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How Hidden Figures Changed the Way We See History

Movies and TV shows do more than just entertain us. They help shape how we see history and how we understand different groups of people. Sometimes movies leave important people out. Other times, they help tell stories that were forgotten. The movie *Hidden Figures* is a great example of how a film can change the way we think about history, especially for groups who were ignored in the past. *Hidden Figures* tells the true story of three Black women, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who worked at NASA during the Space Race. Before this movie came out, most people thought the Space Race was mostly about white male astronauts and scientists. Many people knew the name John Glenn, but they did not know about the Black women who did important math and computer work that helped send astronauts into space. Because their stories were not told, it made it seem like Black women were not part of America's scientific success.

This movie helps fix that problem. It shows that Katherine Johnson's math was very important for sending John Glenn into orbit. It shows that Dorothy Vaughan learned computer programming so she and her team would not lose their jobs. It shows that Mary Jackson fought in court to be allowed to attend an all-white school so she could become an engineer. These stories show that Black women were not just helpers; they were leaders and problem-solvers.

The movie also shows the racism and sexism these women faced. For example, Katherine had to run far away to use a “colored” bathroom because NASA was still segregated. Mary had to ask a judge for permission to attend classes at a white school. Dorothy was not given the job title she deserved, even though she was already doing the work. By showing these problems, the movie teaches viewers that success did not come easily. These women had to work twice as hard because of unfair rules.

When *Hidden Figures* came out, it changed how many people saw history. More people learned about Katherine Johnson and her work. NASA even named a building after her. Schools started teaching more about Black women in science. The movie helped young girls, especially Black girls, see that they can become scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. Seeing someone who looks like you on screen can make a big difference in what you believe is possible for your future.

The movie also helped change the way Black women are shown in media. In the past, movies often showed Black women in small or stereotypical roles. *Hidden Figures* showed them as smart, strong, and important to American history. This helps fight harmful myths and replace them with more truthful and respectful stories.

Some people say the movie makes certain parts of history seem simpler than they were. For example, it shows some white characters helping in ways that may not have happened exactly like that. Even so, the movie still does something important: it brings attention to stories that were almost forgotten. It reminds us that history is not always told fairly, and sometimes we need new stories to fill in the gaps.

In conclusion, movies and TV shows can shape how we understand history and culture.

Hidden Figures helped recover an important story about Black women who played a big role in the Space Race. By telling their story, the film changed how many people see science, race, and gender in America. It shows that when we tell forgotten stories, we do more than learn about the past; we help build a more fair and honest future.

Work Cited

Melfi, Theodore, director. *Hidden Figures*. 20th Century Fox, 2016.