

Go See Lee Daniel's The Butler

By John Raye

Unless you have been living under a rock, you've heard about Lee Daniel's *The Butler*, right? Well, here is my short response; go see it!

Based loosely on a true story, *The Butler* will touch your head as well as your heart as it chronicles the life of Black people in America as told through the eyes of one Eugene Allen (named Cecil Gaines in the movie) who stayed on the job for 34 years serving under eight presidents.

As he was instructed on his first day on the job, "you see nothing, you hear nothing, you just serve". In other words, keep your mouth shut and you keep your job!

Unlike the recent scandal in Rome where the Pope's trusted butler stole and leaked some of his most confidential and private papers, this black White House butler took whatever he heard and saw to the graveyard.

In the 34 years he labored there, from the days of strict legal segregation to post-integration days, Allen saw and heard plenty, but true to his word, kept his lips sealed with a lock that had no key.

Unlike the Pope's trusted butler who went public with what he knew, Allen, despite being offered millions to write a tell-all, walked the walk, but would not talk the talk. He could have made a boatload of money because he saw and heard stuff that most people will never read or hear, not even in the history books.

But this humble butler, forced to turn his cheeks time and time again, never wavered from the advice given to him to, "see nothing... you hear nothing." Two years ago, at age 90, he surrendered his life on this earth and took his White House secrets to his grave.

Though fact is tangled up with fiction, as is the case with most movies, this movie packs a punch as the real McCoy. The reality of Black life in pre and post-segregated America shines through as bright as a full moon on a cool summer night.

It is a wonder, an absolute wonder, that all Black people in America are not certified hopelessly insane. America just didn't abuse and mistreat our physical bodies, but it did something even more evil and sinister. It took away our dignity. It tampered with our minds and nearly destroyed our spirit. When you consider the hellacious mental whipping we endured, all of us ought to be crazy.

What America did and continues to do to its Black citizens, amounts to nothing less than high crimes against humanity.

And how Allen, the real White House butler, for example, maintained his sense of balance and good judgment while working in the harsh climate of racial segregation, surpasses all human understanding. *He had to be a special man, created, much like a Jackie Robinson or Martin Luther King, for a special occasion, and a special season.*

The Butler is a movie with plenty of star power, headed, of course, by queen Oprah Winfrey and the redoubtable, Forest Whitaker, whose tormented portrayed of Allen, will make your flesh crawl. An Oscar nod for such a riveting performance would not be worthy of the message he brings to this nation, and really to the world. Instead of an Oscar, Forest Whitaker ought to be awarded a Nobel Prize for human suffering and deprivation. The Queen ought to knight him; the Pope ought to saint him, and Black folk ought to thank him for telling a story, and a true story, mind you, that has never fully been told.

If truthfully, accurately, and fully told, the Black man's sojourn in America would make the birds stop singing, the oceans dry up and even the rocks would cry out.

The move is rich in symbolic texture, in that, most Black people are able to relate to every scene because reality always touches a nerve. Whitaker's face carries an invisible pain that we will instantly recognize, but more importantly, can still feel because, lord knows, it still hurts.

Here and there, some scenes will put tears in your eyes and a frog or two in your throat, while others will make you laugh through the pain. No matter what the critic's say, when you walk out of that movie, you will know, beyond question that most Black people have been to hell and back, more than one time.

Thus, the psychic damage is unknown and incalculable. Even today, Willie Lynch is still messing with us.

Still, we have survived, and survived with huge, magnificent accomplishments, and a measure of human dignity, all still intact.

And yes, the freedom struggle has been long and difficult. But like a tree planted by the water, we cannot be removed. We cannot be stopped. We cannot be, and will not be denied. Like the proverbial willow tree blowing in the wind, we were beaten and bent--but did not break.

Lee Daniel's *The Butlers*, shows you how we did it.

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Back to Healthy School Meals: USDA Congratulates Six States for Nearly 100% of Schools Meeting New Meal Standards

By Dr. Janey Thornton, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Deputy Under Secretary

As we continue to combat childhood obesity in America, I am proud to say that this Back to School season our school cafeterias are at the heart of offering great nutrition for our kids. Students and schools are embracing the healthier lunches offered through the National School Lunch Program that, together with the healthier breakfasts offered through the School Breakfast Program beginning this school year and the recently announced "Smart Snacks in School" nutrition standards that kick in next year, continue our children on the path towards future health and happiness.

So how are school cafeterias faring with all the meal updates across the nation? Like I said, they are putting their hearts into it.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Florida, Montana, Oklahoma, North Carolina, South Carolina and Colorado, where all or nearly all school cafeterias are now serving meals that meet the new standards. Kudos to them!

In fact, at the end of this past school year, 79 percent of all participating school districts across the country had notified their states that they were meeting the new standards! This represents a significant achievement for the first year of implementation. We are confident that the remaining schools will make the changes needed to qualify for the

performance based reimbursement in the coming year.

In Colorado, for example, Jane Brand, Director of the Office of Nutrition at the Colorado Department of Education, tried several innovative approaches to become the first state to complete certification and validation of all schools. Initially, the Colorado staff mailed jump drives with all the paperwork and instructions to each school district. Some schools were better than others at mastering the system and utilized the jump drives. For the rest, Brand and her staff hit the road and met face to face with dozens of districts small and large across Colorado. The hands-on approach worked to relieve the stress many districts felt in getting through the process. Brand also cross-trained her staff and encouraged school districts to share ideas and information on how to master the process.

The best news is that changes in schools are expected to have a positive impact. Research shows that school-based programs that encourage healthy eating, physical activity and positive body image attitudes are among a range of actions that can help reduce levels of childhood obesity. We are already seeing a promising reversal in childhood obesity rates, and this fall, with a return to healthy eating in schools, I expect nothing less than more progress.

- See more at: <http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/08/16/back-to-healthy-school-meals-usda-congratulates-six-states-for-nearly-100-of-schools-meeting-new-meal-standards/#sthash.QwWxQ3sc.dpuf>

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