映画分析から教材作成へ

『フォレスト・ガンプ一期一会』FORREST GUMP (1994) 作成者: W クリンガー

映画紹介 (outline of the movie)

原作は Winston Groom、1985 年発表の同名の小説。

映画は 1994 年にアメリカで公開され、米国アカデミー賞(作品・監督・脚本主演男優賞など) 6 部門を受賞。その他の賞も 32 個も受賞した作品である。

フォレスト・ガンプが時の政治家に招待されるシーンでは、写真(白黒)の大統領など著名人物が口を動かして実際にしゃべっているように編集された映像テクニック(SFX)は公開に先立つ話題となった。日本公開は 1995 年。

映画では身体的、知能的なハンディキャップがあるにもかかわらず、純粋無垢なフォレスト・ガンプの姿を時代のヒーローとして、世界の時事ニュースにオーバーラップさせながら描いている。公開されると、彼の話す言葉が「フォレスト語録」として流布するほどの社会現象をひきおこした。

映画セリフ (movie line)

・[*repeated line*] (映画で繰りかえされているセリフ)
My momma always said, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."

・Me and Jenny goes together like peas and carrots.

・My momma always said you can tell a lot about a person by their shoes, where they're go, where they've been. I've worn lots of shoes. I bet if I think about it real hard I can remember my first pair of shoes.

キャスト&スタッフ(CAST & STAFF)

監督:ロバート・ゼメキス Robert Zemeckis

製作:ウェンディ・ファイナーマン Wendy Finerman 他

原作:ウィンストン・グルーム Winston Groom

脚本:エリック・ロス Eric Roth

主演:トム・ハンクス Tom Hanks (Forrest Gump)
ロビン・ライト Robin Wright (Jenny Curran)
ゲイリー・シニーズ Gary Sinise (Lt. Dan Taylor)
サリー・フィールド Sally Field (Mrs. Gump)
ミケル・T・ウィリアムソン Mykelti Williamson (Benjamin Buford 'Bubba' Blue)

・<映画分析>・

●ジャンル（genre） ドラマ ・Based on the novel "Forrest Gump"

●トピック/ テーマ（theme）／メッセージ

・人間の愛と信頼 / a parable of tolerance and equality (寛容と平等を比喩)

*The topics make the film useful for cross-cultural studies, and its story of human relationships and values makes it appealing to young EFL students.

●文化（culture）

・ベトナム戦争と反戦運動・南部アラバマ州・1950-70 年代の米国社会事情（エルビス・プレスリー/ジョン・レノン/大統領/ウォーターゲート事件/KKK/黒人公民権運動・参政権/ベトナム戦争反対）

●言語（language）

・米語 ・南部英語

・ガンプ語録（*非標準文法だが、たどたどしい話の内容に'キラメキ'があるので注目）

●教材適用度 ・中～上級向け（*映画の時代背景の解説を必要）

●映画リテラシー （literacy of the movie）

・『フォレスト・ガンプ 一期一会』の原作は 1985 年にアメリカの作家、ウィンストン・グルーム（Winston Groom）が発表した小説 ***Forrest Gump*** である。映画はこの小説のストーリーに沿って製作されている。原作と対比すると、登場人物など全体としては原作とほとんど同じである。

・ クリンガー論文（***Forrest Gump:*** **Themes of Tolerance & Equality**）は、フォレスト・ガンプの時代背景である黒人公民権運動・参政権, KKK, ブラックパンサー, ベトナム参戦，『国民の創生』*The Birth of a Nation*（1915）との対比などをインターネットから諸々の論述を引用して詳細に検証している。必読論文である。(m.t)

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●資料

・Screenplay：映画完全セリフ集「カドカワ・スクリプトブック・シリーズ フォレスト・ガンプ 一期一会」
角川書店 1996/03/25出版 311p 20×11cm ISBN: 9784048540261

・VHS：『フォレスト・ガンプ 一期一会』 字幕：マルチ字幕(日/英) 142分販売元： CICビクター・

・DVD：字幕：マルチ字幕(日/英) 142 分

Forrest Gump: Themes of Tolerance & Equality

Walter KLINGER

In a parallel universe, the protagonist of *Forrest Gump* (1994, Director: Robert Zemeckis) encounters Elvis Presley, John Lennon, and three American Presidents, is involved in the Vietnam War and anti-war demonstrations, and precipitates events like the Watergate Investigation and fads like smiley faces. These topics make the film useful for cross-cultural studies, and its story of human relationships and values makes it appealing to young EFL students. In its evocation of episodes in American history, the film can be interpreted as telling a parable of tolerance and equality. This article discusses two major threads in this theme: persons with disabilities, and the struggle for civil rights.

The movie starts with a feather floating down from high in the sky and landing at the feet of a young man. He picks it up, looks at it oddly, and carefully places it in a children's illustrated book in his neatly arranged suitcase. Having completed the task at hand, he stares ahead rather vacantly and unfocussed, sitting ramrod straight on a bus stop bench. A poster on the side of a passing bus advertises a car for 1981. When a woman sits next to him, he is friendly, volunteering his name, Forrest Gump, and offering her a chocolate from a box. In a modern urban setting, this is unusual, even suspect, behavior. The woman shakes her head and tries to ignore him. Forrest keeps talking; his speech is slow and mild-mannered. He relates his mother's maxims about how a box of chocolates is like life, and what shoes reveal about people. Then he starts reminiscing about his first pair of shoes. The woman cannot help but stare at this phenomenon and listen. Hornstein (1994) talks about her son, who behaves like Forrest at the bus stop:

> My son Joel is 20 years old and has autism along with several developmental disabilities. As with Forrest Gump, a conversation with my son resembles a script from "The Twilight Zone." Joel speaks more in echoed phrases he's heard elsewhere than in self-initiated sentences. It is not uncommon for Joel to meet someone, give his name, shake his hand and then tell the poor, unprepared soul that "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." And yes, he always gives the 800 number to encourage you to respond charitably to this and many other public service announcements which he memorizes. Is Joel intoning some deeply felt, altruistic

> statement meant to change the face of the world? No, this is just his way of using existing phrases in order to participate in that baffling exercise called conversation.

The question is often asked in the film, "is Forrest stupid or something?" Demb (1997) suggests that Forrest probably has "pervasive developmental disorder and certainly not mental retardation." Demb bases the diagnosis on Forrest's "social skills deficits," "perseverative tendencies" like running across the country four times, "a tendency to initiate conversations with total strangers and repetitively use, in a somewhat rehearsed fashion, a phrase from his past," and his "odd vocal quality, with precise and formal intonation." Demb notes Forrest's "excellent gross motor skills and eye-hand coordination," and Hyman (1997) agrees that Forrest has "too much ability." Hyman considers Forrest's "early language delays," and decides that Forrest, in today's society, "would not be classified as having mental retardation; instead, "borderline or dull-normal would be more appropriate."

