

Essay On Hidden Figures

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Introduction

"Hidden Figures" is a 2016 biographical drama film directed by Theodore Melfi that tells the untold story of three African-American female mathematicians, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, who played a crucial role in the United States' space program during the 1960s. The film is set against the backdrop of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, where segregation and discrimination were still prevalent in American society. Despite facing systemic racism and sexism, these three women overcame numerous obstacles and made significant contributions to the success of NASA's space missions, including the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit.

Main Characters

Katherine Johnson was born in 1918 in West Virginia. She showed an early aptitude for mathematics, but segregation and discrimination limited her educational opportunities. After earning a degree in mathematics and French from West Virginia State College, she began working as a "computer" at NASA's predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). Johnson's meticulous calculations helped launch the first American into orbit and later the Apollo 11 mission that landed humans on the moon. Dorothy Vaughan was born in 1910 in Missouri. She earned a degree in mathematics from Wilberforce University and became a teacher. In 1943, Vaughan joined the segregated West Area Computing unit of NACA, where she learned to program and became an expert in the newly emerging field of electronic computers. She later became the first African American supervisor at NACA and oversaw the transition from human "computers" to electronic computers.

Mary Jackson was born in 1921 in Virginia. She earned a degree in mathematics and physical science from Hampton University and began working at NACA in 1951. After petitioning to attend graduate courses in engineering, Jackson became the first female African American engineer at NASA. She worked on many high-profile projects, including the Apollo program. All three women were intelligent, hardworking, and determined to succeed in their chosen fields. However, they faced significant obstacles due to their race and gender. Segregation laws meant that they had limited access to education and job opportunities, and they had to fight for the

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recognition and respect they deserved. Despite these challenges, Johnson, Vaughan, and Jackson persevered, using their talents to help advance NASA's space program and pave the way for future generations of women and people of colour.

Obstacles and Challenges

The characters in the movie faced numerous obstacles and challenges in their personal and professional lives. Some of these challenges are Racial Discrimination, Sexism, Educational Barriers, Lack of Recognition, and Personal Struggles.

As African American women, Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughan faced significant racial discrimination and prejudice at work. They were not allowed to use the same bathrooms or dining facilities as their white colleagues, and they were often excluded from important meetings and discussions. The three women also faced sexism and gender discrimination in their workplace. They were constantly underestimated and undervalued because of their gender, and they had to work twice as hard as their male counterparts to get recognition for their work. Mary Jackson had to fight to get permission to take classes at a segregated school that would allow her to earn the credentials necessary for a promotion. This shows how education was also an obstacle in their lives.

Despite their significant contributions to NASA's space program, the three women were not recognized for their work until many years later. They had to fight for acknowledgement and respect for their accomplishments. Along with the challenges they faced at work, the characters in "Hidden Figures" also had personal struggles to deal with. For instance, Katherine Johnson had to balance her job with caring for her three daughters after her husband died, while Mary Jackson had to deal with a husband who didn't support her career aspirations.

Impact and Legacy

The contributions of American women were vital to the success of the US space program, but for many years their work was largely unrecognized and undervalued. Hidden Figures played a critical role in the success of NASA's space program. They were responsible for performing complex calculations needed to launch and land spacecraft, including trajectory analysis, launch window determination, and emergency return scenarios. They also played a significant role in developing the computer programming and software used in space missions. In particular, Katherine Johnson's calculations were crucial to the success of John Glenn's 1962 orbital mission, and her work was instrumental in the development of the Space Shuttle program. Beyond the space program, the Hidden Figures also had a significant impact on American society as a whole. Their success challenged stereotypes about the abilities of African-American women and helped to pave the way for greater opportunities and inclusion in STEM fields. Their contributions

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helped to open doors for future generations of women and minorities who aspire to careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The legacy of the Hidden Figures is one of diversity and inclusion in STEM fields. Their contributions demonstrated that talent and intelligence are not limited by race or gender. Their perseverance and dedication in the face of discrimination and inequality paved the way for greater opportunities and inclusion for women and minorities in STEM fields. Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of the Hidden Figures is essential for several reasons. First, it is important to acknowledge and honour the vital role they played in the US space program and American society. Second, recognizing their contributions helps to inspire future generations to pursue careers in STEM fields, particularly among underrepresented groups. Finally, celebrating their legacy helps to promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of society, which is essential for progress and innovation.

FAQ's

Is "Hidden Figures" based on a true story?

Yes, "Hidden Figures" is based on a true story. The book and movie are based on the real lives and accomplishments of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson.

What impact did "Hidden Figures" have on popular culture?

A: "Hidden Figures" brought attention to the often overlooked contributions of African-American women in science and technology. The book and movie have inspired many people, particularly young girls and women, to pursue careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields.