

MASW Human Rights Task Force and "The Only Good Indian"

On March 25, 2010, the Missouri Association for Social Welfare Human Rights Task Force co-sponsored the showing of "The Only Good Indian" (followed by a discussion with the director) along with the local NAACP and the cultural diversity faculty at Lincoln University.

The film, "The Only Good Indian," provides historical fact regarding the inhumane treatment of native children in the U.S.A. from part of the nineteenth century through the 1960s. As good historical fiction, it engages its viewers in a story, told from the native perspective, something that Hollywood films do not show, as they typically provide a white character through whose eyes viewers experience the story of the "other."

Viewers saw how native children were wrenched from their families, as unwilling participants in acculturation and assimilation, where their names were changed, as was their religion, their dress, and their entire culture. All can be summed up in a sign stating: "Kill the Indian, Save the Man."

At the close of the film, there are several frames of text explaining the truth behind the film and the boarding schools. In addition, the director, Kevin Willmott, provided a question and answer session in which he discussed how native people are still ignored in popular culture, the fact that the United States has never issued an apology or reparations (as has been done in Canada), and even explained his own ignorance prior to directing this film of the subject of forced boarding schools for native youth.

Considering the lack of treatment of this human rights violation in most U.S. schools, the Human Rights Task Force is pleased to raise awareness of this important issue, not only to set the record straight, but to help students at Lincoln University, as well as others who attended the showing, make connections to other human rights violations in the state of Missouri and beyond.

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"Give to every human being every right that you claim for yourself"
(Robert Ingersoll)