The 1986 novel by Winston Groom (born 1944), on which the film is based, opens with Forrest's words, "Let me say this: Bein' a idiot is no box of chocolates." Greenbaum (1996) contends that the phrase from the novel is "much less charming but far more realistic" than the film's *bon mot* about bonbons, as people with mental retardation in reality have low prospects for financial success or happiness in love, quite unlike Forrest's experience. Greenbaum also remarks that "no one with Forrest's IQ would be labeled 'a idiot' today. The term is offensive and outdated."

Besides his intellectual handicap, Forrest as a child in the mid-1950s also has a physical disability. He wears braces on his legs to help correct a spine "as crooked as a politician." The braces bring to mind the viral disease, polio, which for decades had paralyzed, confined to iron lung machines, and crippled tens of thousands of people, children disproportionately so. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945, President 1933-1945)'s legs were almost totally paralyzed by polio. In the decade following World War II,

> at least twenty thousand cases were reported annually; in 1952, polio reached its destructive peak with fifty-eight thousand new diagnoses. … So many of those who had "recovered" from polio were left with twisted backs, withered limbs, bodies that no longer could run and play. … Polio epidemics were second only to the atomic bomb in surveys of what Americans feared most (Pomerantz 1999).

The monumental victory over polio by Dr. Jonas Salk (1914–1995)'s polio vaccine in 1955 coincides with the time Forrest threw off his leg braces.

The film plays "with boundaries of fiction and history" (Grainge 2003:208). Much of the humor in the film comes from seeing Forrest repeatedly wander and stumble into well-known scenes from history, like a feather "buffeted by the winds of postwar America"

(Guinti 1996), and unwittingly affect the course of events. Sometimes the subject of humor is Forrest being "a bit on the slow side" and his awkward social skills. We are meant to laugh when Forrest understands everything people say literally, as when he meets Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Guinti (1996) remarks,

> There is a weird dissonance between Forrest's wide-eyed narration and Zemeckis's knowing direction. In a number of witty quick-cut montage sequences that accompany Forrest's simple-minded voice-over, part of the joke is that Forrest doesn't get what's going on. Thus the audience is actually put in the position of laughing at its hero's ignorance.

For the most part, however, Forrest's disability is treated sympathetically, and Forrest himself is a compassionate person.[1]

An important message of the film is that all people deserve to be treated fairly. This is developed particularly strongly through a number of scenes that describe and reflect events in the history of American race relations. The very first scene, of Forrest talking to the woman at the bus stop, recalls a landmark event, one of the first victories for civil rights for black citizens since the Civil War of 1861 - 1865. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks (1913-2005), was arrested after she refused to give up her bus seat in the section for "coloreds," behind the front seats permanently reserved for white passengers, to let a white passenger sit. The local Baptist church minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), led a boycott using a method that turned out to be tremendously effective in gaining legal rights for black people: nonviolent resistance, or civil disobedience. 40,000 black people throughout the city stayed off the public buses for over a year and held peaceful rallies, while segregationists bombed Dr. King's house and black churches. The contrast between the methods of the protestors and segregationists was readily apparent on TV and in newspaper reports, and helped sway public and political opinion in favor of the civil rights movement. In November 1956, the United States Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation on buses violated equal protection laws and was unconstitutional. The bus boycott ended the day after the court order arrived in Montgomery, six weeks later. In recognition of the importance of her action, Mrs. Parks received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 1999. After her death, her casket lay in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington, and front seats of city buses in

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[1] Forrest is similar to the lead characters in the 1958 movie, *No Time for Sergeants,* and the 1964-1969 CBS TV series, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* All three are strong, naïve, slow-witted, literal-minded, good-hearted country boys from the rural South stationed in the army, whose misadventures are told as comedies. Forrest is watching *Gomer Pyle* on TV in the army hospital when a soldier tells him to turn off "that stupid shit." This seems to be the film making a humorous comment about itself and its predecessor.

Montgomery and Detroit (where she later lived) were marked with black ribbons.[2]

The image of Forrest and the woman brings to mind the Montgomery Bus Boycott perhaps mainly in hindsight, reflecting on what messages the movie might be presenting. However, two stories Forrest tells the woman deal directly with events in the history of race relations, so we can be confident that this interpretation is not overreaching.

Having told the woman about his childhood physical handicap, Forrest next informs her that his mother named him after "the great Civil War hero, General Nathan Bedford Forrest," who "started up this club called the Ku Klux Klan." We see a short scene from the silent film, *The Birth of A Nation* (1915), with a man who looks like Forrest and other men in white robes and pointed white caps, sitting on horses draped in white cloth, ready to ride off somewhere. This image is readily recognizable by all Americans, and we know what it is that they are riding off to do: to terrorize and attack black people.

Nathaniel Bedford Forrest (1821–1877) was a self-made millionaire landowner and slave dealer before achieving fame (and notoriety, for his part in the Fort Pillow massacre of over 300 Union soldiers and black people) as a cavalry leader in the Civil War. He was acclaimed honorary leader, "Grand Wizard," of the Ku Klux Klan, or KKK, in 1867. The KKK was formed of loosely organized, and even unrelated, bands of white supremacist

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[2] Martin Luther King, Jr. became the acknowledged leader of the civil rights movement, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, and is now one of the most admired people in the USA. His "I Have A Dream" speech at the rally for civil rights in Washington on 28 August 1963 is regarded as one of America's finest: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." King's assassination somehow did not register in Forrest's life, at least as far as the movie shows it, but the DVD has a deleted scene where Forrest unwittingly prevents police dogs from attacking King by throwing them a stick to play with. King's first encounter with the idea of peaceful resistance was American philosopher Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)'s essay, "On Civil Disobedience," an argument for disobeying the law in moral opposition to an unjust state. King writes of reading Thoreau in 1944: "Here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory into Mexico, I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times. I became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good" (Carson 1998: Chapter 2). Gandhi (1869–1948), who led the passive resistance movement to compel the British to leave India, also credited Thoreau as a major influence. King said, "Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Gandhi furnished the method." The woman in the movie says her "feet hurt," which also recalls Mrs. Parks' actions, as some reports said that Mrs. Parks refused to give up her seat because she was tired from her day at work. Mrs. Parks herself said she wasn't especially tired physically, but tired of being abused. She was secretary of the Montgomery NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, one of the oldest and most influential civil rights organizations in the United States, founded in 1909), knew that her action would lead to arrest, and was prepared to follow through with what needed to be done to change the segregation law (Evans 2001:191). Lerner (2006:331,332) shows photographs of Mrs. Parks being fingerprinted by the police, and sitting in a bus in front of a white man after the bus had been desegregated. *The Long Walk Home* (1991), *Boycott* (2001), and *The Rosa Parks Story* (2002) dramatize this event. Scenes of the bus boycott and King's speeches can be seen on several documentary DVDs.

