Film Review: Brainiac Fulfillment is the Key to ‘Hidden Figures’

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on December 25, 2016 - 10:03am

- 20th Century Fox [2]
- African American [3]
- Hidden Figures [4]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [5]
- Janelle Monae [6]
- Jim Parsons [7]
- John F. Kennedy [8]
- John Glenn [9]
- Kevin Costner [10]
- Kirsten Dunst [11]
- Mahershala Ali [12]
- Movie Review [13]
- NASA [14]
- Octavia Spencer [15]
- Patrick McDonald [16]
- Space Program [17]
- Taraji P. Henson [18]

CHICAGO – In America, there is the history we have, and the history that we want to have happened. “Hidden Figures” falls into the second category, but it’s presented in such a way that it fulfills the goal – tell an amazing story about a group of African American women who helped launch men into space.



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The performances, the composition and the style of the film is all earnestness, but that does not distract from the purpose of the story and the fact that it is based on what actually happened. It succeeds mostly through the performances, as Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer and newcomer Janelle Monaé express the dignity, frustration and personal triumphs of having brilliant theoretic minds that were born into the obstacles of being African American (and women!) in the 1950s/60s USA. Even in the groan-worthy moments – also known as modifying history – the film reaches for a higher purpose. It becomes inspirational and aspirational.

The film begins with three African American women, Katherine (Taraji P. Henson), Dorothy (Octavia Spencer) and Mary (Janelle Monaé) working on a disabled car in late 1950s Virginia. Inevitably, a police officer comes by and wonders why they are taking up his space. It turns out they all work for NASA in their “computing” department, because of their talents for working complex mathematics to launch a human being into orbit.

The story follows the three through the trials of being both black and brilliant. American apartheid still exists, but at NASA it’s about the brainpower over the racial divide. The space program is overseen by officious Al Harrison (Kevin Costner), a no nonsense manager who doesn’t have time for particulars, including naysayers like his associate Paul (Jim Parsons). If John Glenn is to orbit the planet, they will need all the creative minds on earth.
”Hidden Figures” releases in Chicago on December 25th. Featuring Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monaé, Kevin Costner, Kirsten Dunst, Jim Parsons and Mahershala Ali. Screenplay adapted by Allison Schroeder and Theodore Melfi. Directed by Theodore Melfi. Rated “PG-13”

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L-R: Janelle Monaé, Taraji P. Henson and Octavia Spencer in ‘Hidden Figures’
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Releasing

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[4] http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hidden-figures
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