

During the MLK weekend I attended several workshops and discussions including the movie showing of *Not Your Negro*, and online presentation of *Social Movements During the Covid-19 Pandemic* by Nadejda Marq, and finally *Fighting Forward: Ending Mass Incarceration & Racial Justice* with Tara. What I will describe in this paper is the first event I attended was the viewing of *Not Your Negro* based off of James Baldwin's unfinished story of Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X. The movie showed the life of these activists, and was largely surrounded by Baldwin's own reflections and insights into racial issues in America during the Civil Rights Movement. What I found fascinating, was that James Baldwin didn't associate himself directly with any of these social movements. In the discussion succeeding the movie we discussed how the title of the movie accurately reflected Baldwin's stance in life. He didn't belong to anybody or anything. Baldwin truly was his own individual. Although I was not terribly impressed by the visuals of the movie, and I felt that whoever compiled the story could have done a much better job, I still loved the message portrayed by the film. It was impressive how black Americans during this time period were able to keep sane and for the vast majority continue to protest and fight with peace and King's philosophy of non-violence even though human rights violations such as lynchings and beatings appeared on the news every day. Some of the historical footage shown in the movie was horrifying. Mobs of white anti-integration protests beat people to death, young children watched lynchings like it was nothing, and King, Malcolm X, and Medgar all died so young. Another message that the film conveyed was the sickness embedded in American ideology, and the pure ideological difference creating vast polarization in the nation.

Although the film was fascinating, the most impactful part of the night for myself was the conversation afterwards. For about 45 minutes about 20 students as well as Dr. Mora, and Kayla Cooper discussed the contemporary issues of race in institutions in America, identity and race, and Baldwin's approach to racism. Throughout the conversation, many different points of view were brought to the table. Maeve discussed their perception of race after living on a small island in Ireland with only white people. The concept of white privilege was first introduced to them upon arrival to UWC. Another fascinating point of discussion was debating whether we are, or should be, more self-aware of our race and skin color on a daily basis. As someone who is white, we have the privilege of either acknowledging our skin color, or ignoring it for a lifetime. Anyone who receives inequitable treatment due to their race is forced to concede to that reality every day. Dr. Mora likened Baldwin's method of educating others about racism to that of a mirror. Baldwin used his gift for his scholarly yet comprehensible way with words to help others realize their position in society, especially compared to those less advantaged. My favorite scene of the movie was when Baldwin was on a talk show, and a Yale professor was introduced to the stage. The professor questioned Baldwin on why he needed advantages when given largely the same opportunities as

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a white man. In the most eloquent manner, Baldwin held up his figurative mirror, and helped the professor realize his white privilege and advantageous position in society. Baldwin emphasized the extra effort that the black man needed to put in to obtain the same position in society as the white man.

Overall, this weekend of workshops and speakers was largely inspirational. I gained a lot of insight into issues of race in America, and had several meaningful conversations. I learned about activism, and what it means to become a human rights activist. I also learned about institutional oppression in America, and specifically the prison industrial complex. I was reminded again of the importance of figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X, and the leaps and bounds they made for social development advancements in America. I reflected on the America I know today. Although we are very far from perfect, blacks and whites work together in many sectors of society. Blacks no longer are held exclusively to their own neighborhoods and living areas. There are several black scholars and politicians who are largely influential. Black activists such as Stacey Abrahams helped utilize the black community to flip a presidential election that would have further perpetuated white supremacy in America. I value highly this inwards reflection and insight that this weekends MLK workshops have been able to provide me with.