vigilantes. In 1869 Nathaniel ordered the Klan to disband, saying it had become "perverted from its original honorable and patriotic purposes, becoming injurious instead of subservient to the public peace." "There were some foolish young men who put masks on their faces and rode over the country, frightening negroes [*sic*], but orders have been issued to stop that, and it has ceased," he insisted (Forrest 1868). The KKK obviously ignored Nathaniel's order to disband, as they wreaked violence on blacks and other minorities for over a hundred more years. In a speech to a black political organization, he declared, "I want to elevate every man, and see that you take your places in your shops, stores and offices," though not before claiming, "I am here representative of the Southern People -- one that has been more maligned than any other" (Forrest 1875).

Nathaniel fought for the Confederacy in what is commonly known as the American Civil War, though it is also sometimes called the War Between the States (in Chinese-based languages, the "American North-South War").[3] The major cause of the war was a dispute over whether slavery, introduced into colonial America in 1619, would be permitted in the new states formed as the U.S.A. expanded its borders to the west. The more immediate cause was the election as President of Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865, President 1861-1865), who opposed extending slavery to the new states, though he was willing to allow it in those states that already had slavery. Eleven southern states seceded from the United States of America to form a new country, the Confederate States of America, in order to protect their "independence" and "states rights." These expressions referred to the self-claimed right of individual states to permit slavery, without having to say the distasteful word "slavery" too often. Needless to say, the slaves themselves did not have a voice in the matter.

Of the southern states' population of about 9 million, about 4 million were slaves and 300,000 were free blacks; one in four white families owned slaves. Of the north's 21 million, one percent were slaves. 18% of all white male Southerners aged 13 to 43 died in the civil war, and 8% of that age group of Northerners. A total of about one million people died,

[3] The U.S. Congress has never adopted an official name for this war, reflecting its unsettled status in the mind of America. The Confederate government avoided the term "civil war" and referred in official documents to the "War between the Confederate States of America and the United States of America." In 1994, the U.S. Postal Service issued commemorative stamps captioned "The Civil War / The War Between the States." The black comedy, *Spike Lee Presents: CSA, The Confederate States of America* (2004), shows what life would be like in the USA today if the Confederacy had won, and how absurd that situation would be. The twelve-hour ABC TV mini-series *Roots* (1977) is probably the best-known film about slavery in the USA. The six-hour PBS-WGBH Boston documentary *Africans in America: America's Journey Through Slavery* (1998) http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html is an informative resource, as is the three-hour BBC Four documentary *Racism - A History* (2007) http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/features/racism-history.shtml.

including 600,000 soldiers, more than in all other U.S. wars combined, in some 10,000 military engagements, almost half of them in Virginia and Tennessee. As the war dragged on, President Lincoln, in the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, declared the slaves in the Confederate states to be free (though not those in the Union). Even after the Confederacy was defeated, southern states refused to let the "Freedmen" vote, and passed other discriminatory laws. To stop these actions, the federal government placed those state governments under military rule in 1867. African American men could vote and many were elected to public office. However, their civil rights were almost completely reversed after dubiously-elected President Rutherford B. Hayes (1822–1893, President 1877–1881) removed federal troops in 1877 in "a back-room deal" (Field 1998), leaving white men free to forcibly take back control of the state governments. By the early 1900s, racism "had become more deeply embedded in the nation's culture and politics than at any time since the beginning of the antislavery crusade and perhaps in our nation's entire history" (Foner 1988).

The Birth of A Nation (then called *The Clansman*) opened in 1915 and was a sensational success, the first Hollywood blockbuster. In the first two years, over 25 million people in the United States saw it. Costing about $100,000 (the equivalent of $2 million in 2007), by 1931 it had returned more than $18 million (some estimates say more than $100 million) (Calney 1993). Made by Hollywood's first great director, D.W. Griffith (1875–1948), the three hour-long melodrama was a pioneering landmark in the history of film technique. It is also perhaps the most evil movie Hollywood ever made.[4]

The film begins with a caption hoping that there will never again be any war, followed by a caption saying, "The bringing of the Africans to America planted the first seed of dis-Union." Next shown are two short scenes, a slave auction, and Abolitionists campaigning to end slavery. The main story then begins, of two white families, one from the North, one from the South, and how their harmony and friendship is torn apart by the Africans and the white people from the North who support their freedom. In the end, North and

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[4] Film reviewer Roger Ebert (2003) says, "*The Birth of a Nation* is not a bad film because it argues for evil. Like Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will*, it is a great film that argues for evil. To understand how it does so is to learn a great deal about film, and even something about evil." Lapper (2007) says, "*The Birth Of A Nation* should never be forgotten. It should be taught in history classes and sociology classes to educate people on the power of racial myth, the power of hatred. It is as important an historical artifact as the Nazi propaganda films of the forties and has enormous historical value. But it should not be taught in film class anymore. It should not be revered. It belongs on no list of great films." An interesting footnote about the clip seen in *Forrest Gump* is that tire tracks are visible on the dirt road. Obviously they do not belong in a Civil War setting; they are Griffith's filmmaking goofs. The whole film can be watched at http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6688165513470959198&q=birth+of+a+nation

South regain their harmony when the blacks are put back into slave-like conditions and their white supporters realize the error of their ways.

The Stonemans from Pennsylvania visit their good friends, the Camerons, in South Carolina before the outbreak of the war. Here they take a walk through cotton fields, where slaves are, well, … slaving, and watch slaves dancing merrily during their dinner break. A caption titled "In the Slave Quarters" notes that the slaves work from six to six with a two-hour dinner break; the implied message must be that their working conditions were really quite reasonable. Romance blossoms between Ben Cameron and Elsie Stoneman, and two young men from the two families become "best pals." A caption says that the Southern states leave the union to protest the "rule of the nation over individual states." In the war, the best pals fight on opposite sides and predictably die next to each other. The assassination of Lincoln ends the first half of the film.[5]

The last half glorifies the Klan for restoring white supremacy to the South. After the war, Congressman Austin Stoneman comes to the South with his mulatto aide, Silas Lynch. In reality, people like Austin were sent by the federal government to enforce the law freeing the slaves and to help them in education, health care and employment. However, as portrayed in the film, Austin uses the Freedmen as tools to humiliate the white Southerners and punish them for supporting the Confederacy. A film caption says that the intention of "carpetbagger" Northern whites like Austin was to "put the white South under the heel of the black South." There are many scenes showing the "outrages" perpetrated against Southern whites. A big strong young black man pushes a frail little old white man for no apparent reason, and black men elected to political office eat fried chicken, drink whiskey, and leer at white women during assembly meetings, where they pass laws like permitting interracial marriage.

