



## ***THE BUTLER***

This film, directed by Lee Daniels, is a historical drama inspired by a true story. The protagonist, Cecil Gaines (Forest Whitaker), is an African-American man who works as a butler in the White House.

Cecil is born in 1919 on a cotton plantation in Georgia. When he turns eighteen, he leaves to avoid the same fate as his father, Earl, who was murdered by the plantation owner for trying to defend Cecil's mother, Hattie, from his abuse. Cecil meets Maynard (Clarence Williams III), a shop clerk who helps him professionally. Owing to Cecil's dedication, he is eventually promoted to a butler's position in the White House, where he meets Gloria (Oprah Winfrey), a maid whom he marries. They have two sons, Louis (David Oyelowo) and Charlie (Elijah Kelley). As the boys grow up, they follow very different paths.

The plot covers not only the Gaines family's experiences, but also Cecil's employment in the White House over several decades, providing insight into the stance that the various presidents he serves, from Eisenhower to Reagan, take on civil rights.

Similarly, the film also alludes to various groups and leaders of the civil rights movement, including James Lawson, Martin Luther King Jr. (Nelsan Ellis), the Black Panthers, and Malcolm X. Interestingly, at one point Martin Luther King Jr. mentions to Louis that, although we perceive the butler as subservient, in many ways he is unwittingly subversive.

*The Butler* portrays relevant aspects of the social and political situation in the United States in recent decades. Fictional images of protests and riots are used in combination with archival footage to show events such as the Ku Klux Klan attack on a freedom bus or the Selma voting rights movement.

It is worth mentioning that Whitaker, Winfrey and Oyelowo deliver outstanding performances, while the star-studded cast also includes well-known artists and actors such as Cuba Gooding Jr., Lenny Kravitz, Mariah Carey, Robin Williams and Jane Fonda, among others.

Daniels' film succeeds in making visible the effects of racial oppression on all generations of a family. This thought-provoking film, released in 2013, is still relevant today, as many of the issues it highlights remain unresolved.

All in all, it is well worth watching. Why not borrow the DVD from the library?