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Children of Men

Children of Men explores many different themes of social, political, and cultural interactions. The movie expresses social criticism of immigration policies in first-world countries and the importance of fertility and family structures. Additionally, *Children of Men* demonstrates social stratification and the complex dynamics of intersectionality and power. This dystopian thriller observes social, political, and economic structures in a disastrous, infertile world.

First, fertility plays an important role in social and family structures worldwide. Lineage, descent groups, and consanguineal relationships provide stability, predictability, and continuity for humanity. Hegemonic ideas around childbirth contribute to society's perception of personal purpose, marriage, and relationships. *Children of Men* analyzes a world with infertility, where a lack of agency and familial ties has created mayhem. Considering how the continuation of life is relative to all cultures, a world without children is devastating. This film displays the importance of reproduction and how it coincides with love, bonds, and overarching happiness. In general, children are valued as gifts and are deeply cherished. The discontinuation of humankind in this dystopian world exuberates a lack of purpose and a surplus of despair. The opening scene exemplifies this perfectly, as Theo witnesses a national news broadcast about the youngest person alive, an 18-year-old boy, being killed. The reaction to his death is enormous, evoking fear, sadness, and hopelessness. The way that the aging population clung to the boys' youth symbolizes their desire to preserve children and the continuation of humanity. Additionally, the importance of fertility is presented at the end of the movie amidst the crossfire of war. As the soldiers on both sides notice the first child born in 18 years, they briefly halt their attacks to observe.

Another important aspect of the movie is intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to how a person's identity is impacted due to the overlapping of race, gender, social groups, and class. Intersectionality has a strong relationship with privilege and power and is exemplified strongly throughout *Children of Men* by the character Kee. When Kee is introduced in the film, it is evident that she is a part of several different minority groups. Immediately, the audience sees that she is a pregnant woman, who is black. More specifically, she is the first person in 18 years to be fertile on the entire planet. Her status as the only pregnant woman on Earth makes her incredibly valuable to the members of the rebel organizations, the U.K. government, and the entire human race. Additionally, Kee is marginalized as an immigrant. Her skin color and gender, combined with her immigration status, leave her constantly under mass scrutiny. Kee risks the possibility of being killed with every move she makes. Her character creates apparent irony through the possibility of being the savior of humanity as she is incredibly marginalized and put at many intersectional disadvantages.

Furthermore, Kee is simultaneously representing aspects of religion and faith throughout *Children of Men*. When her character is first introduced, Theo meets her in a barn. Surrounded by cows and hay, a classical instrumental plays in the background as Theo notices her pregnant belly. This scene, while powerfully symbolizing hope for life on Earth, is also representative of Jesus and his nativity scene. Kee, in this instance, embodies the likeness of the biblical Virgin Mary. Many Christian followers have colonially ingrained the image of Mary as a white woman. Black people are continuously marginalized in society and have been historically as well. The intersectionality of Kee's race and gender shifts structural power. No longer is the life of a white male more precious than the life of a black female and her child. Furthermore, when Kee's baby

is finally born, it is quickly assumed to be a boy. The gender is revealed to be a girl, contributing even more to the shift in racial and gendered power.

Immigration plays a critical role in the political and social atmosphere of the film. Immigration policies and processes are often debated here in the United States, as activists and lobbyists alike engage in constant conversation about reform. Immigration detention camps are set up by the government and hold immigrants while officials examine their papers. Detention centers are sterile, strict, and uncomfortable. The facilities are an extension of the U.S. prison system, with many immigrants having assigned living locations, minimal personal items or rights, and being held for an unfairly long amount of time. While enforcing many anti-egalitarian beliefs, more often than not, detention centers are overused and forceful.

In *Children of Men*, infertility paired with the destruction of government causes mass immigration to London. An imagined community in the U.K. that possesses security and stability leads to many world citizens seeking refuge. Unfortunately, this imagined version of London proves to be unrealistic and incredibly xenophobic.. In *Children of Men*, immigrants are shown locked up in cages while heavily armed police officers patrol the streets. Immigrants are depicted begging for entry into the country, while government officials violently refuse to listen or show hospitality. Moreover, immigration laws are incredibly strict throughout the film. A large aspect of the plot centers around the protagonists being chased as law enforcement attempts to round up immigrants who have crossed borders.

Lastly, social stratification is incredibly prevalent throughout *Children of Men*. With the U.K. having the only standing government, a very clear hierarchical structure is formed between the people in control and those who are not. Inequality is demonstrated through the unequal distribution of resources, power, and privilege in this dystopian world. The authority/ legitimacy

of the state pressures individuals to accept their government's leadership. The Fishes and other 'terrorist groups' who challenge authority contribute to the global crisis. The U.K. government uses discipline and force to assert superiority over their citizens and immigrants. Given the large divide in wealth and power, it is not surprising that mass anti-government associations seek reform and representation. Evidence of inequality is displayed when Theo visits his family in their upper-class gated community. Conspicuous consumption and public displays of wealth are prevalent in the exhibition of his cousin's social class, power, and status. Viewers are exposed to the luxurious ways of living and storing surplus that the rich enjoy while the general public struggles.

Children of Men is a powerful film that portrays how different elements of society function. Using immigration policies, social stratification, and anti-government associations, this movie serves as a warning for future generations. While displaying what could happen if the world were to be faced with a fertility crisis, *Children of Men* uses Kee and the intersectionality of her identity as a figure for hope and social reform. Overall, this movie strongly critiques society and capitalist colonial power.