



The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption

By Matthew Hughey




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The cinematic trope of the white savior film--think of Sandra Bullock in *The Blind Side*, Kevin Costner in *Dances with Wolves*, or Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*--features messianic characters in unfamiliar or hostile settings discovering something about themselves and their culture in the process of saving members of other races from terrible fates.

In *The White Savior Film*, Matthew Hughey provides a cogent, multipronged analysis of this subgenre of films to investigate the underpinnings of the Hollywood-constructed images of idealized (and often idealistic) white Americans.

Hughey considers the production, distribution, and consumption of white savior films to show how the dominant messages of sacrifice, suffering, and redemption are perceived by both critics and audiences. Examining the content of fifty films, nearly 3,000 reviews, and interviews with viewer focus groups, he accounts for the popularity of this subgenre and its portrayal of "racial progress."

The White Savior Film shows how we as a society create and understand these films and how they reflect the political and cultural contexts of their time.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Since the 1980s, Hollywood has released a spate of so-called 'white savior' films, in which heroic white protagonists liberate persons of color from dangerous and decayed environments... Hughey provides a systematic study of the messages these films convey, as well as how film reviewers and audiences receive them... The author's analysis is sound, and he ultimately offers a convincing critique of how these movies seek to maintain the racial status quo. VERDICT: Scholars of film, sociology, and cultural studies will find this book particularly illuminating." - Library Journal

About the Author

Matthew W. Hughey is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut. He is the author or co-author of seven books, including *White Bound: Nationalists, Antiracists, and the Shared Meanings of Race*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Karole Standley:

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