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Do The Right Thing in Societal Context

Connecting *Do The Right Thing* to a societal context is not difficult. This movie was named one of the most controversial movies of its time. It brings up systemic racism, poverty, and class segregation. There are many parts of this movie that can trigger an emotional response when decoding the film from real life. The plot of this movie decides the difference between racism and personal preference. Sal, the owner of a pizza shop in Brooklyn, has a “wall of fame” for Italian actors that he looks up to. While he may have thought it was his own choice to have people of Italian descent on his wall, the rest of the neighborhood disagrees. Because this restaurant is in a predominately black neighborhood, the people that live, surrounding the restaurant agree that they should also have a choice in what goes on the wall.

This later becomes the significance of the entire movie. Agree to disagree, but to disagree, ends in death. Because this restaurant is centered around a neighborhood in a lower class, that substantially lives beneath the poverty line, there are many calls made to the police directed at their common non-illegal actions. Whether that be using the fire hydrant as a sprinkler system, or completely beating up another man for simply playing music. After the argument about Sal’s Pizzeria wall, Buggin’ Out (the original person who decided to start this argument) decides to have the rest of the neighborhood boycott this restaurant, in an attempt to have Sal change his belief about who can be up on the “wall of fame”.

After the start of the boycott, the neighborhood decides to use the fire hydrant, to distract themselves from the beating hot sun of Brooklyn. The “playtime” lasts about twenty minutes before Sal decides to drive through with his pristine vintage car. Therefore a point of arguing between Mookie (Spike Lee) and Pino (Sal’s elder son) about the African-American hatred that Pino has for the neighborhood, occurs. After a heated debate race, Sal decides to call the police on the teenagers who opened the fire hydrant. While nothing is done about it, for the time being, there is much to come at night.

Having this argument between Pino and Mookie can show a lot to the viewers about how systemic racism can occur on smaller occasions depending on the location of the act. The difference between racism and systemic racism is the clear distinction of authority. Being able to define the complete wrongfulness in the justice system is not as difficult as it may seem. In *Do*

the Right Thing, there are many pieces of evidence that plainly show the problem with systemic racism, and how nothing is done to stop it.

Towards the end of the movie, Buggin' Out, Radio Raheem, and Smiley (a white person) decide to storm into Sal's pizzeria and demand that there be pictures of famous people who are of African-American descent. Sal, Pino, and Vito, all begin to argue with the group that walked in. Sal, enraged demands that Radio Raheem turns off his boom box. Radio Raheem, ignores his request. Angered, Sal decides to throw out multiple racial slurs at the group, and destroys the boom box, beginning a riot.

With this riot beginning, people from all around the neighborhood decide to trash Sal's Pizzeria. This is very similar to what happened with the *Black Lives Matter* Protest. There were multiple business establishments burned to the ground for their lack of support in this protest and movement. The movement was forced to deal with rioting, with this occurring inside the community was very hard for the movement to be able to continue staying successful without people labeling it as a crime. Originally starting as a protest for the people that could not speak, became a riot, with multiple buildings destroyed in the process.

At the end of this movie, Radio Raheem, while fighting with Sal gets pinned on the neck, by the police. This occurs for around 5 minutes, making the neighborhood concerned for Raheem's ability to live. After finally getting the policeman off, Radio Raheem lacked a pulse, clinically defined as dead. This began an outrage. When George Floyd was choked to death by a white police officer, this outraged more than just one community. *Do the Right Thing* signifies the idea of The *Black Lives Matter* movement, and how its impact can change a community.