

Gracie Trainum

Dr. Riden

SOCL 233

December 7, 2023

Final Comprehensive Essay

The film “White Wash” aims to identify the different roles of racism and prejudice in the surfing culture of Southern California. It dives deeper into the history of African Americans in the world of surfing and the barriers they faced along the way. The documentary contains interviews with surfers which provide us with relevant and real-life experiences. The film signifies the lack of diversity in the sport and encourages a better and more equal representation.

Aspects of culture are represented throughout the film. Historically, the culture of African Americans is touched on because the film focuses on how racism affects other activities and different parts of their life. Viewing the sport of surfing, it is predominantly influenced by White culture. This signifies the importance of well representation due to the impact it has on cultural identity. The film evaluates the cultural identity of African Americans and how they overcome the obstacles in a White dominated sport. In terms of social identity, it is encouraged that people consider their own identity and the impact it has on activities.

The idea of social structure is prevalent throughout the film. It is noted that the surfing community is affected by racial differences and social hierarchies. Due to White culture dominating the sport, African Americans are provided with a lack of resources and support. Social and cultural institutions heavily affect the idea of certain “norms” in the surfing community. Examples of these institutions include certain clubs, neighborhoods, and families.

The media impacts the cultural institutions of Surfing because through television and newspaper, the perception of a surfer can be impacted.

Inequities are not just the effect of a single individual. They can be a result from inequities within a larger institution. Interpersonal racism involves the discrimination on a personal level. In the film, this could have been the White people making racist remarks to the African American on the beach who was about to surf. Institutional inequalities relate to the systematic barriers that are present within a large organization. This can be affected by the media, and the lack of representation of black surfers and in the aspect of a bigger institution such as surfing clubs and competitions. The film draws attention to both personal and systematic ideas that contribute to disparities and inequalities in the sport of surfing.

Structural inequalities describe the disparities that result from discriminatory practices of institutions. This can affect socioeconomic status, access to resources, and other outcomes. As said in the film, inequalities within the surfing community are not a new thing. They have been prevalent within society and are being constantly reproduced among generations. The unequal access to resources brings many inequalities. Many White people have access to additional resources such as coaching, equipment, and additional training facilities. African Americans are provided with limited resources which in return affects their success in the sport.

The film “White Wash” analyzes the racism and inequalities present within the surfing community. African Americans have constantly been underserved with adequate resources, negatively affecting their experience in the sport. Due to stereotypes of the sport portrayed in the media, and through institutions, African American surfers are continually facing obstacles. This shows just how toxic the media is and how much of an effect it can have on any circumstance. As said in the film, “I am not a black surfer. I am a surfer.”