

“Selma”



Directed by: Ava DuVernay

Duration: 127 minutes

Cast: David Oyelowo, Oprah Winfrey, Carmen Ejogo, Tom Wilkinson, Common, Tim Roth, André Holland, Stephan James, Tessa Thompson, Colman Domingo, Lorraine Toussant, Micheal Ribisi

Production: Notorious Pictures

Year: 2014

Country of Production: U.S.A.

Award: 2015 Bet winner, 2015 Oscar Nominee, 2015 NAACP winner

The Movie

Selma focuses on the efforts of Martin Luther King Jr and the people of Selma, Alabama to secure voting rights for African Americans. Though they have the legal right to vote, they are prevented from exercising it by illegal tactics like the poll tax and outright violence. President Johnson has signed the Civil Rights Act into law and wants to focus on the issue of poverty, without giving any attention on the insistence of Dr. King on working towards voting rights. Against president wishes and Governor Wallace position, King organizes a march from Selma to Montgomery in peaceful protest. Being threatened and watched by the FBI, King's marriage to his wife Coretta is threatened and King suffers second thoughts about his strategy for achieving equality. Though the movement receives an enormous support both from those inside and outside of Selma, colored and white people, the violence from those in power is seemingly inescapable.

"Selma" recreates the grass-roots protests that resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In this riveting film, audiences get to see how average citizens have been able to push politicians to take action that they don't have the courage to do on their own. One of the most extraordinary fact was to win a battle against one of the most racist state of the US: Alabama.

The movie depicts President Lyndon Johnson as a leader who was extraordinarily hesitant, to the point of being hostile, toward proposing a voting rights bill.

Facts that inspired the movie

Throughout March of 1965, a group of demonstrators faced violence as they attempted to march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand the right to vote for black people. The guide of the March was Martin Luther King Jr.

One of the pivotal days was March 7 when many people were killed by the police and one of the future member of the US Congress, John Lewis was injured by the police with other thousands of marchers. This fact became so famous that people know it as the "Bloody Sunday".

Brief Timeline of the March

February 1965 - Alabama Governor George C. Wallace try to avoid marches and demonstrations over voter registration and he makes marches and demonstration illegal for the state of Alabama.

February 18, 1965 - During a march in Marion, state troopers attack the demonstrators. James Bonard Fowler, an officer from state troops, shoots and kills Jimmie Lee Jackson. Jackson family have to wait 2007 to see Fowler charged with murder and he was later pleaded guilty in 2010.



March 7, 1965 - About 600 people begin a march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, led by Lewis and Hosea Williams. The aim of the marchers was to stop the discrimination in voter registration. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge, state and local lawmen attack the marchers with billy clubs and tear gas, driving them back to Selma.

March 9, 1965 - President Lyndon Johnson speaks out against the violence in Selma and ask both side of one of the most important battle for African-American people to stop the violent conflict.

March 9, 1965 - Unitarian Universalist minister

James Reeb, in Selma to join marchers, is beaten up by two white man during a fight and he will die two days later

March 10, 1965 - The US Justice Department files suit in Montgomery, Alabama, asking for an order to prevent the state from punishing any marcher for civil right.

March 17, 1965 - Federal District Court Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. rules in favor of the marchers. In his sentence the Judge says that people wanting to change a discrimination law can demonstrate in large groups.

March 18, 1965 - Governor Wallace criticism what Johnson did and blame the federal government for what happenend.

March 19, 1965 - Wallace asked the help of the President, saying that the state does not have enough troops and cannot bear the financial burden of calling up the Alabama National Guard.

March 20, 1965 - President Johnson issues an executive order federalizing the Alabama National Guard and authorizes any operation and forces the Defense Secretary deems necessary.

March 21, 1965 - About 3,200 people march out of Selma for Montgomery safely because of the protection of federal troops. They walk about 12 miles a day and sleep in fields at night.

March 25, 1965 - The marchers reach the state capitol in Montgomery. The number of marchers grows to about 25,000, making this march one of the biggest of all time since then.

The critics review of the film

The film has had some conflicting critics' reviews.

One of the most important contributors of CNN and Democratic strategist Donna Brazile, says that Selma is igniting a struggle of its own over who deserves credit -- or blame -- in the events of 50 years ago that are depicted in the movie.

Donna's main criticism is around the portrayal that the film gives on the character of Lyndon B. Johnson. In fact we have to remember that LBJ in the history timeline, fought on the same side of MLK for the Civil Right and he was an important ally for colored people that with his administration achieved the basis for democratic equality.

The other critics agree with Donna Brazile about the portrayal of the president and most of them say that the film was a great biopic of Martin Luther King that makes the figure of King more humanized and more realistic, near to the historical figure of one of the most important persons of the XX Century.

"Selma and Today"

Selma fact leaves a remarkable sign in US culture, but whereas in the big city like NY and LA colored people nowadays don't have any kind of problem in voting and in demonstrating their opinion, in rural states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin and Louisiana African-American people still have problems with white supremacists that try to keep them from polling stations in the election days. For many people this could seem unacceptable but it's because of Martin Luther King that things like these are now illegal and anti-democratic.

If a 35-year-old King were magically transported to 2016 he would be horrified at all the inequality that still exists and many people think that demonstrating with marches is still the best way to change things in the world like 50 years ago happened in Selma, Alabama.

Sitography

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