



Motion Picture Biographies: The Hollywood Spin on Historical Figures

John Cones

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Hollywood movies are famous for promoting negative stereotypes of all kinds, especially against minorities, women, Southerners, and Christians. To what extent are biographical films selected for production according to certain biases, conscious or unconscious, among the Hollywood elite?

An expert on the U.S. film industry gives readers brief synopses of Hollywood biopics produced and/ or released from 1912 through 1994. This survey provides the basis for discussion and analysis.

Tracking these one-sided depictions over a longer period of time, the patterns of bias - and the source of the problem - become more clear. The problem appears to be that most of the people who have green-light authority in the U.S. film industry - for either the production and/or distribution of a motion picture - share a common ethnic/religious/cultural background. Thus, the stories of their own cohort and those of all other ethnic, religious and/or cultural groups (whose members seldom achieve positions of power in Hollywood) are being filtered through the cultural sensibilities of a single group.

John Cones suggests that the solution could lie in increasing diversity at the highest levels in the U.S. film industry.



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