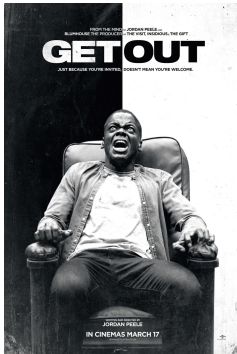


Get Out

by Douglas Keesey | May 11, 2017



Please note that this article contains spoilers.

As the product of a black father and a white mother, writer-director-comedian Jordan Peele embodies the Obama dream of multicultural difference-in-unity. As he and his biracial co-star Keegan-Michael Key said on their comedy show Key & Peele, they find themselves having to 'adjust their blackness' depending on which race they are with at the time, sometimes 'dialling up' the colour to 'terrify white people'.⁽¹⁾ What was once a joke has become no laughing matter in the Trump era of demonising immigrants as rapists, delegitimising America's first black President as a non-native 'other' and denying African-Americans the right to vote. It turns out that a number of white people really are terrified of racial 'others' trying to take over the country. What *Get Out* exposes, says Peele, is that the Obama era was 'a post-racial lie' because, at that time, 'the idea that America was as racist as we now realise it is was not so clear'.⁽²⁾

In Peele's film, which he calls 'a horror movie that is from an African-American's perspective',⁽³⁾ the worst black nightmares about white racism turn out to be true, marking the death of the Obama dream. Blacks are no longer slaves, but Georgina the maid and Walter the groundskeeper are still economically enslaved servants to a wealthy white family, their labour harnessed to the benefit of Caucasians rather than working to enrich themselves. A young African-American named Logan may reap the financial rewards of

assimilation by marrying an older white woman, but he is essentially her sex slave, valued solely for his 'primitive' physical prowess. Buppie photographer Chris may be dating a white woman, but that doesn't prevent him from being racially profiled by the highway patrol, even when she is driving the car. Her liberal parents may seem to welcome him to the family estate, yet matriarch Missy uses her silver spoon in a hypnotic ritual not just to stop him from smoking, but to 'castrate' his black masculinity by quelling his rebelliousness and sending him to the Sunken Place. As Peele explained, 'The Sunken Place means we're marginalised. No matter how hard we scream, the system silences us.'⁽⁴⁾ The Sunken Place is also a metaphor for 'the prison-industrial complex': 'The disproportionate number of black men thrown into a dark room for the rest of their lives is one of the central themes of what my movie is an allegory for.'⁽⁵⁾ Finally, Chris may receive accolades for his photos, believing that his talent has been acknowledged by the white Establishment, only to find out that a Caucasian photographer, who is going blind, plans to capitalise off Chris's eyesight by transplanting the white man's brain into the black man's head—perhaps Peele's nightmare of the mixed-race body as leading to a loss of black identity.

Get Out could have succumbed to the 'kill whitey' violence of the 1970s blaxploitation films that marked another era of disillusionment following the hope of the 1960s' civil rights movement. But Chris does not choke to death the rich white girlfriend who betrayed him, just as he tries to save the black maid Georgina, even though it turns out that her body contains the brain of the white family's grandmother. As Chris shows empathy for the suffering of the white grandmother as well as that of his Caucasian girlfriend, we recall that Peele himself has a white mother—and note that he is married to Caucasian comedienne Chelsea Peretti. It would seem that, even in this horror film, he is not yet ready to give up on the dream of interracial understanding.

References:

1: [YouTube](#)

2: Jordan Peele quoted in Sean Plummer, 'Fear of My Fellow Americans', *Rue Morgue*, no. 175 (March-April 2017), p. 33.

3: [Forbes.com](#)

4: [Jordan Peele Twitter](#)

5: [Guardian Review](#)

Douglas Keesey's *Twenty First Century Horror Films* has just been published by Kamera Books.

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