

## Review 2: Movie Review: “For Colored Girls”

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“For Colored Girls” - a Ntozake Shange adaptation infused with Perryism and contemporary commentary--was widely released Friday November 5, 2010. The story followed the lives of seven women and their own unique struggles filled with thematic nuances of love and betrayal, self worth, date rape, religious extremism, down low men, and HIV - albeit a stale and unmoving account - and how the merging of their lives and problems triggered lyrically-induced-vigor.

Tyler Perry’s new writer, producer, and director triad is his most ambitious endeavor to date. Ntozake Shange’s literary gold is filled with themes and stores that are clearly over his head. It is a choreopoem -- a collection of different poems and monologues -- that does not fit the traditional narrative structure which is outside of Perry’s usual formulaic storylines.

*For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow is Enuf* was written by a woman and explores the ins and outs of the lives of these particular women of color. Simultaneously it connects people through the universal language of despair, coated and layered with a myriad bumps and “what else can go wrong” situations that have not been Perry’s strongest cinematic muscle.

He is good at laughs and straightforward cinematography. He is good at cracking the Hollywood-dollar-code that provided him with a soundstage and studio, a loyal bible-thumping black fan base, and the backing of the mogul Oprah Winfrey. But is he good at making significant movies that transcend cultures?

Men will not feel good about themselves after watching this movie -- if that is what they are looking for. On the other hand, the goal was not to deprecate men either, the indirect message to men should be that of strength and perseverance not only for women of color but themselves and, perhaps, a better understanding of some women’s struggles. To have a conversation about the pain men felt while watching this film is problematic and counterproductive to the overall message of the film.

What “For Colored Girls” does accomplish spot on is providing a voice for the characters that speak directly to us. The powerful cast includes, respectively, Whoopi Goldberg, Phylicia Rashad, Loretta Devine, Thandie Newton, Kimberly Elise, Kerry Washington, Anika Noni Rose, Janet Jackson, Macy Gray, Michael Ealy, and Hill Harper -- among others. Perry captures a realism that hasn’t been in any of his other films and it is clear the actors had input in the arc of the characters.

He takes a chance and leans into his theatrical roots by actually breaking the fourth wall when the characters say their poetic monologues -- not compromising Shange’s text -- in full soliloquy and asides. Ordinarily that doesn’t work in films but something Shakespearean occurs when you hear

the lurching realities of these characters sympathetically awakened on screen. The dynamic relationships are quite pleasing to the pallid.

In widely agape fashion, the soap operatic style narrative, at times, becomes a little too predictable and entangled. Janet Jackson's character Jo -- or Lady in Red -- is a high-strung magazine editor (more annoying version of Miranda Priestley, but less deserving of our attention) is obviously having marital problems and "sick" too. She coughs three times and we see her husband eyeing other guys -- J.L. King style -- on the street and in the opera hall. As foreshadowed, he's been cheating with other men and instead of addressing the root of such behavior -- homophobia and blatant disdain for gay men -- Tyler Perry glazes over the subject and perpetuates the same demeaning stereotypes of HIV and selfish betrayal. Jo lives happily ever after with her cough and all.

The same happy-go-lucky resolve can be applied to the other characters. In the end -- with the exception of Goldberg's Character, Alice, Lady in White -- we see the women, and we feel them, feeding off of each other's strength to move on despite the terminal STDs, murdered children, rape, and lowly men in their lives, they persist.

And, in the end, we can see Tyler Perry has stepped up his movie-making game. Now if we could only see him deal with his own issues in a constructive way. That would be powerful.