

Undeniably the film is not historically accurate, yet it succeeds at creating an authentic experience that transports audiences back into the complex world of the Jim Crow South. The film provides a look into a diverse South, spotlighting often neglected stories like that of Asian Americans, the Reconstruction era, and music as a tool of resistance in Black culture. Lastly, due to its core theme of race and historical setting, it has potential as a teaching tool for courses that center around race or the setting of the film. Overall, *Sinners* is a love letter to Black culture that celebrates Black excellence by highlighting how music was a tool used to overcome oppressive conditions while still preserving the culture. It will undoubtedly go on to shape people's mental image of the Jim Crow South.

*Christopher Ramires Beltran*

Cristina Comencini, director. *The Children's Train*. Palomar, Netflix, 2024.

A starving boy stares at a stoic but mournful violinist before he begins his performance. The film is about a violinist named Amerigo. He begins to remember his childhood after being informed that his mother Antonietta has died. We are then given flashbacks of his childhood in 1949 Naples. The film focuses on the children of Naples during the Second World War. It is also about the impact women in the Italian Communist Party (PCI) had during the Second World War and the post-war recovery. It was through the PCI that the efforts of women were needed but undermined by the rest of Italian society. The message of the film is that there is a need to break away from old ideologies to survive and find purpose.

The need for new a political framework started when women were laid off after the war. Women had agency but were forced to serve men and were under scrutiny. The PCI and its ideology functions as a form of political expression. Antonietta and her son are interviewed by the PCI to register for the *Treni Della Felicità* (trains of happiness) program. It consists of sending children from Naples to Modena. As the camera pans to the different women being interviewed, one of the women explains that she used to work in a

factory during the war and was fired when the men returned from the war. Women worked in manufacturing and logistics during the war but were forced back into domestic spaces when the war ended. Amerigo's adopted mother, Derna, is a member of the PCI as well as a former member of the resistance movement against the Fascist dictatorship. During the International Workers' Day festival, Derna is being slapped by one of the male party members for suggesting that there should be a woman speaker on stage. He remarks that her medals were won by "hanging up decorations." Women may have participated in the war effort, but the chauvinism from men illustrates that their efforts are not considered equal. This inequality is what created a need for political and social change.

The movie demonstrates the role sexism had in the post-war recovery. However, there are some issues in how it portrays this theme. The film leans toward sentimentalism. It suggests that the solution for sexism is that women should embrace their role as care takers rather than as political actors. There is admiration of partisan women in the PCI but a glorification for women who are homemakers. The recurring symbolism of the Virgin Mary and Antonietta's willingness to let Amerigo return to Modena after the program ends highlights this conflict. It is the focus on sentimentalism that makes this middlebrow entertainment rather than anything that challenges the viewer despite the important subject matter. Nevertheless, there are moments where tugging at the heartstrings works to highlight the bleak situation that families were left in Naples. The ending has images of children taken in 1949 in Naples; smiling as they are starving and wearing rags. This film is dedicated to all the children in the world struggling through all wars. Those who are fans of drama and historical fiction will appreciate this film.

What the film does well is the portrayal of the children's struggle. It shows that women taking political action creates solutions. The debate in what kind of ideology women wanted to adopt demonstrates their role as political actors. The film had different political options that were present among the female population in Napoli. In the beginning of the film, the elderly woman Pachiochia protests fervently against the PCI while holding a portrait of the last king of Italy Umberto II of Savoy. There are also the nuns that shame the women

that allow their children to be a part of the program. The conflict between the traditional Italian society and the PCI is best highlighted when the PCI activist and Pachiochia argue outside of the train. Both women hold sway over the crowd even though they have competing ideologies.

The movie shows the impact of women in the Italian political movements, domestic industries, and as homemakers. War serves as the catalyst for different political thoughts and action. The resilience of the Italian people during the post war era reveals necessity of change in the face of uncertainty.

*Alberto Cordova*

RaMell Ross, director. *Nickel Boys*. Plan B Entertainment, 2024.

*Nickel Boys*, directed by RaMell Ross and written by Ross and Joslyn Barnes, is primarily set at the peak of the Jim Crow era in the 1960s in Tallahassee, Florida. The story follows the lives of two black teenagers, Elwood Curtis (Ethan Herisse) and Turner (Brandon Wilson), who befriend one another after meeting at the Nickel Academy, a segregated reformatory run by a white man addressed as Spencer (Hamish Linklater). The academy turns out to be a horrific school where boys are mentally, physically, and sexually abused, taken advantage of for labor, and even killed. Even though much of it is not explicitly shown on camera, it is implied through scenes of students' screams being heard behind closed doors. Further, there is a scene where Elwood is taken to the school hospital after being reprimanded for being involved in a fight after defending one of his own from a possible sexual assault. Evidence of abuse is further portrayed by cut-away shots from official investigative photos, where objects like rusted buttons and belt buckles are discovered interred after authorities perform a thorough investigation of the academy's grounds. These objects are remnants of bodies that were discovered in unmarked graves to cover the school's crimes.

The film is an adaptation of a novel by the same name, which is based on the Dozier School, a real-life reform school for young men. Nearly 100 boys died between 1900 and 1973 at Dozier, some