The perceived powerlessness of Southern whites leads Ben Cameron to start an organization to restore the white supremacist social order. As a caption quoting President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924, President 1913-1921) explains, "The white men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation, until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku

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[5] In the film, Lincoln inexplicably transforms from the cause of the war into the savior of the South. For the Southerners in the film, Lincoln is "The Great Heart" and "Our Best Friend," sympathetic to the policy of forgiveness towards the South, unlike the evil men who come after him and try to destroy the South. Lincoln's famous words showing that he was prepared to let the Southern states back into the Union gently are inscribed on one wall of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C.: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds."

Klux Klan, a veritable empire of the South, to protect the Southern country."[6]

The Klan rides to the rescue any number of times to beat back the blacks and rescue the whites, including the clip we see in *Forrest Gump.* On Election Day, Klan members prevent black men from voting by pointing their guns at them, and the blacks back off on tip-toe, bug-eyed. (This is surely intended to elicit laughter from the audience.) When Silas tells Austin he wants to marry one of his daughters, Austin is horrified and realizes that his place is with white men after all. The film ends with the weddings of Phil Stoneman with Margaret Cameron and Ben Cameron with Elsie Stoneman, the reunion of divided friends and the birth of a new white nation. The ghost-like image of Jesus hovers above, apparently approving the result.

When it was released, *Birth of A Nation* sparked anti-black riots outside theaters and protests from the NAACP. Its propaganda message also sparked a resurgence of the Klan. "Within ten years of the film's premier, the Ku Klux Klan rose to the height of its power" (Lerner 2006:313). In the early 1920s, the organization may have had as many as 45 million members, 15% of the nation's population. By other estimates, the Klan's active membership was about 1.5 million (Calney 1993). The new Klan was successful in recruiting members in the American Midwest and West, advocating not only white supremacy but also anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration, and anti-communism. Membership dropped by 1930, but the Klan's violence continued for decades.[7]

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[6] In one strange scene, Gus, a "Renegade Negro" --as the title credit calls him, says to Flora Cameron, "I'se a captain now, an' I want to marry." Flora slaps him, runs into the forest, and jumps to her death off a cliff, rather than let Gus … do what? Catch her? Touch her? Make her marry him against her will? Violate her? Why she jumps isn't clear to me, but before she breathes her last, she whispers something to Ben that isn't captioned, and the Klan tracks Gus down and lynches him. Fabe (2004: 37) writes, "Griffith depicts black men who are not faithful Uncle Toms as dangerous, power-hungry rapists who equate political equality with the freedom to sexually possess white women. According to this logic, the violent overthrow of black power by the Klan at the end of the film is morally justified. In fact, the real predators were white males with power over women slaves. By projecting their lawless sexuality onto black men, whom they can then hate, revile, and punish with impunity, white men are able to protect the illusion that they are pure, lawful and restrained. Interestingly in this regard, Gus and Silas Lynch, both lawless men who lust after white women, are played by white actors wearing unconvincing blackface [make-up]. Scratch the black facade and underneath the leering exteriors of the film's prime villains are white men." An "Uncle Tom" was a black man who behaved subserviently to white men. In the film, there are a number of black characters that remain faithful to their masters. The most famous movie of the Civil War, *Gone With the Wind* (1939) features mostly faithful slaves-turned-servants (see Diller 1999).

[7] To give a few examples, in the early 1970s, Klansmen were involved in bombings in Michigan and Boston to protest "busing," the federal government policy where students were sent by bus to schools in order to achieve a certain level of racial integration within a school district. One group, the "United Klans of America," claimed a membership of 33,000 in the South in 1965, but lost members when group leaders were found linked to criminal activity. They were later bankrupted when they were found liable for $7 million in a wrongful-death verdict after a 1981 lynching murder in Alabama. The stories of 1960s Klan murderers who were finally brought to

Forrest says the Klan would wear white sheets "and act like a bunch of …. ghosts or spooks or something." He says that his mother named him Forrest to remind him "that sometimes we all do things that, well, … just don't make no sense." The pauses in Forrest's sentences indicate that he is searching for the right words to say. They suggest that Forrest does know at least a little about what these men really did. Forrest is not saying that he doesn't know that the Klan attacked black people; he is saying he doesn't understand *why* they did. As Byers (1996:428) observes, "Forrest, in his natural goodhearted innocence, would find their real motives incomprehensible."

We can read Forrest's words as "carrying an implicit political critique of the Klan" (Byers 1996:428). As he says these words to the black woman, a representative of Rosa Parks, and, through her, victims of hundreds of years of racial oppression and hatred, they may even be read as an apology of sorts for the violence of Forrest's forebears.[8]

Forrest himself has been the target of name-calling and physical attack, so he understands how it feels to be a victim. Boys throw rocks at young Forrest and taunt him, and again in high school they chase him in their truck, the camera showing a close-up of a Confederate flag bumper sticker. Lieutenant Dan gets angry with Cunning Carla and Long-Limbs Lenore when they ask him, "Is your friend stupid or something?" He says, "Don't you ever call him stupid," and the girls call Dan a number of derogatory terms regarding his own physical disability. Forrest understands what is happening here very well: "He didn't want to be called crippled like I didn't want to be called stupid."[9]

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trial and convicted 30 and 40 years after the events are presented in *Mississippi Burning* (1989), *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1996), and *Mississippi Cold Case* (2007). The name of the group derives from the Greek *kuklos*, meaning circle.

