BlacKkKlansman – black and white words

Released in the United Kingdom on the 24th August, ***BlacKkKlansman*** is a biographical film directed by **Spike Lee** and based on the memoir of **Ron Stallworth**, *the Black Klansman*. It has been presented at the **Cannes Film Festival**, where it competed for the **Palme D'Or** and it won the **Gran Prix**. It is written by Charlie Wachtel, David Rabinowitz, Kevin Willmott and Lee, and produced by Lee, Raymond Mansfield, Shaun Redick, Sean McKittrick, Jason Blum, and Jordan Peele. The rights to the film were purchased in 2015 and in 2017 Lee signed as director for the film. The cast started workin the following

month in the New York State. Main actors are **John David Washington** – as Ron Stallworth – and **Adam Driver** – as Flip Zimmerman. The story is based on the true experience of Ron Stallworth, a black policeman in Colorado Springs, where the film is also based. During his career in law enforcement he decided to go undecover in the Klux Klux Klan, with the help of a white undercover officer with the purpose of collecting information of the actions of the klan. His investigation has been kept a secret until 2006 when he released the details to the Deseret News of Salt Lake City and in 2014 he published his book.

Film inside film inside film

Lee's film begins with a scene from ***Gone With The Wind*** (1939) where Scarlett O'Hara is wondering among the dead Rebel in 1864 with the Confederate flag waving high showing the Southern sacrifice.

Gone With The Wind – civil war scene

After this another film pops on and it's ***The Birth of a Nation*** (1915) – famous for its highly racist content – running on the face of the segregationist leader Dr Kennebrew Beauregard (Alec Baldwin), who is spewing hatred and racism. This film is then shown again with the klan all reunited which is cheering enthusiastically at the scenes where the klan saves the white ladies from the black-faced men.

The Birth of a Nation – film still

Another scene – more postive than the former – is when Ron and Patricia (**Laura Harrier**) are walking and talking about great Afro American actors in cinema history and Lee shows the posters from these films, highlighting and **emphasizing Black culture and art**.

When words hurt

BlacKkKlansman is not just a film based on a true story that wants to speak about racism. Many films are about racism, white power and all the things related. Lee wanted to put a mark on words and how they are used by white supremacists. Just from the beginning, **Dr. Beauregard** is continually repeating words of hate in a different tone and attitude to find the perfect one. He repeats three times "*We had a great*

way of life” as a sort of brainwashing act towards the viewers. Not just him but also **David Duke** (Topher Grace) has a big role both in the film and in real life – especially nowadays and during the former elections – as his use of words is controversial and confusing. He talks about America being “anti-white” and not racist or anti-semitist. He plays on the effect of reverse racism to convince American people that the issue is real and most be dealt with, transforming the State in a huge black nation. But the reality is totally different. Also in Lee’s film, words are chosen carefully and wisely. In the first meeting between Ron-Flip and Walter Breachway – KKK president of the Colorado Springs chapter – there is a particular attention in not using the words “klan” and “grand wizard”, replaced by “organization” and “national director”.

The **word of the year** for **Oxford Dictionaries** in 2016 has been "***post-truth***", chosen because of the political situation in Europe with Brexit and the political situation in the USA after Trump's election. [quote_box name=""]

post-truth *adjective*

Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

[/quote_box] Not only, journalist **Shaya Tayefe Mohajer** wrote an article in 2017 with the title "**It is time to stop using the term alt-right**", noting how this term has been used to make white supremacists beliefs unclear and vague, making it easier to be accepted by the vast majority of Americans. [quote_box name=""]In the Associated Press' *Stylebook*, the term "alt-right" is defined as "a name currently embraced by some white supremacists and white nationalists"—which, in itself, paints the term as a trendy thing to call an age-old American problem. Somehow, they were allowed to rework their public personas with a term that makes them sound a little edgy, like an alt-weekly or alt-rock.[/quote_box] In an interview with the African-American Film Critics Association Stallworth explains that he didnt' want to make a political statement about Trump's America. It was Lee who did all the work connecting the dots and drawing the parallel between Stallworth's time and the Trump era.

> *Ron Stallworth talks about seeing his book turned into a movie. A @SpikeLee joint. From producer @JordanPeele. @BlacKkKlansman is a true story! In theaters August 10.#BlacKkKlansman pic.twitter.com/PF3lYEcsIP*
>
> *— TheAAFCA (@theaafca) 1 agosto 2018*

To enter the klan, Stallworth had to champion pure whiteness on the phone and he does that by using the words "**pure white**

body“, referred to his fake sister being attacked by a black man. The words “pure” and “white” together have always been combined and are still put together when talking about race and racism. As read on **BuzzFeed News**, a woman from Carolina was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol and she said she couldn’t be arrested because she was a “very clean, thoroughbred, white girl. I’m a white, clean girl”. And when the cops asked her what that had to do with her being arrested, she answered “You’re a cop, you should know what that means.”

From fact to fiction to fact again

Lee’s film is not only talking about racism, pointing out the issues faced in 1979, but he is also making us aware of the fact that we are now living in 2018 and these issues are still alive. They are so alive that the **Charlottesville riots** looked much like the KKK parade from *The Birth of a Nation*. The slogan “America First” is not just a Trump thing, it’s a David Duke thing as well. And it is not reassuring. It doesn’t make you feel at ease. The real footage at the end of the film, right after the image of a black and white flag, scared me much more than a horror. I know that zombies and scary nuns don’t exist. Racism, violence, hate, white power, the KKK, they all exist. They are so terribly alive that it makes you feel sick.

Despite beginning really slowly and reaching its climax right at the end, I highly recommend this film. It will make you think. It will make you sick. But it’s all real. And this is what cinema is: giving the viewer the opportunity to think, to receive a message from the director, to learn, to look right into the truth behind things. Or to look at something you would usually skip, because it’s too hard to watch; it’s too violent. But I’ll go see the next Tarantino movie with all that blood and violence. We can skip that video on Facebook or turn the TV off, but you didn’t expect that at the end of the film, did you?

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