Teaching Diversity with Film

The Illinois and United States Constitutions guarantee that all people are to be treated as equals under the law. A wide range of anti-discrimination laws protect people including specific provisions against discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, military service or unfavorable discharge from military service. These laws extend protections to everyone in our increasingly diverse nation. We can be proud that our equal rights laws and acceptance of diversity stands as an example to other governments and societies.

To enhance diversity discussions in classrooms and communities, here is a partial list of films that can be used as tools to generate discussions. Please note: Some have adult content. Teachers should review a selected movie before using in class.

- A Day Without A Mexican
- A Time to Kill
- Amistad
- Beauty and the Beast
- Billy Elliot
- Boys Don't Cry
- Brokeback Mountain
- Dances With Wolves
- Do the Right Thing
- Gandhi
- Glory
- In the Heat of the Night
- Mississippi Burning
- Munich
- Osama
- Philadelphia
- Radio
- Real Women have Curves
- Roots
- Schildler's List
- Snow White
- Spanglish
- The Gods Must Be Crazy
- The Joy Luck Club
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- West Side Story
- Young Frankenstein
- A Patch of Blue
- Akeelah and the Bee
- Babe
- Bend it like Beckham
- Birth of a Nation
- Boyz 'N the Hood
- Crash
- David and Lisa
- Fried Green Tomatoes
- Ghosts of Mississippi
- Hiroshima Maiden
- Malcolm X
- Monsoon Wedding
- My Left Foot
- Patch Adams
- Pokahontas
- Rain Man
- Remember the Titans
- Save the Last Dance
- Shrek
- Sophie’s Choice
- The Color Purple
- The Hiding Place
- Thumbelina
- Transamerica
- Wizard of Oz
Visit the ABA for more diversity film titles
http://www.abanet.org/publiced/resources/diversity_ae.html

DIVERSITY MOVIE REVIEW ACTIVITY - View one of the movies on the list provided and write a brief review. Here are the steps to the assignment.

• Rent and watch the movie. You may do this as a solo assignment or assign groups of students to watch the movie. While watching the film, tell students to watch for themes that reflect diversity.
• Write a two or three page, double spaced paper that reviews the movie, including the diversity themes that were noted. Papers must be done individually and not as a group effort. Include the title of the film, the year it was produced, what areas of diversity are addressed. List the main characters and provide a brief plot outline. Then address the theme or themes that you noted while watching.
  o Did the film address
    ▪ cultural differences
    ▪ issues of race
    ▪ gender issues
    ▪ religious issues
    ▪ age discrimination
    ▪ physical or mental ability
    ▪ or other differences

Include a few paragraphs on how the movie made you feel. Were you angry, sad, sympathetic or amused? Do you think the movie meant to make you feel these feelings? Synopsize the message you believe the movie was supposed to make. Was there an obvious conflict addressed by the film? What was the resolution? Was a problem solved in a way that satisfied all parties? Was there violence depicted? If so, were there better ways of resolving the conflict? Could you imagine yourself in a situation like the one depicted in the film? How would you have reacted?

Conclude your paper by rating the film on a scale of 1 (awful, disappointing, failed to address issues) to 5 (fantastic, would highly recommend, learned from the film, provided great insights).

Students should be prepared to defend the ratings rating during class discussions.

Ask students to expand the list we’ve provided with suggestions of their own.