[8] "While not generally regarded as a civil rights film, the immensely popular *Forrest Gump* is nothing if not a retelling of postwar southern history. The film signals its historical designs, in fact, in the first scene, in which a black woman waits for a southern city bus. Although the scene is set in present-day Savannah, the Rosa Parks connotations are unmistakable. As if taking his cues from the scenario, the dimwitted Forrest proceeds to offer up to the woman a virtual apologia for southern racism" (Graham 2001:191). "Forrest's very first audience is an African-American woman (apparently a nurse) whose "feet hurt" and whose presence immediately foregrounds racial difference (her placement at the bus stop, moreover, is likely to have real resonance for anyone familiar with the history of desegregation in the South). …. So Forrest Gump, in other words, is announced as the descendant and namesake of a champion of white supremacy and perpetrator of genocidal violence. Forrest's initial construction, however, as a paragon of whiteness (which is to say, racism) is coded as a false identification insofar as the film (much more unequivocally than the novel) appears to be committed to an antiracist project" (Savran 1998:300-301).

[9] One boy calls, "Look, I'm Forrest Gimp." "Gimp" is an offensive word to refer to a person who limps. "Gump" is itself an obscure word meaning a foolish person. "Gumption" is more positive, meaning "boldness of enterprise; initiative or aggressiveness." Some southern whites call the Confederate flag a symbol of pride and heritage; for others it is a symbol of the history of division and racial hatred. Dan himself earlier called Forrest "an imbecile, a moron who makes a fool of himself on national TV." Dan is in despair over his own physical disability: "I'm nothing but a goddamn cripple; a legless freak. … What am I gonna do now?" Dan's

One of the clear messages of the film is that no one deserves to be victimized, and that all people deserve respect and an equal chance in life. The first thing we hear Mrs. Gump tell her son is, "Don't ever let anybody tell you they're better than you, Forrest. If God wanted everybody to be the same, he'd have given us all braces on our legs." In the context of the themes of this film, "white skin" and "high intelligence" could be substituted for "braces on our legs." Mrs. Gump also insists that Forrest should have "the same opportunities as everybody else." Jenny's repeated victim relationships with men are also presented sympathetically.

We see another message of anti-racism in a story that Forrest tells the woman. Again, he doesn't understand why people are doing what they are doing. "College was very confusing times," he says, introducing this sequence. Forrest is digitally inserted into newsreel film from a well-known event in the civil rights movement, "The Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" of June 11, 1963. This scene is "one of the few instances where the film allows an explicitly political discourse to be heard" (Byers 1996:429).

We see Chet Huntley (1911-1974) reporting on the TV news,

> Federal troops, enforcing a court order, integrated the University of Alabama today. Two Negroes were admitted, but only after Governor George Wallace had carried out his symbolic threat to stand in the schoolhouse door.

Next are a few seconds of newsreel footage of Governor George Wallace (1919–1998, Governor of Alabama 1963-67, 1971-79, and 1983-87) coming out of the schoolhouse to face Federal Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach (b. 1922). Wallace has said, "We hereby denounce and forbid this illegal and unwarranted action by the central government," though we only hear Katzenbach's reply, "Governor Wallace, I take it from that, uh, statement that, uh, you are going to stand in that door…"[10]

A TV reporter (digitally inserted into the scene and not from the original footage) continues,

> Shortly after Governor Wallace had carried out his promise to block the doorway, President Kennedy ordered the Secretary of Defense then to use military force. Here, by videotape, is the encounter by General Graham, commander of the National Guard, and Governor Wallace.

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disability is dealt with sympathetically; there is only one joke about it in the film: when he tells Forrest he wants to try out his "sea legs," and Forrest doesn't understand the expression. Through his business talents and investment acumen, Dan manages to parlay his and Forrest's luck in the hurricane into a sizeable fortune; he eventually finds his self-worth, or, as Forrest puts it, makes "his peace with God."

[10] We cannot hear clearly from this point, but Katzenbach continued, "and that you are not going to carry out the orders of this court, and that you are going to resist us from doing so. I would ask you once again to responsibility step aside and if you do not, I'm going to assure you that the orders of these courts will be enforced."

We see Wallace saying,

> (**This first part is not heard in the film:* We must have no violence today, or any other day,) because these National Guardsmen are here today as federal soldiers for Alabamans, and they live within our borders, and they are all our brothers. We are winning in this fight, because we are awakening the American people to the dangers that we have spoken about so many times, just so evident today, a trend towards military dictatorship in this country.

The digitally inserted reporter says, "And so, at day's end, the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa had been desegregated, and students Jimmy Hood and Vivian Malone had been signed up for summer classes." Newsman Huntley concludes, "Governor Wallace did what he promised to do. By being on the Tuscaloosa campus, he kept the mob from gathering and prevented violence."[11]

The court order refers to a number of court injunctions that forbade the Alabama state government with interfering in the enrollment of black students. However, Wallace had declared that the federal government would have to arrest him before he would allow Hood (b. 1943) and Malone (1942-2005) to enroll (Clark 1993:168). He appointed himself Temporary University Registrar and stood blocking the doorway to the administration building, Foster Auditorium, refusing Katzenbach's requests to step aside four times. President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963, President 1961-1963) then federalized the Alabama National Guard; that is, he took away the Governor's command of the voluntary state militia (as distinct from the federal army).[12] About four hours after the showdown had begun, General Henry V. Graham (1917-1999) of the Alabama National Guard said to Wallace, "Sir, it is my sad duty to ask you to step aside under orders of the President of the United States" (Ingram 2005). Wallace next gave the statement shown in the movie, and left the campus.

Certainly there was a potential for violence that day, and Wallace's presence helped prevent it from erupting. The Ku Klux Klan had staged a rally near the town the night

[11] The last part of Huntley's report is only vaguely heard in the film: "NBC News will present a special program on the Alabama integration story at 7:30 p.m. tonight, standard Eastern Daylight Time. Now a word from Anacin."

[12] Blum (2007) explains that the Insurrection Act of 1807 permitted the President "to call the militia into Federal service to suppress insurrections and to enforce the law, including when State authorities were unable or unwilling to secure the Constitutional rights of their citizens." Not shown in the movie is Wallace's claim in the school doorway of "the right of state authority in the operation of the public schools, colleges and Universities" (Wallace 1963). Wallace's states' rights claim is similar to that of the Confederate States: it allows the speakers to present themselves in an offended yet dignified pose, disguising their deprivation of other people's rights under the cloak of defending their own rights. If Kennedy had used the federal army to enforce the law, it would have supported Wallace's claims of states' rights being trampled, and probably would have created more sympathy for Wallace. As the National Guardsmen lived "within our borders," in Alabama, Wallace was able to save face by saying that local people shouldn't fight against other local people, but that the fight would continue another day.

before, and one student in the film says he is not happy about the black students. He tells Forrest, “Coons are trying to get in school.” Forrest perhaps doesn’t know the derogatory meaning of this word, or perhaps he just confuses two meanings. He seems to understand when the student uses another racist and inflammatory word, “Not raccoons, you idiot. Niggas.” Hanbery (n.d) describes the how students, teachers, and administrators on campus prepared for the worst that day:

> We took out all of the bottled soft drink machines all over campus, picked up rocks and every piece of wood. There was nothing bigger than a toothpick you could find to throw. … I think Wallace assumed Katzenbach would take the students back off campus, and then he viewed that they would have to have federal force to bring them back in. And so that would make the federal government the aggressor against the state. But when they were turned away by Wallace, we took them to their residence hall rooms. The inside of the campus, with the residence halls, was under control of the federal marshals. Now if Wallace was going to do anything, he would have to be the invader of the campus.

