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Opportunity

In 2009 Warner Bros. released the John Lee Hancock film, *The Blind Side*. This heartwarming film is based on the true story of former NFL player Michael Oher, played by Quinton Aaron. Michael came from a very poor family that lacked a father figure and had a drug abusing mother. Oher was essentially homeless until one cold night he was walking the streets and got taken in by the Tuohy's. The Tuohy's were a wealthy white family that lived in the area and were essentially ran by the mother, Mrs. Leigh Anne Tuohy, played by Sandra Bullock. Mrs. Leigh Anne was a compassionate, self-less, and strong-willed woman who developed a deep interest for Michael and later grew determined to help him prosper. The family provided Michael with all of the opportunities he needed to flourish in any career path he wanted. Michael grew fond of football, so that was what he pursued. Throughout the film there are many American cultural topics acknowledged even though not all of them were positive. *The Blind Side* holds significance in the film industry for its ability to spark conversations about social issues (diversity, education, and social class), promote empathy and understanding, and inspire individuals to make a positive impact in their communities. It serves as a reminder of the resilience of the human spirit and the potential for individuals to overcome obstacles and achieve greatness with the support of others.

The film highlights the transformative power of education and access to opportunities in breaking the cycle of poverty. It underscores the importance of investing in young people and providing them with the resources they need to succeed. By focusing on Michael Oher's journey from homelessness to NFL success, the film advocates for policies and initiatives that support disadvantaged youth in realizing their full potential. Before meeting the Tuohy's, Michael had a difficult life. He did not have a consistent living situation, forcing him to couch hop. He was not attending school and the school he was enrolled in was not great. He did not have a fulfilling diet. He did not have any parental figures. This reality is a common theme for many adolescents that are victims to the societal wage/ race gap in America. This is most commonly seen with inner city children. They are not provided with adequate resources needed to discover/ prepare for what they want with their lives. Michael was unfortunately a victim of this, but by the grace of the Tuohy's he was given amazing opportunities. Michael is a prime example of that opportunity and proper education makes or breaks the futures of the children in America. The film touches upon issues within the educational system, as Michael faces academic challenges but eventually succeeds with the help of the Tuohy family. This aspect of the story encourages discussions about the disparities in the education system and the importance of providing equal opportunities for all students.

Through its portrayal of interracial adoption and relationships, the film promotes diversity, tolerance, and inclusion. It challenges stereotypes and prejudices, emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding across racial and cultural divides. By showcasing the bonds that form between people from different backgrounds, "The Blind Side" encourages acceptance and mutual respect. Mrs. Leigh Anne Tuohy is the prime example of empathy and understanding in this movie. The specific scene of the movie that exemplifies this is the lunch

scene. Mrs. Leigh Anne attended a lunch/ tea with a few of her good friends a few months after taking in Michael. At the lunch, her friends proceeded to make insensitive remarks about Michael and his relationship with the family. Mrs. Leigh Anne did not stand for it and shot right back explaining that the color of Michael's skin makes him no different than anyone else and that they should be ashamed of themselves for thinking otherwise. Her interaction with her friends reveals her strong personality and willingness to challenge societal norms and expectations. Leigh Anne's decision to invite Michael Oher, a homeless African American teenager, to join her family demonstrates her compassion and disregard for racial or socioeconomic barriers.

The Blind Side, sheds light on the complexities of social class and its impact on individual lives, relationships, and opportunities. By depicting the intersecting dynamics of privilege, inequality, and empathy, the film prompts viewers to reflect on their own assumptions and attitudes towards social class and consider the ways in which they can contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive society. One of the earliest examples of social class complexity was at the beginning of the film when the Tuohy's first took Michael into their home. After crossing the threshold, Michael was in awe of the beautiful home. The scene highlights the immediate contrast between Michael's impoverished background and the privileged lifestyle of the Tuohys, setting the stage for exploration of social class dynamics throughout the film. To add, the Tuohy's also provided Michael with several luxury items. As Michael's relationship with the family grew stronger. Mrs. Leigh Anne noticed he did not have a lot of clothes or shoes. This resulted in an all day shopping spree, which Michael has never experienced before but is the reality for Mrs. Leigh Anne. Mrs. Tuohy symbolically integrates him into her family and social sphere. Shopping together signifies acceptance and inclusion, breaking down the barriers of race and social class. It demonstrates Mrs. Tuohy's willingness to treat Michael as a valued member

of her family, regardless of his background. On top of signifying acceptance and inclusion, this selfless act also reflects the genuine qualities of Mrs. Leigh Anne. By taking him to buy new clothes she was helping Michael to better integrate into his new school. Michael was already going to stand out - his size and race set him apart; with new clothes he would have greater confidence to take on the challenge and he would look the part.

The film tells the true story of Michael Oher, a homeless African American teenager who is taken in by a wealthy white family, the Tuohys. Through their support and encouragement, Oher overcomes numerous obstacles to become a successful football player and eventually, an NFL star. The narrative of triumph over adversity resonates deeply with American audiences, embodying the belief in the American Dream – that with hard work and opportunity, anyone can achieve success. With the film being based on a true story, it is an inspiration to a variety of people. Kids in the same socioeconomic situation as Michael will muster hope. Adults with similar lifestyles to the Tuohy's will consider extending their privilege to those who need it. Higher ups who recognize the uneven distribution of education in our country will hopefully step up and be a voice to fix it. Overall, this film touches many American cultural issues and aspects. These messages resonate with audiences, encouraging them to believe in their own potential and the possibility of positive change.

Works Cited

Lewis, Michael. *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game*. W.W. Norton, 2009.