

Describe the controversy of *The Color Purple*.

Within the Black Community, some of the controversy from the debut of the film, *The Color Purple*, came from the depiction of Black men within the film. The men in the film are violent, they are looked at as caricatures of Black men through a white lens; they are over-sexed and violent to the women who take care of them, rather than the white world that put them in hardship to begin with. The oppression of Black men during the period of the film is not shown at all; in fact, they are the oppressive figures. The men are another version of the “buck” stereotype, and as the film came in a time with positive depictions of Black men increased, some people felt as though the film was pulling the progress made on screen in the opposite direction.

While the controversy of *The Color Purple* does have some merit, it is important to also be aware of intersectionality of the issues within the Black community. Women in the Black community are at the intersection of both being Black and being woman; they are at the disadvantage of our society which prioritizes the thoughts and feelings of the white male. So, while it is true that the depiction of men in *The Color Purple* is a troubling one, I believe that the basis of it has some dealing with trying to show the audience the troubles of being both Black and woman in a male dominated and Eurocentric world. The hardships Celie faces in the novel are fleshed out and the reader can know what she thinks and goes through; the movie misses this mark because one cannot read the actor or character’s mind – it can only show through pictures. As the viewer has already been exposed repeatedly to harmful outlines of the Black experience, a viewer can easily interpret the movie’s intentions of giving a Black woman a voice as just victimizing her on-screen once again, this time at the hands of her own race.

I find it interesting that the theme of intersectionality is in the midst of chapter 9. Another example is the rise of Prince’s stardom; he is both masculine and feminine, and both Black and

white. From reading the chapter, I feel as though the 80's was a time where more nuance was trying to be added to the screen. More study was being given to the problems of the Black community, and as the public was eased into a false state of security regarding the ending of racial tension, more conflict was being added to the screen instead of just the conflict of white versus Black.