

Movie Review: *The Intouchables*

Introduction

Raising acute social problems in modern cinema is a common approach to draw the public's attention to the specific issues and challenges of people facing crucial obstacles. As a film for review, *The Intouchables* by Oliver Nakache and Éric Toledano will be analyzed, and one of the themes raised in this movie is the daily struggle of the person with severe disabilities (*The Intouchables*). This movie is based on real events and is a biographical drama with comedy elements. *The Intouchables* describes the routine life of a French millionaire who is confined to a wheelchair and forced to receive help from his servants. The acquaintance of the disabled person with a young and daring man from Parisian slums changes the lives of both radically. The film shows that for a person with disabilities, recognition as a full member of society is more important than sympathy and compassion, and this message expressed comically raises an essential problem of human loneliness.

Summary of the Movie

The plot of the film describes an unusual tandem of two people who have become unexpectedly close to each other. They are Philippe, a middle-aged millionaire who is paralyzed below the neck due to a spinal injury, and Driss, an active young man from a poor family who, in search of work, gets to Philippe for an interview and becomes his personal assistant. Despite Driss's criminal background, Philippe realizes he feels better with Driss who does not behave obsequiously and sometimes forgets that Philippe is disabled. For Driss, in turn, such work is beneficial and helps join the elite life. Due to constant interaction, the men become close friends and support each other. Various comic situations make the movie easy to perceive and highlight distinctive cultural environments in which both protagonists grew up.

The age limit of the film is 16+, but in the movie, there are no violent scenes, and the

target audience can be both young and old. The key goal of *The Intouchables* is to show how close opposites can be if a person goes beyond one's own boundaries and breaks the usual order. The directors' thesis can be interpreted as an attempt to show that Philippe, being disabled, needs not a decent and courteous servant but just Driss, the liberated man unspoiled by high society. Therefore, the idea of disability as a social problem serves as a tool that aims to show the importance of the perception of a person as free and outside social frameworks and traditional foundations.

Analysis of the Film

The film was released worldwide, and the efforts of both directors made the movie popular and widely loved. Their tandem has already proven its effectiveness in other French projects, and the decision to shoot *The Intouchables* was entrusted to them as the specialists who worked on many scenarios before. While analyzing the plot of the film, one can assume that the creators were inspired by a real story and adapted those people's lives for the film version. Oliver Nakache and Éric Toledano aim to emphasize that the difference among members of different social classes can be blurred when real human relationships develop and allow people to get to know one another from different angles. By doing this, the directors argue that Philippe, being alone among a mass of servants, is looking for a kindred spirit. Thus, the filmmakers show that people with distinctive backgrounds can significantly influence each other's lives and become friends regardless of the opinions of others.

As evidence of their argument, the directors resort to comic plot twists and juxtapositions of the two main characters' distinctive views. For instance, a traditional visit to the theater becomes a real show for Philippe when Driss, who is next to him, in his characteristic direct manner, cannot hide his surprise at what he sees. The key analysis methods used by the filmmakers are observation and comparison. As the plot develops, viewers watch the transformation of the characters, their worldview, and new habits. At the

same time, while interpreting the basic aspects of the story, one may note that Philippe's disability should have been considered in the context of medical care as an alternative storyline. However, as Grue argues, often, this problem is of a social rather than medical nature (957). The directors could have cited more situations that would describe Driss's real help to Philippe, in addition to the psychological support that the young man showed unconsciously. Nevertheless, the existing scenario allows drawing conclusions about the key ideas of the film and evaluating the authors' messages to the public.

Evaluation of the Movie

The directors' goal is achieved, and the film has become one of the leaders in the world ratings. The thesis that Philippe needs not a servant but a friend is proven because, even after Driss stops working for Philippe, he helps him find love that can replace the young man. The movie is compelling since both the set and the acting are essential components of the film's success. The contrast between the millionaire's home and the slums in which Driss lives is intended to juxtapose the two characters' distinctive social backgrounds. *The Intouchables* can be called entertaining due to its comedic cuts, but overall, the dramatic aspect dominates the humor. The directors have managed to subtly notice the difference between the two characters, but an even greater achievement implies demonstrating their common features revealed as the plot progresses, for instance, a craving for art. Therefore, those elements that demonstrate the difference between Philippe and Driss are valuable and persuasive tools that accurately reflect their inner motives.

The evidence presented by the filmmakers is adequate and not diminishing. Conversely, in individual scenes, one can assume exaggeration, for instance, when some objects of art are valued at tens of thousands of euros. Nevertheless, this move is consistent with the storyline, and the whole structure of the film is non-standard. In the beginning, the situation from the middle of the film is shown, and then, the events preceding them are

described. The tone is chosen successfully since the audience is intrigued from the very beginning, and the organization of ideas is at the highest level due to the acting. One of the advantages is a mesmerizing musical accompaniment that plunges the viewer into an atmosphere of mystery and slight sadness. Funny situations alternate with dramatic scenes, which also creates additional tension. One of the few weaknesses is the lack of the disclosure of secondary characters, which could complement the overall impact. *The Intouchables* should be watched by everyone, including connoisseurs of both the comedy genre and serious dramas, and numerous nominations and awards confirm the quality of this movie and the imprint it leaves on the audience.

Conclusion

For a person with disabilities, an opportunity to feel like a full member of society is more important than compassion on the part of people who can give nothing but sympathy. This thesis presented in *The Intouchables* is crucial and highlights the acute problem of the loneliness of the disabled. The filmmakers have managed to convey the contrast of the two characters clearly and authentically, and due to the combination of comedic and dramatic scenes, the movie is deep and deserves different viewers' attention. The organization of the film and the arguments presented by the directors allow feeling the experiences of both Philippe and Driss and assessing how strongly opposites attract.

Works Cited

Grue, Jan. "The Social Meaning of Disability: A Reflection on Categorisation, Stigma and Identity." *Sociology of Health & Illness*, vol. 38, no. 6, 2016, pp. 957-964.

The Intouchables. Directed by Oliver Nakache and Éric Toledano, performance by François Cluzet and Omar Sy, Gaumont, 2011.