

Racism Ignites Protest

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colleges in the nation. As far as faculty diversity goes, 1 percent is African-American according to collegeprowler.com.

Friday's demonstration brought out students from a diverse set of backgrounds, overtaking the outside of the school's main administration office with chants of "Walk the Talk!" and calls for change to how the college deals with issues of race on campus.

Lewis and Clark President Berry Glassner briefly addressed the crowd.

He told them, that in his youth he and his family were subject to numerous racist acts because of their Jewish ancestry. Though he noted that "no two groups and no two people's experiences are the same," he expressed empathy for the call for action in addressing blatant racial insensitivity on campus. But

Glassner did not provide a specific plan to crack-down on racist acts or increase diversity on campus.

Organizers of the rally say that many members of the faculty have shown their support by attending student meetings on diversity issues and sending e-mails to the student body condemning racist actions.

Micah Leimbach, one of the organizers of the sit-in and a four year Lewis and Clark student, said the large support the demonstration drew sent a message to the importance of race relations on campus.

"This is one of the most important issues that's come up," Leimbach said. "A lot of our administrators and faculty are new, they've never seen this kind of energy before. So having this kind of energy around an issue shows that this is something that Lewis and Clark students care about."

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Rust Belt Dignity

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father; he keeps an eye on his brother; he lives with a pretty teacher, Lena (Zoë Saldana) with whom he intends to make a life, though it is taking longer than he wishes. He bears it all without complaint; each day he has a plan, and he stolidly adjusts that plan when life throws in complications and costs for which he didn't provide.

It all unravels, predictably. A cascade of Russell's own and his brother's mistakes lands Russell in prison. He faces this like he does everything else; with determination and realism. He takes responsibility, and hangs onto his hope, though while he's in prison Lena leaves him and his father dies. By the time he gets out, Rodney has returned from his fourth tour, and seems even more lost and angry. He literally fights -- in bare-knuckle, fixed bouts -- for cash that raise the stakes ever higher and suck him into the orbit of a mountain community ruled by a ruthless outlaw (Woody Harrelson).

The elements of this story, as I recount them, sound familiar; without seeing the film, you can guess the outlines of the rest of the story. Yet what Cooper (who co-wrote the screenplay) lacks in imagination he makes up for in the concreteness and commit-

ment he applies to its telling. If you're willing, the film draws you into the mix of will and bad luck that characterizes each of Russell's choices; you invest in his love for his brother, his deep grief at the loss of his dreams of a life with Lena, his sorrow over his own mistakes.

The scenes between Bale and Saldana are particularly affecting; the film takes time to show their resolution and pain, and why it must be so, and doesn't spare us the way so many films would. We know

As the film's ads aptly note, "sometimes your battles choose you" -- and corny as it sounds, this film makes that case with sincerity.

Even if that premise wears thin upon reflection, the great performances from all the film's players leave you with much to savor. Bale, Affleck, Saldana, Harrelson, and Willem Dafoe and Sam Shephard in smaller roles, all make you believe in and care about what happens in a story that trades on the inevitable. Hopefully Cooper's talent

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that people this beautiful exist in working class communities, and a good film shows you what intrinsic beauty actually looks like when a person does not have an artistic team to put him or her together every day. In a similar way, the film shows us what courage and resolution and toughness look like when one's options don't realistically involve work that one loves or opportunities to lead.

for eliciting such performances eventually will be applied to subtler material.

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. You can find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

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