

Personal Reflection On The Movie Hidden Figures

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Hidden Figures is an inspiring historical drama that tells the story of three African American women who worked at NASA during the Space Race: Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. These women were known as “human computers” because they performed complex mathematical calculations before electronic computers became widely used. Their work helped NASA complete important space missions, including the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit. (NASA, n.d.; Amalia, 2020; Ikawati, 2018)

The film is powerful because it highlights a part of history that was often ignored. For many years, stories about space exploration focused mostly on astronauts, engineers, and male leaders. *Hidden Figures* changes that focus by showing that the success of NASA also depended on the intelligence, discipline, and determination of Black women working behind the scenes. Watching the film made me think more deeply about race, gender, science, and the meaning of opportunity.

My First Impression of the Film

My first impression of *Hidden Figures* was that it was both emotional and educational. The film captured my attention because it combined personal struggle with national achievement. It was not only a story about NASA or mathematics; it was also a story about human dignity. The three main characters were not presented as victims only. They were shown as talented, hardworking, intelligent, and determined women who refused to let racism and sexism define their futures.

I enjoyed the film because it showed unexpected strength in ordinary moments. Katherine Johnson solving difficult calculations, Dorothy Vaughan teaching herself computer programming, and Mary Jackson fighting to become an engineer were all meaningful examples of courage. Their achievements were not sudden or easy. They came through patience, confidence, study, and persistence.

The film also helped me understand that history is often incomplete. Many people contribute to great achievements, but not all of them receive recognition. *Hidden Figures* reminds viewers that success is often built by people whose names are not immediately remembered.

Racism in Hidden Figures

One of the most important themes in the film is racism. The story takes place during a period of racial segregation in the United States. African Americans were treated unfairly in public spaces,

workplaces, schools, and government institutions. The women in the film faced discrimination not because they lacked ability, but because society judged them by race.

Katherine Johnson's experience in the workplace shows how racism created unnecessary barriers. She had to work in a space where she was not fully accepted by her white colleagues. One of the most memorable parts of the film is her struggle to use a distant segregated restroom. This scene shows how segregation wasted time, energy, and dignity. It also shows how racism was not only about major laws but also about daily humiliation.

The film made me reflect on how painful it must have been for talented people to constantly prove their worth in environments that doubted them. Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary were not asking for special treatment. They were asking to be recognized for their skills and given equal opportunity.

Gender Discrimination and Misogyny

In addition to racism, *Hidden Figures* also shows gender discrimination. The women in the film worked in a field dominated by men. Science, mathematics, engineering, and leadership positions were often seen as male spaces. Even when women had the knowledge and ability to contribute, they were frequently denied authority or promotion.

Mary Jackson's story is especially important because she wanted to become an engineer. To do so, she needed to attend classes at a school that did not allow Black students. Her legal and educational struggle shows that gender discrimination and racial discrimination often worked together. As a Black woman, she faced barriers that white women and Black men did not always experience in the same way.

Dorothy Vaughan's story also demonstrates workplace inequality. She performed the duties of a supervisor but was not officially given the title or pay. Her intelligence and leadership were obvious, but recognition came slowly because of racial and gender bias. Her decision to learn computer programming shows her ability to adapt and prepare for the future.

Science, Mathematics, and Technology

Another important lesson from *Hidden Figures* is the value of science, mathematics, and technology. The film shows that mathematics is not just an abstract school subject. It can solve real-world problems and help achieve extraordinary goals. Katherine Johnson's calculations were essential because space travel required precision. A small mathematical error could lead to disaster.

The film also shows the transition from human calculation to machine computing. Dorothy Vaughan understands that technology is changing the workplace. Instead of fearing the IBM computer, she learns how to use it. She also teaches other women in her department so they will not be left behind.

This part of the film teaches an important lesson: education and adaptability are necessary in a changing world.

The film made me appreciate the connection between human intelligence and technology. Machines can process information, but people must understand how to guide, interpret, and apply that information. The women in *Hidden Figures* succeeded because they combined technical skill with creativity, discipline, and courage.

Collaboration and Teamwork

Hidden Figures also teaches the importance of collaboration. NASA's space missions could not succeed through one person alone. Astronauts, mathematicians, engineers, technicians, supervisors, and many other workers were part of the same mission. The film shows that collaboration becomes stronger when people are valued for their abilities rather than judged by race or gender.

At first, Katherine is treated as an outsider in the Space Task Group. Over time, her skill becomes impossible to ignore. When others begin to respect her work, the team becomes more effective. This shows that discrimination does not only harm individuals; it also weakens institutions. When talented people are excluded, the whole organization loses potential.

The film's message about teamwork is still relevant today. Workplaces, schools, and communities perform better when they include different voices and respect different talents.

The Emotional Impact of the Film

The emotional impact of *Hidden Figures* comes from its balance between struggle and hope. The film does not ignore racism or sexism, but it also does not present the main characters as powerless. Katherine, Dorothy, and Mary face discrimination, yet they continue moving forward. Their confidence and determination make the film inspiring.

One of the most powerful lessons I learned from the film is that dignity can be maintained even in unfair conditions. These women did not allow society's prejudice to make them doubt their intelligence. They worked harder, learned more, supported one another, and demanded recognition.

The film also made me think about how many other "hidden figures" exist in history. Many women, minorities, and workers have contributed to science, politics, education, and culture without receiving proper credit. This film encourages viewers to look beyond the most famous names and ask who else helped shape history.

What I Disliked About the Film

Although I enjoyed the film, there were some parts I found less effective. The romantic subplot in Katherine's life felt less important than her professional and personal struggles at NASA. I was more interested in the difficulties she faced as a mathematician and how she overcame discrimination in the workplace. The romantic scenes may have been included to make the story more personal, but they were not as powerful as the scenes focused on her work, intelligence, and courage.

Some parts of the film also appear dramatized for emotional effect. This is common in historical dramas because filmmakers often add fictional or simplified scenes to make the story more engaging. However, viewers should remember that the film is based on real people, even if not every scene happened exactly as shown. The main message remains important because it brings attention to women whose contributions were historically overlooked.

Lessons Learned from Hidden Figures

The biggest lesson I learned from *Hidden Figures* is that talent needs opportunity. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson were brilliant, but brilliance alone was not enough. They needed access to education, fair treatment, professional recognition, and the chance to use their abilities. Their story shows that many people are held back not by lack of talent but by unfair systems.

Another lesson is the importance of persistence. Each woman faced obstacles, but none of them gave up. Dorothy prepared herself and others for the future of computing. Mary challenged educational barriers so she could become an engineer. Katherine proved that her mathematical ability was essential to NASA's mission.

The film also teaches that representation matters. Seeing Black women as mathematicians, leaders, and problem-solvers challenges stereotypes. It reminds viewers that intelligence and achievement exist in every community, even when society fails to recognize them.

Conclusion

Hidden Figures is more than a film about NASA. It is a film about race, gender, courage, education, and recognition. It shows how Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson used their intelligence and determination to contribute to one of the most important scientific achievements in American history. Their story is inspiring because it proves that people can succeed even when society creates unfair barriers against them.

My personal reflection on the film is that it teaches both historical awareness and moral responsibility. It encourages viewers to recognize hidden contributions, challenge discrimination, and value talent.

wherever it appears. The film left me with admiration for the women it portrays and with a deeper understanding of how science, justice, and human dignity are connected.

References

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