

YOUNG EUROPEAN CINEPHILES: ITALY

By Eleonora Fioravanti and Ester Palmieri

When we started thinking about the double feature for this festival, we came up with lots of ideas, but we chose these two films because they deal with a topic that really involves us. They are both set in the USA during the '60s when The Civil Rights Movement started to become really notable.

THE BUTLER (Lee Daniels, 2013) is based on the real story of Eugene Allen, an ordinary man who worked, since he was a child, in a cotton field in Georgia. Thanks to his extraordinary fortitude and determination he managed to get over his terrible past obtaining a job as a White House butler under seven presidents, from Eisenhower to Reagan.

THE HELP (Tate Taylor, 2011) is a story that takes the cue from real facts about the relationships between white families and their African-American maids in the segregated South of the 1960s. Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan, the main character, is a white woman who decides to write about the real situation of black maids in Jackson, Mississippi, interviewing them on their lives.

Both films share the common theme of the emancipation of black people in the USA during the 1960's, but while THE BUTLER gives an overall view from the 1920's to the early years of the 21st century, THE HELP is focused just on the early 1960's and in particular on women's status in that period. We don't believe that the style of one film is better than the other; while the first shows the situation following every political event, the second one shows everyday life. In addition, both films show people who fight for their ideals and are excluded by family and friends. However they are able to demonstrate their braveness anyway continuing their struggles.

In both films we can notice the different ways of facing the issue of racial segregation. Starting from what seems like a careless approach and continuing with another which can be considered "peaceful-revolutionary", we reach one which uses violence. The focus of our attention, with regard to these different approaches, has been the notable fact that every main character is willing to question his\her opinion and position showing a definite ability to change their point of view. We were struck by this fact because we believe that in politics, as in any other sphere of life, it is fundamental to be open minded and embrace different points of view.