

Visual Style and Intention

All, Fear Eats the Soul

The film *All, Fear Eats the Soul* by Director Rainer Werner Fassbinder utilizes a simplistic visual approach and emotional manipulation to evoke a potent reaction from its viewers. The cinematographic techniques employed by Fassbinder, namely the utilization of extended takes, stationary camera angles, and a subdued chromatic scheme, serve to accentuate the mundanity of quotidian existence and foster an ambiance of seclusion and subjugation. The purpose of this particular visual style is to mirror the social controversies surrounding the interracial relationship between Emmi and Ali while also highlighting their marginalized existence. The reading states, "The film's visual style is characterized by long takes, static shots, and a muted color palette that emphasizes the drabness of everyday life" (Heide, n.d.). Furthermore, Fassbinder aims to illuminate the suppressive role of communal structures within societal frameworks, as stated in the quote, "Fear Eats the Soul is a filmic reflection on group formation and the often repressive function of communities in society..." (Heide, n.d.).

Salt of the Earth

The film *Salt of the Earth*, helmed by Herbert J. Biberman, utilizes a neorealist approach to visually portray the challenges faced by Mexican-American laborers in the mining industry. Implementing extended takes and naturalistic lighting techniques enhances the narrative's authenticity. At the same time, the involvement of non-professional actors from the local community contributes to the film's realism. As mentioned by Sandhu, "The film's visual style is described as 'neorealist,' with long takes and naturalistic lighting" (2017). Biberman's primary objective was to contest preconceived notions regarding Mexican Americans and motivate

laborers to mobilize and advocate for their entitlements. The reading highlights this intention: "The film's director, Herbert J. Biberman, was a member of the Hollywood Ten, a group of filmmakers who were blacklisted during the McCarthy era for their alleged communist sympathies. Biberman's intention with 'Salt of the Earth' was to create a movie that would challenge stereotypes about Mexican Americans and show their struggles for better working conditions" (Sandhu, 2017).

Moolaade

The film *Moolaade* by Ousmane Sembene employs a visual aesthetic that cultivates a sense of immediacy and intimacy between the audience, the characters, and their environment. Sembene utilizes close-up shots, specifically on the countenances of female characters, to establish a robust emotional bond between the viewers and the main characters. Furthermore, the utilization of hues, specifically red and white, carries emblematic importance. Sembene's visual style is aimed at promoting awareness of the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Africa and advocating for measures to combat it. The reading states, "Sembene's visual style in *Moolaade* is characterized by a number of elements that work together to create a sense of immediacy and intimacy with the characters and their world," and "Sembene's use of color in *Moolaade* is also significant, particularly his use of red and white" (Borden, 2011).

The Spook Who Sat by the Door

Ivan Dixon's film, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, employs a visually and politically radical approach to mirror the pressing and tumultuous nature of the characters' endeavor for civil liberties. The implementation of handheld camera work, jump cuts, and other cinematographic techniques engenders a perception of instability that parallels the political

context depicted in the film. The visual style communicates the imperative for African Americans to assume agency over their futures and advocate for their entitlements. As Sheppard states, "The film's visual style is characterized by a number of elements that work together to create a sense of immediacy and urgency," and "The Spook Who Sat by the Door is a film that is explicitly political in its intentions" (2017).

Deacons for Defense

The film "Deacons for Defense," under the direction of Bill Duke, underscores the significance of community mobilization and collaborative efforts in attaining transformative societal progress. Although the readings do not explicitly mention particular visual style characteristics, the film probably employs a blend of stylistic elements to communicate the importance and exigency of the Deacons for Defense and Justice's defensive measures. The film emphasizes the necessity of self-protection in response to persistent aggression from white supremacists. The reading emphasizes this intention: "The Deacons for Defense and Justice were not a revolutionary force in the traditional sense, but rather a defensive necessity in a time when black Americans were under constant threat of violence from white supremacists" (Kwantes, 2018).

Bread and Roses

The film Bread and Roses by Ken Loach employs a naturalistic visual approach that accentuates the daily challenges faced by the characters. The film's cinematography employs handheld camera movements and a subdued color scheme, effectively conveying the working-class milieu. Loach frequently utilizes medium shots and close-ups to accentuate the characters' facial expressions and emotional states, engrossing the viewers in their realm. The

implementation of handheld camera techniques serves to augment the impression of immediacy, effectively capturing the dynamic essence of protests and demonstrations.

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