While most of the people watching didn’t know if this scene would end peacefully or violently, apparently Kennedy and Wallace had largely agreed in advance what would happen (Elliott 2003). A reporter (McGhee 2005) writes of his conversation with James Hood:

> [Hood] said the agreement between the White House and Wallace’s aides provided that Wallace would step aside. They [Hood and Malone] had already enrolled quietly at the federal courthouse in Birmingham, and all they had to do was pay their fees and leave, he said. He recalled talking to President Kennedy on the telephone. “We knew it was going to be historic but we had no idea what the impact would be,” he said.

That evening, President Kennedy gave a speech broadcast live by all television networks across the country:

> Good evening my fellow citizens. This afternoon, following a series of threats and defiant statements, the presence of Alabama National Guardsmen was required on the University of Alabama to carry out the final and unequivocal order of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Alabama. That order called for the admission of two clearly qualified young Alabama residents who happened to have been born Negro. That they were admitted peacefully on the campus is due in good measure to the conduct of the students of the University of Alabama, who met their responsibilities in a constructive way. ... We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. … One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free. … Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act, to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century, to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law. ... (Kennedy 1963).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, following Kennedy’s proposal, annulled state laws that segregated public places like hotels, restaurants, theaters, and retail stores. A Civil Rights Act had been enacted in 1957; the first civil rights legislation in 82 years, but it was limited to voting rights and largely ineffective in bringing more black people to the polls. In 1954, the

U.S. Supreme Court in the case of "Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka" had ruled that segregated public schools by their very nature were unequal, and thus violated the Constitution. There was much resistance and some schools were closed rather than be forced to integrate. In 1965, 94% of southern black children were still enrolled in segregated schools (Wicker 2001:113).

The civil rights movement had been growing for years by now, often meeting violent opposition. Marchers, including children, protesting segregated facilities were attacked by police dogs and knocked against walls by high-pressured water hoses in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. Three months after the schoolhouse stance, a bomb planted by Klansmen in a Birmingham church killed four young women. In the age of television news, these and other scenes of racial hatred appalled good people across the nation and around the world.

> In 1965, six hundred predominantly black civil rights activists [including Martin Luther King, Jr.] set out from Selma [Alabama] to the state capital in Montgomery, fifty miles away, to make voter registration a national issue. Wallace issued an order to stop the march. When the marchers arrived at the Edmund Pettus Bridge at the edge of Montgomery, they found state troopers waiting with sticks, bullwhips, and tear gas. The beatings that followed were seen on television by a horrified national audience. Within days, President Johnson asked Congress to pass the most comprehensive voting rights bill in the nation's history (Riechers 2000).
>
> Combined with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act set in motion a dramatic change in the political landscape of the United States by ensuring that all eligible Americans, regardless of race or color, could cast their votes and have those votes counted" (Lerner 2006: 345).

"Within three years, black voter registration in Mississippi, the most repressive southern state, increased from 6 percent to 44 percent" (Wicker 2001:101). In 1965, there were fewer than 100 black citizens elected to public office in the United States; twenty-five years later there were more than 7,200. It is ironic that segregationist Wallace can be credited with helping push two Presidents to strengthen civil rights laws.[13]

As a consequence of his stand at the schoolhouse door, Wallace became well known throughout the nation, and he was ambitious. Ingram (2005) observes, "While the 'stand in the door' was a charade, it served Wallace's purposes well. On that day he ceased to be just another Southern governor who opposed segregation; he became the national symbol of that

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[13] "Although he courted black votes in 1960, Kennedy did not endorse equal rights and civil right legislation until the year before his term and life were cut short" (Bond 2001:14). Lyndon Johnson (1908–1973, President 1963–1969) was in the 1950s also not a clear supporter of equal rights. However, by the time he became President, Texan Johnson "wanted to be remade from Southerner to Westerner to American; a figure conscious that history would be his judge; a bighearted man more sensitive to appeals for racial justice than any president before or after him" (Bond 2001:14).

resistance."

> Even as the violent events were taking place in his home state, he saw an opening on the national scene with his anti big-government, pro law-and-order message. He presented himself as the outsider and tapped into working-class feelings of being left out by a government concerned only with the rights of minorities. … Wallace entered the 1964 Democratic primaries in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Maryland, and with little campaigning took over one third of the overall vote. … [In 1968,] the country was in turmoil on the heels of the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., riots in major cities, antiwar marches and sit-ins. The explosive atmosphere put Wallace in a prime position with his law-and-order message, his opposition to the civil rights acts passed by Congress, and the Supreme Court's decisions on school prayer, integration, and later, on abortion. By October of 1968, 22 percent of American voters supported George Wallace for president. In the general election he won five states with ten million people casting their votes for him … But Wallace never did become president, despite additional attempts in 1972 and 1976. [In the 1972 campaign,] just as Wallace was gaining momentum (he had won the Florida primary and posted strong seconds in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania), he was shot by the mentally unstable Arthur Bremer during a campaign stop in Laurel, Maryland. …Wallace ran again in 1976, this time from his wheelchair. With his health a major factor among voters, he did not fare well. (Riechers 2000)

Before he was Governor, Wallace as a judge in the 1950s often ruled in favor of black plaintiffs and demanded that they be treated with respect. But to win election as Governor, Wallace decided to "play the race card," to pander to the racial fears and hatreds of the white voters. In 1963, he delivered his most notorious rabble-rousing slogan, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." In later life, Wallace regretted his behavior. He called civil rights leader John Lewis, who had been beaten by state police on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. "He literally poured out his soul and heart to me. It was almost a confession," said Lewis (Riechers 2000). In 1979 he apologized to the congregation in Dr. King's former church:

> I have learned what suffering means. In a way that was impossible [before being shot and crippled], I think I can understand something of the pain black people have come to endure. I know I contributed to that pain, and I can only ask your forgiveness. (McCarthy 1995)

