

Mini Project #1: *The Blind Side* Movie
Julie Paluch

The Blind Side was the movie I choose to help me better understand the culture of an orphaned, uneducated, African American male who is recognized for his potential on the football field. As I watched the movie, I began to question how my identity, beliefs, and values of an educated, middle class, white woman differ from Michael Oher's identity, beliefs, and values. In this paper, I take a deeper look into the life changing events that shaped Michael into who he has become, as well as pointing out ways in which my upbringing differs from Michael's.

Michael Oher grew up in a poverty stricken area of the inner city of Memphis and was raised under the influence of a mother addicted to crack. This upbringing is very much different than mine in terms of environment and family structure. I was raised in a loyal and compassionate family that supported me academically, physically, and spiritually. For Michael, the idea of family support was a far cry from mine. Due to the lack of family support in his situation, Michael's identity of himself and the values he once dreamed of having had been tainted and changed forever. He quickly realized that his responsibility in life became a matter of survival within this crazy, mixed up world that we live in.

His tainted view on life not only portrayed poverty but he also began to feel anger and resentful feelings building up inside of him. He was now faced with the challenge of survival for his own basic needs, attempting to create a name for himself, and fulfilling his dreams at becoming the next star athlete. Fortunately, Michael had been saved from his hardships as the Tuohy family

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adopted him into their Christian family. Little did Michael know that his identity, beliefs, and values would change for the better.

When comparing my family to the Tuohys, I see similarities in terms of values and beliefs. Both sets of parents held a Christian point of view in how they lived their lives and based their decisions. The parents within each of these families took the roles and responsibilities of Christian parenting very seriously, whereas Michael's mom did not quite understand her role as a parent. Growing up, Michael was not spoken to with the reassurance that no matter where you are in life, God is there right beside you, seeing you through life's challenges. As I think about this reassurance that I was given on a regular basis and the sense of security that was built on the reassurance, I wonder if Michael's outlook in life would have been different had he received those particular words on a regular basis as well.

Within my upbringing, there wasn't a day that went by in which I questioned whether there would be a meal on the table for me to eat, or some sort of roof over my head. This was a sense of comfort and security that I grew up with and desire to have for my future family. On the other hand, Michael longed to have this sense of comfort and security with his mother, but was not fulfilled of his desires until the Touhys came along. It was from that point on in Michael's life that he began to fully understand the concept of wealth, in terms of resources, possessions, and love.

As Michael became more aware of his potential within society and the various cultural dynamics that shaped him, he not only gained a sense of trust

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and satisfaction within the Touhy household, but also within the White culture.

Michael no longer had to be concerned about the typical stereotypes of the African American culture, such as, where his next meal would come from, or when and where he would be able to take his next hot shower. Michael was able to set those stereotypes aside and focus on his new future within the Touhy household that he grew to appreciate.

In Michael's case, it wasn't the fame and fortune that brought him to be a successful NFL player, it was the consistent love and compassion that was shown to him from the Touhy family that made him aware of his value and potential in life. My prayer is that more people within the White culture, myself included, can set aside their differences and take on the challenge of helping and assisting the less fortunate people that cross our paths each day. I think there are more families, like the Touhys, who are capable of giving someone the fighting chance to survive.