

## Have you seen Django Unchained yet?

Written by William Reed

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Have you gone to see *Django Unchained* yet? Activist Dick Gregory called the current box office smash “brilliant,” while filmmaker Spike Lee said it was “offensive to my ancestors.” All the while, the force behind *Django Unchained*, Quentin Tarantino, is taking bundles of money to the bank from throngs of Blacks who have attended showings. The movie is pure fantasy and takes privileges with history, but Blacks like it a lot.

*Django Unchained* is a 2012 American western film written and directed by Tarantino. The film stars Jamie Foxx, Christoph Waltz, Leonardo DiCaprio, Kerry Washington, and Samuel L. Jackson and was the fifth highest-grossing Christmas release in history. At a New York City premiere, Black society and its media were “overwhelmed” with the film and its cast.

Black historians see similarities of abolitionist John Brown and his Gang of 21 in Tarantino’s tale. *Django Unchained* is set in 1858 as several male slaves are being transported across Texas by the Speck brothers. In their group is Django (Jamie Foxx), who has been sold away from his wife, Broomhilda (Kerry Washington). The Speck brothers encounter Dr. King Schultz (Christoph Waltz), a German immigrant dentist and, unbeknownst to them, bounty hunter. Schultz takes Django and kills one of the Speck brothers, leaving the other to be killed by now-free slaves. Schultz reveals that he sought out Django to aid him in identifying the Brittle brothers, a trio of ruthless killers working for a plantation owner. Schultz confesses that his bounty hunting is opportunistic, but emphasizes to Django that he despises slavery. The two come to an agreement: in exchange for helping locate the Brittle brothers, Schultz will free Django from slavery and give him \$75 and a horse. After hunting down and killing the Brittles, Schultz takes Django on as his bounty hunting associate.

In many ways Django is three hours of caricature. After their bounty hunting success during the winter months, Schultz and Django confirm that Broomhilda's current owner is brutal plantation owner Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio). At Candie's plantation, Candyland, some male slaves are trained to fight to the death (called "Mandingo fighting"). Schultz and Django devise a plan to reach Broomhilda by posing as potential purchasers of a Mandingo fighter. Schultz introduces Django as a free man and “expert” on Mandingo fighting. Candie and Schultz come to an agreement to purchase a Mandingo fighter for \$12,000. Schultz also offers to purchase Broomhilda, claiming that she would help alleviate his nostalgia for his mother tongue because she speaks German. Django raises the suspicions of Candie's house slave, Stephen (Samuel L. Jackson), who correctly deduces that Django and Broomhilda know each other, and that the Mandingo sale is a ruse. He informs Candie. Throughout, *Django Unchained* is a brutal tale of retribution based on the theme that punishment doled out is morally right and fully deserved. Django is an audacious Black hero who shoots White slavers with impunity and lives to tell about it. The film’s violence is used as a kind of spiritual redemption which Black audiences are meeting with glee.

But, is this the “spiritual redemption” the descendants of slaves need right through here? With the “debt due” and legacy of slavery continuing in our daily lives, how can self-respecting descendants of African slaves be party to such a charade that mocks us and our ancestors? Today’s Blacks deal in movie “make believe” and are loath to accept the reality of slavery and its legacy in our lives. Blacks accept as “fact” that they have high unemployment rates, and that whites rightfully have 20 times our wealth. To be about eliminating America’s gross inequities,

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Blacks need to be organizing constructive collective actions. Stop accepting that “slavery was a long time ago and there is no one alive to collect or pay reparations.”

The legacy of slavery is without end across America. Those who profited from slavery don't just owe reparations for the past, but for the inequities of the present as well.

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