

Encore!

'Glory' tells story of uncivil war

Broderick, Washington star in epic film

By Ken Nolan
Emerald Contributor

It's called *Glory*, and it is a stirring, rousing epic about the

Movie Review

African-American soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

That Civil War is depicted as a very uncivilized war in this film. The first five minutes in-

cludes an extremely violent battle scene, including a graphic shot of a human head bursting like an exploding watermelon.

Barely two minutes later, the audience is tortured with a medical tent interlude, the type of scene which seems a requisite for all war films.

You know the type of scene: a long, slow shot panning over bits and pieces of arms, a lot of

blood on the floor, soldiers covered in bandages and most missing a few limbs here and there. Need we go on?

The producers of *Glory* seem to think we needed to go on, as we are offered a silhouette of a doctor with a hacksaw in his hand amputating the leg of a very wide awake soldier, who shrieks "Please, God, don't cut anymore!"

And so, within 10 minutes of the opening credits, *Glory* has overwhelmed and disgusted the audience.

This war, the film says, was not a war full of heroes and honor. It was not a romantic time of Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara. It was a time of legs being sawed off and heads exploding.

Matthew Broderick, as a 26-year-old white officer from a wealthy family, is witness to these wartime horrors. As we watch his face while he listens to the screams of his comrades being blown to small bits of smoldering flesh, we ask ourselves the question he is undoubtedly asking himself: In a war like this, how can one achieve glory?

Broderick is somehow promoted to colonel, although he knows he is not cut out for the duty, and he is placed in charge of a very innovative and new project: implementing a black regiment in the Union army.

Thus, the first and most famous black regiment in the Civil War is born, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer.

Broderick's boyhood friend, a free and well-educated black man named Thomas, is the first volunteer. In turn, the audience meets other characters of the 54th including the bitter, brutal Denzel Washington and the fatherly Morgan Freeman.

Will Broderick ever get this ragtag, makeshift regiment into shape? Of course he will. But



Courtesy photo

Jhimi Kennedy (left), Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman portray soldiers in an all-black regiment of the Union army during the Civil War.

he will have to make some sacrifices to do so.

Including turning his back on his lifelong friend, Thomas. He must also make an enemy out of another friend, Cary Elwes (*The Princess Bride*), an officer under his command whom Broderick constantly chides for not teaching the black soldiers properly.

Throughout the film, we

and strong performance as the stubborn ex-slave whom we both love and despise.

The most stirring scene in the film is when Washington is punished before the entire regiment for leaving camp without permission. He is flogged at the order of Broderick.

Washington's back is laced with old whipping scars, and his physique suggests one who

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doubt Broderick's leadership. But toward the end of the film we see a method to his madness. Broderick doesn't want to see any more exploding heads or sawed-off legs. He doesn't want dismembered soldiers. He simply wants to make the men of the 54th the best soldiers there ever were.

Morgan Freeman (*Clean and Sober*) gives a good performance as the elder soldier whose calm and patience earn him the rank of sergeant-major. Although his character is limited, Freeman seems to bring what lines he does have to life.

Denzel Washington, on the other hand, gives a triumphant

is impervious to pain. With each lash of the whip, the audience sees Washington's face in a tight close-up.

Absolutely stone-faced and staring Broderick straight in the eyes, Washington stoically receives blow after blow as tears well up in his eyes. It is the most well-acted and potent scene in recent memory.

All the characters of the film, including bullheaded Denzel Washington, come to an awakening of one sort or another. The beauty of this ensemble group of characters is that we delight in seeing each one of them achieve a goal.



Courtesy photo

Soldiers of the 54th Regiment parade through the streets of Boston in the Civil War epic *Glory*.

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