Running for governor again in 1982, Wallace won with 60 percent of the total vote and over 90 percent of the black vote. In October 1996, Vivian Malone received the first Lurleen B. Wallace Award of Courage from the George Wallace Family Foundation. At the ceremony, Wallace said, "Vivian Malone Jones was at the center of the fight over states' rights and conducted herself with grace, strength and, above all, courage. She deserves to be rewarded for her actions in that air of uncertainty."[14]

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[14] Mrs. Jones said that in a private meeting before the award ceremony, "[Wallace] said he felt that it was wrong, that it shouldn't have happened. He said he felt the state of Alabama is better now than it was then as a result of what has happened through the integration and the desegregation of the schools here" (Jet 1996). "I asked him why did he do it," she said. "He said he did what he felt needed to be done at that point in time, but he would not do that today. At that point, we spoke -- I spoke -- of forgiveness" (Holley 2005). In 2007, the Alabama

In the movie, Forrest is digitally inserted between Wallace and Graham, looking at them intently, trying to understand what they are talking about. (A security guard is also blue-screened into the scene, looking at Forrest.) When he notices that Vivian Malone has dropped a book (digitally added to the historical footage), he runs to pick it up, and runs after her, calling, "Ma'am, you dropped your book. Ma'am!" He gives a little wave to the crowd and the camera, and runs after her into the schoolhouse. Forrest's football coaches are surprised to see him on the TV news apparently supporting the struggle for racial equality. However, doing that would require a conscious understanding of what is happening, so the coaches can't believe it was really Forrest. Giunti (1996) notes that what Forrest did "is certainly an act of kindness, but hardly an act of moral courage."[15] The main reason for this scene in the film is, I believe, to provide the viewers the pleasure of seeing Forrest surrealistically interact with yet another well-known scene of American history. Some viewers may laugh at Forrest's lack of understanding about what is happening. There is also a message delivered here, that Forrest is bigoted towards none and polite to all, and that that is an admirable way to behave.

Finishing this story, Forrest says, "A few years later, that angry little man at the schoolhouse door thought it'd be a good idea and ran for President. But somebody thought that it wasn't." Forrest, in referring to Wallace as "that angry little man," seems to be giving a political opinion, as he did about the Ku Klux Klan. We see a newsreel clip of Wallace being shot, and Forrest comments, "But he didn't die." Wallace was paralyzed in both legs as a result of the shooting. Forrest remembers this event well; perhaps because Wallace was Governor of his state for a long time (his wife Lurleen was also Governor), and because it resulted in Wallace having a disability a little like his own when he was young. The woman on the bench leaves, saying, "My bus is here." Forrest politely says, "It was nice talking to you," though the woman has barely said anything.[16]

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legislature passed, and the Governor signed, a resolution expressing "profound regret" over slavery and its lingering impact. The bill was signed in the Alabama state house that served as the first Capital of the Confederate States of America. Gary Sinise, Lieutenant Dan in *Forrest Gump*, played Wallace in the TV movie, *George Wallace* (1997).

[15] Hood and Malone walked through the schoolhouse door to "a spattering of applause" (Clark 1993:231). The people applauding showed moral courage.

[16] Boyle (2001) argues that because the black woman "chooses not to participate in the telling" of these stories, her "failure to offer analyses or interpretations to challenge Forrest's perspective thus strengthens the legitimacy of his tale." Boyle suggests her experience of racism would be quite different from Forrest's. This scene was filmed in Chippewa Square, in Savannah, Georgia. The statue in the background is of General Oglethorpe, founder of the Colony of Georgia (Manual n.d.:53). From its founding in 1732 until 1750, slavery was illegal in Georgia.

There are several more scenes that show Forrest interacting with black people. After his improbable graduation from college, Forrest joins the Army.[17] The year is about 1965 and he is in an integrated unit. The Drill Sergeant, a black man, yells in his face. This would have been unthinkable and impossible not many years earlier. President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972, President 1945-1953) banned racial segregation in the American armed forces in 1948. At the start of the Korean Conflict (1950-1953), the Army was still resisting the order. Most African American soldiers served in segregated support units in the rear, and a smaller number in segregated combat units. As the white units were being decimated as the war continued bloodily, they began accepting black replacements. The Army thus became integrated without much controversy.

As Forrest looks around at the men in his platoon, of whom a large number are black men, he says, "I don't know much about anything, but I think some of America's best young men served in this war."[18] Bubba becomes his "best good friend," and Bubba remarks on their good relationship, "we be watching out for one another, like brothers and stuff." Forrest runs repeatedly into the battle zone to try and rescue Bubba. Lavery (1997:21) remarks on this "Southern-stereotype-defying friendship with an African-American."

The movie one more time presents a rather long political speech, referring again to black rights, and to the Vietnam Conflict.[19] Jenny brings Forrest to a Black Panther Party headquarters during the anti-war rally in Washington of October 21, 1967. Posters of radical revolutionaries like Eldridge Cleaver (1935–1998) and Che Guevara (1928–1967) adorn the walls. One placard reads, "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger." Masai pats Forrest down, checking for concealed weapons, and says,

> Let me tell you about us. Our purpose here is to protect our black leaders from the racial onslaught of the pig who wishes to brutalize our black leaders, rape our women,

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[17] Forrest in the novel has to leave college after one year because he cannot pass enough courses. He does, however, take a course on "The Idiot in Literature" and has a talent for mathematics. That the Drill Sergeant considers Forrest to be a "genius" and "gifted," and will surely be "a General someday" makes fun of the Army more than it does of Forrest.

[18] 22% of the American soldiers in Vietnam were black, while blacks made up only 11% of the total population. The discrepancy was most certainly due to economic reasons. Forrest's comment seems to be a "healing" comment about the American soldiers, who were called "baby killers" by people like Jenny's boyfriend, and, on their return to the USA, were not hailed as heroes but were neglected, ignored, and sometimes even despised. Lugg (1999:7) says, "By the late 1960s, the U. S. military deliberately recruited men with sub-normal IQs, some as low as 62, for the Southeast Asian meat grinder. Hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with warfare and despised by their comrades-in-arms, most of these men were quickly slaughtered."

[19] Because the U.S. Congress never declared war, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Conflict were not officially "wars," but "police actions." Official declarations of war would likely have resulted in China and the USSR also becoming more openly involved. Direct American combat in Vietnam was circa 1961-1973, though the Vietnamese people are still today affected by damage like genetic birth defects caused by defoliants.

