

RWB&B: Best Rugby Movie I've Seen

Written by Pat Clifton

Wednesday, 30 January 2013 17:03

Experience the magic of Red, White, Black & Blue at the San Diego Black Film Festival.
38 South Los Angeles students are tested on a rugby journey through New Zealand.
The results will surprise you! Winner of Best Documentary Idyllwild CinemaFest

FRASER AWDOFF 2013
HONORARY DOC EDGE 2013
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BEST DOCUMENTARY
IDYLLWILD CINEMAFEST

SOUTH L.A. RUGBY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

RED

WHITE

BLACK & BLUE

NARRATED BY BILLY CAMPBELL

TOMMY FILMS PRESENTS A CLOUD SOUTH FILMS PRODUCTION "RED WHITE BLACK & BLUE"
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PARKER HUDNUT PRODUCED BY STUART KROHN SUMNER BURSTYN TOM BURSTYN CHRIS PACKARD
WRITTEN BY JOEL HAINES EDITED BY ANTON LEACH DIRECTED BY JAMES BROWN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 - 7:30 PM

READING THEATERS GASLAMP

Red, White Black & Blue is a documentary that follows the Inner City Education Foundation's (ICEF) boys and girls high school rugby teams on a tour of New Zealand. ICEF is a consortium of schools based in inner city Los Angeles, and the team is made up of African American

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students of View Park Prep High School, a charter school located in the heart of South Central at the intersection of Crenshaw and Slauson.

The movie focuses on seven players, in particular, following them to their houses in nearby neighborhoods, which have for decades been portrayed as gang-ridden boroughs of crime, riots and poverty in Hollywood movies and hip-hop songs.

Red, White, Black & Blue tells a layered story about young people from an infamous place struggling and striving with their personal setbacks and successes as they meet peers from an unfathomably different place dealing with the same issues.

Director James Brown tells the story from opposing angles. On one hand, he tries to dispel some of the negative stereotypes and stigmas associated with South Central and young African Americans, while also revealing the intimate, unique conflicts the characters of the film deal with in their personal lives.

Leodes, an underclassman, opens the film reading a poem about his father, Loedes Sr., who spent many of his son's formative years in jail. The articulate, wide-smiling Leodes shares an anecdote later in the movie about how his mother went hungry so he could eat as a small child.

Marjau, the introspective senior with a tough exterior but sensitive interior has a young mother and a brother with undiagnosed mental problems. She struggles with leaving them at home while she goes on tour, and uses rugby as the outlet for her pent-up aggression and frustration.

De'Janae is a backup player who is hoping to be the first person in her family to attend college. She was supposed to pursue higher education with her male cousins, as they all discussed as adolescents, but they were murdered by gang members.

Then there's Ebony, whose mom describes herself and her husband as Afro-centric when explaining why they live where they do and why Ebony goes to school where she does. Ebony's the happy-go-lucky valedictorian awaiting acceptance letters from schools like Dartmouth and Brown while in New Zealand.

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And Cameron is a humble, soft-speaking standout athlete who plays guitar, likes Buddy Guy and is on track for a football scholarship. He's offered a chance to extend his stay in New Zealand and train with a local team. But, like so many mothers would, Cameron's mom wants her son returned home safely and on schedule.

The movie isn't just about these kids and their sitcom normalcies or dramatic personal struggles, it's also about the maturation and education of young people. One of the conflicts we see unfold is that of captain Jennese. She knows what she wants from her younger teammates, and she knows she's supposed to lead them, but she doesn't always address them with the right tone, or so they think.

The learning process is a joy to watch. When the team arrives in New Zealand, they are immediately immersed in Maori culture. They swiftly get out of the city and into smaller towns like Raglan and Rotorua where they're greeted by a Maori tribal dance. To reciprocate, the team performs a step dance, like those synonymous with black fraternities and sororities, and you can see a tattoo-faced Maori man happily shaking his head in appreciation.

After the boys' first game, a close loss to a local team named Melville, the opposing captains exchange gratitude and pleasantries. Upon request from the audience, Asa, the ICEF captain, shows everyone how to Dougie. The Melville captain exhibits his moves, too.

When the teams arrive in Turangi, they're warned not to leave their shoes outside because they'd likely be stolen. And when the team leaves, the local coach holds back tears when he expresses how thankful he is of the ICEF team visiting Turangi, which has developed a bad reputation. Just before they board the bus, you see teary-eyed teenagers hugging their new-found friends goodbye – young people from opposite corners of the world bonded over similarities.

The kids aren't the only ones who stretch their boundaries, either. Mrs. Bacon, Jennese's mom who injects more than her share of humor into the movie, reluctantly goes whitewater rafting after being prodded by ICEF coach Stu Krohn. She lets go of her fear, enjoys the ride and thanks 'Mr. Krohn' for making her get on the raft.

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For rugby people, and particularly those who work with youth and high school teams, *Red, White, Black & Blue*

is affirmation of what we do, why we voluntarily pour hours, miles, dollars, effort and emotion into the lives of young people. For those outside the rugby community, it's a beautiful introduction to our lifestyle, way of thought and our game.

ICEF Rugby founder Stu Krohn and his coaching mate Dave Hughes aren't canonized in the film, but they should be here. Hats off to the work they put in, to the thousands of coaches hoeing the same field and to the creators of *Red, White, Black & Blue*, the best rugby movie I've seen.