

Chuck Warren
Blindness – Protest Response
8/2012

I watched a movie this week I found fascinating, frightening, disturbing and moving all at the same time. But the thing I found most incredible was a seemingly intelligent organization's senseless reaction to the film.

The movie was titled Blindness and was based on a book with the same name by Portuguese writer Jose Saramago. Since I didn't read the book I can not comment on the accuracy of the adaptation, but I never felt that anything was missing or difficult to understand as I do with so many other novels that have been turned in to films.

The movie revolves around Julianne Moore's well played character who is the only sighted person in a world rendered blind by something the government classifies as a contagious virus. In classical fashion the government's knee-jerk reaction to the spreading condition is to round up and quarantine the afflicted, and contain them at gunpoint to prevent escape from the facility in which they are forced to survive.

The frightening and fascinating components of the plot are threaded through the somewhat predictable downward spiral of the society of afflicted people once they are faced with physical and emotional upheaval. The group splinters in to good and bad factions as a good leader emerges from group A, while an evil leader assumes control of group B. As the situation goes from hopeful to hopeless Julianne Moore's character grows from a seemingly ditzy housewife to an unlikely but capable hero.

The movie is violent, horrifying, and occasionally disturbing. But the social interaction between the individual characters and groups is interlaced with so many examples of real world views and reactions to political, race, and gender differences and stereotypes that its foundation is truth. It is a thinker's movie, and I would recommend it to anyone with the stomach to watch all the way through.

The movie revolves around a society suddenly stricken blind, but the affliction is only a simple way to create a common condition for the characters. If they were all suddenly deafened, or muted, or handicapped in any other way the same situations would eventually arise with the same end results. Their paths would surely be different, but in the end chaos would prevail as it does here. That is why I am appalled at the reaction to the film by the National Federation of the Blind.

On the film's opening day many theaters were faced with protests after the NFB condemned the film as unfairly depicting blind people by portraying them living in

filth and chaos. The message I would like to convey to the National Federation of the Blind is –

Grow up.

To say that the movie Blindness is attempting in any way to represent blind people is the same as saying all country singers are drunks or all newspaper reporters can turn in to superheroes. The movie is not about blind people, it is about people suddenly blinded. It is about the human condition and how the fragile social balance we live with every day can be completely destroyed in a heartbeat. It is about people being people.

It would be just as easy to protest the film because it portrays a Hispanic male as a sociopathic criminal, or because it shows an Asian man reacting selfishly to his wife's rape. The movie does not intend to present an accurate representation of blind people, just people and what would happen if you threw a large group together in a frightening environment with no outside assistance and no real control.

People today are so ready to take offense at any and every opportunity, whether it is to champion a cause or because of a perceived attack on a shared imperfection. We live in constant fear that someone will step on our toes and believe that when it does happen it is always intentional. But what other way is there to tell a story, or make a statement? Every character can't be a hero, and every story must have descriptors or the act of telling a tale becomes ineffectual and pointless. If these perceived offenses are reinforced then movies, books, and television will all become variations of the same theme. Every tale will become "A person is born, they live, and then they die."

Although I know it's an impossible request I would like to ask the people of the world to stop defending themselves against attacks that do not exist. Stop alienating yourselves from the rest of the population in your quest for acceptance. Stop bringing attention to the fact that you are black, white, Asian or Hispanic in the name of equality and just be a person. If you didn't point out your differences most people would never see them as such.

Everyone is different in some way. Every person can be classified in detail if they wish to be. I could claim offense that the hardware stores put things out of my reach so they must be discriminating against people less than 6 feet tall. I could just as easily claim they are putting things too low to the ground so they must be discriminating against people over 5 feet tall. There is no end to the list of potential offenses.

If you are blind, I will accommodate and assist you in any way you ask me to. If you are otherwise handicapped I will hold a door, reach a high shelf, or help with

any other issue you have if you wish me to. But I won't do it because you are handicapped, I will do it because you are a human being just as I am.

We are all different, and yet all the same. We are people, and in the end we're all trying to reach the same goal. It doesn't matter if you are sighted or blind, tall or short, black or white. We're all just trying to fumble our way through the dark in an attempt to survive the world around us.