> and destroy our black communities. We are here to offer protection and help for all those who need our help, because we, the Black Panthers, are against the war in Vietnam. We are against any war where black soldiers are sent to the front line to die for a country that hates them. We are against any war where black soldiers go to fight and come to be brutalized and killed in their own communities as they sleep in their beds at night. We are against all these racist and imperialist dog acts.

The Black Panther Party, most active between 1966 and 1972 and often in the news headlines, combined elements of Black Nationalism and socialist revolutionary class struggle. Panther members were involved in deadly shoot-outs with police a number of times; two were shot asleep in their beds in Chicago. Most of these events happened over the next few years; the movie is obviously conflating history.[20] Forrest cannot follow Masai's rhetoric; besides, his attention is on Jenny as her boyfriend hits her. Byers (1996: 431) contends, "In context, we are no more to understand him than Forrest does. Rather, his speech is simply aggressive, irritating, half-heard background noise." The speech nonetheless does appear to summarize the feelings of black people who have abandoned non-violent protest to fight racial oppression. Quite ironically, given their reputation for endorsing the use of violence, it is the Panthers who tell the usually placid Forrest to leave. He apologizes for having "a fight in the middle of your Black Panther party," confusing two meanings of "party."

In Bayou La Batre, Forrest pays sincere respects to Bubba at his grave and sings in a black gospel church.[21] He gives "Bubba's share" of his financial fortune to Bubba's mother, and we see that she doesn't have to work for white people anymore and like her ancestors did; rather, white people work for her. He also gives "a whole bunch" of money to the church and the local hospital.

In many of these scenes with black people, Forrest seems to be a kind of healer of historic wounds. Kellman (1996:114) says, "*Forrest Gump* expunges the stigma of racism from the image of the South." Chumo (1995:3) writes, "Gump carries in his very name America's racist history, and, by making him the redeemer of the nation, the film suggests that

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[20] "Pig" was a derogatory term referring to the police and other authority figures. "Imperialist running dog" was a standard Marxist insult to supporters of the capitalist economic system.

[21] Forrest goes to a church to pray for shrimp, as Lt. Dan cynically suggests. The humor in this scene is that white Forrest cannot sway his body and sing out like the other (black) choir members. It is also perhaps funny that he is the only white face in the choir, but that is more ironic than comical. "Most faiths promote the equality and fraternity of all believers as a central tenet. Yet in practice religious congregations are among the most segregated of institutions (Polis Center 1999). Slaves attended church services with their owners, but had to sit in the balcony. "Slaves were prohibited from forming their own congregations, for fear that they would plot rebellion if allowed to meet on their own" (Edsitement 2002). Savran (1998:302) remarks, "His lone white face in the choir is both the film's way with a visual joke and the sign of Forrest's taking up a black positionality within the narrative --the sign of his exclusion, his difference, his victimization in relation to white Southern society (this identification is also set up earlier in the film when, as he is being pursued by bullies, the camera zooms in on the Confederate flag license plate on their truck)."

America itself, with the same racist roots, can transcend the ugly aspects of its past." Graham (2001:193) suggests that when Jenny reassures Forrest that their son is "very smart, one of the smartest in his class, the legacy of Nathan Bedford Forrest, even, in fact, the very notion of inheritance, magically dissolves. The birth of a shining, intelligent, new Forrest signifies in no uncertain terms the birth of a culturally cleansed South." We also notice that their son was conceived on July 4, 1976, the 200th anniversary of the founding of the U.S.A. and the Declaration of Independence, which famously stated that "all men are created equal."

Some film reviewers see Forrest performing as a healer in an even wider range, as Forrest can also be seen to reconcile other American traumas; in particular, the antagonism between people who supported waging war in Vietnam and those opposed to it.[22] Forrest's own words seem to reveal this message of making peace with terrible events: "Mama always said, 'You've got to put the past behind you before you can move on.'"

The movie ends as the feather drops unnoticed out of Forrest's book and floats away. It has spent only a year or two in Forrest's book, but during the length of the film we have seen much of his life and many events in American history. Forrest is again sitting and staring rather vacantly. This time, we are aware of the sadness in his eyes, and we know something about why he feels that way. He is sad that people he loved and who loved him have died, and he is sad that he doesn't understand a lot of the things, many of them violent and hateful, that have happened around him and to him. In this way, Forrest embodies aspects of the human condition; he is an American Everyman.[23]

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[22] Forrest in military uniform and medals embraces Jenny the counter-culture flower child in the pool in front of the Washington Monument, suggesting "a national baptism" (Chumo 1995:5). Vietnam veteran Lieutenant Dan introduces his Asian fiancée, "a reconciliation with Vietnam, a union of East and West," and Jenny gives Dan a kiss on the cheek, "as if national conflicts are being resolved" (Chumo 1995:6). Boyle (2001), however, protests that this view "evades the actual damage done by American troops and thorny questions about the experiences of disabled veterans in a disabling society." Other reviewers also see the film condemning "loud and pushy" war protestors while praising the military. Byers (1996:435) notes, "There is something Orwellian about this notion that the war is waged by peaceful boys, while the peace movement is like being in the army." Forrest dropping his pants and mooning President Johnson, who has just called for escalating the war, seems like a blatant political comment by the filmmakers, if not Forrest. Despite whatever messages about healing may be read in *Forrest Gump,* the cultural battle over the significance and legacy of the events of the 1960s has not yet been resolved in the mind of America (see, for example, Perlstein 1996), and racial discrimination is not yet completely in the past. It is interesting that while film seems to portray Forrest as a healer, it also mocks this perception. In his runs across America, Forrest is taken as a holy man by his followers, as someone "who's got it all figured out" and "who has the answer," but in the end he leaves them high and dry. Forrest can also be seen as a representative of a new kind of man (see Byers 1996:431), who would never behave as badly as some of the men before him did, including his own father, Jenny's father, the elementary school principal, Klan members, Governor Wallace, and Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

[23] There is surely no final interpretation on Forrest's life and stories. Scott (2001:9) provides this summary of the meaning of the film: "Straightforwardly, this is a feel-good message of hope and good will, but this film begs

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to be read ironically, satirically, and allegorically, as well as straightforwardly; it begs to be seen as postmodernism, as deconstructing itself and the very myths that it depends upon for its own success. Thus the target of the satire is also the audience of the film, and the interpretation that the film calls for brings into question and under fire the interpreters themselves. This dilemma of *Forrest Gump* is the dilemma of postmodernism more generally, with artifact and audience alike implicated in creation and critique. It is an uncomfortable, edgy position for both parties, because while it fuels apologies, criticisms, and dismissals alike of postmodernism, it also supplies much of the creative energy for the art of the end of the millennium."

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