

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 1920 American silent film "Within Our Gates" by Oscar Micheaux portrays the racial situation of the early 20th century, emphasizing prevalent injustice and prejudice. It is considered one of the earliest and most remarkable films in the race film genre. Oscar Micheaux aimed to depict the white supremacist ideology of the 1900s and the roots of racism against black individuals stemming from ignorance in "Within Our Gates." The storyline revolves around Sylvia Landry, an African-American woman embarking on a journey to the North to raise funds for a struggling black school in the Deep South, facing various oppressions that significantly impact her life and trying to resist these oppressions.

The 1920 film "Within Our Gates" vividly portrays Sylvia's journey, highlighting the oppression faced by black women through the matrix of domination due to intersecting forms of social class, gender, and race. Sylvia's lower social class results in economic injustice, primarily evident in her underpaid salary as a schoolteacher. Her gender classification places her in a lower social status, evident in her inability to confront accusations due to her fiancé's opposition and attempted rape by Girdlestone, a white man threatened by black individuals. She also encounters racial classification based on her race and physical features, leading to her being categorized as 'colored.' Sylvia experiences racial discrimination while fundraising for the Piney Wood Negro School, and

during Old Ned's sermon, she witnesses black individuals being discredited while white people are elevated with power.

Besides the matrix of domination, controlling images also play a significant role in oppression. Sylvia's encounter with two such images in "Within Our Gates" (1920) is telling: the Mammy and the Black Lady. The Mammy stereotype unfairly ties black women to domestic servitude, perpetuating lower wages for them in service-oriented roles. On the other hand, the portrayal of the Black Lady, representing the rise of black women into the middle class, triggers resentment towards gendered affirmative action. This portrayal is evident in Girdlestone's attempt to rape and murder Sylvia's family, driven by a sense of threat and insecurity in the presence of black people.

The immense oppression black women face fuels their determination to resist, as seen in the movie "Within Our Gates" (1920), where Sylvia Landry raises funds for a Negro school and advocates for African-American rights. This aligns with Collins' two primary stages of resistance: woman's consciousness and standpoint. Sylvia's resistance is evident through her pursuit of education as a schoolteacher, challenging stereotypes of black women's education levels. She also asserts her rights as a woman by preventing her fiancé, Conrad, from leaving without hearing her side of the story. Sylvia's visit to Reverend Wilson reflects her sense of responsibility and belief in racial equality as she strives to secure funds to prevent a school closure. Lastly, Sylvia's unwavering standpoint is evident when she faces a sexual assault attempt by a white man named Girdlestone, preserving her dignity and resisting the assault to protect her honor as a woman.

