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“The Most Important Element in ‘Top Five’”

There’s a lot going on in “Top Five.” Chris Rock is stupendous in his orchestration of a movie that has more moving parts than any movie I have seen in a very long time. In fact, I can’t think of a movie that is as diverse in concepts, characters, and intent as “Top Five.”

What are the most important elements in “Top Five”? First, as a pro-Black employment and Black business advocate, I really appreciate how Rock found a way to integrate seamlessly so many Black actors and actresses in the movie. I mean, come on, Ben Vereen as his father? That was masterful. A lot of Black actors and actresses got a paycheck as a result of this movie, and that’s a really good thing.

But it goes further. Rock expresses very strong support for Blacks working with and for Blacks in the movie itself, which we should all emulate. For example, unlike entertainment stars like Oprah who, in real life, surrounds herself with White personnel, Chris Rock used this movie to show that there are competent Black experts who can look after your best interest—even if you are operating at the highest level of the entertainment industry.

Second, I really appreciated Rock’s incorporation of a Latino American (Rosario Dawson) into the movie’s complex chemistry. Why is this important? Because Blacks and Latinos, once we get our acts together and quit being divided by outside instigators, can drive the political and economic direction of the nation—assuming that Black Americans don’t decide to separate from the nation. “Top Five” showed, once and for all, that Blacks and Latinos have a lot in common and that, as two peoples, we can come to learn to love each other. Once we do, our future in America can assume much brighter possibilities.

Third, Rock did not overlook his connection to White audiences, and gave them a chance to see some of their favorite comedians in cameo appearances that are integral to the movie. While not my favorites, Jerry Seinfeld and Adam Sandler qualify as two of the top White funny men in the entertainment industry today. They expanded the movie’s appeal, and this means even higher paychecks for the Black actors and actresses in “Top Five.”

Fourth, and I am somewhat saddened by this, “Top Five” confirms in the hearts and minds of each viewer that Rap Music is a true and eternal phenomenon. In fact, the movie continually emphasized the importance of Rap Music by having character after character identify their top five Rappers. Every character questioned recited, without hesitation, a top five. I was saddened because, due to my age, I never became enthralled with Rap Music and can only count two or three among the Rappers that I know well enough to be in a top five list.

However, the fifth and most important element of “Top Five” is Rock’s calling out of Black Americans. We often talk about the horrors of slavery that was imposed by White Americans and the need for recompense. Yet when faced with an opportunity to experience something as simple as vicarious recompense by watching a movie (Uprise) about Haitian slaves extracting justice by executing 50,000 White souls, “Top Five” shows that Black Americans preferred to turn the other way and pay to watch the emasculation of Black males—in this case, Tyler Perry appearing in a dress in a Madea movie.

I have written elsewhere that [“Black Americans Don’t Want Reparations.”](#) If “Top Five” is accurate, then it seems that we also don’t want any form of recompense—even vicarious. I understand that “Top Five” is “art imitating life.” But the movie sends a strong signal to the world that Black Americans have very short memories, and that we follow the Christian principle of turning the other cheek. Unfortunately, we seem to be the only people who live by this principle and, as a result, we find ourselves being trampled generation after generation.

Chris Rock, on the other hand, has learned history’s lessons well, and he takes great pains to reveal key insights in “Top Five”. He shows us how Black Americans can live, love, and work together. Maybe in the future, he can be successful in producing an even more serious movie that pushes our understanding forward concerning how we can address the historical wrongs that Blacks have experienced in America.

I may not have a Rap Music top five, but I certainly have a top five for Black movies, and this is one of them.

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12/21/14

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