



"Pride," with Terrence Howard (middle) and Bernie Mac (right) is based on a true story.

As formulaic biopic, inspiring story flails

By Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When Jim Ellis (Terrence Howard) arrived in Philadelphia in the summer of 1971, it was with high hopes of landing a teaching position. Instead, the only employment the recent college grad could find was a dead-end job closing down a rundown recreation center located in a disadvantaged area of North Philly known as Nicetown. But after discovering that the gymnasium had a swimming pool, instead of preparing the dilapidated facility for the wrecking ball, Jim decided to try to renovate it. For, he knew that if he carried out his original assignment, the neighborhood kids would be losing their only local outlet for constructive, supervised exercise.

Furthermore, as a former competitive swimmer on the university level, Jim figured he had some worthwhile advice to share with the rudderless boys just hanging out on the sweltering, rimless bas-

ketball court. So, rather than allow them to get into trouble on the streets, he invited them inside for a chance to cool off in the pool. Then, he put them on a serious training regimen in order to turn them into a team capable of holding their own against the best swim clubs in the area.

In the end, Ellis not only succeeded in his efforts to resurrect the Marcus Foster Recreation Center, the program he created has continued to flourish for the past 35 years, providing a healthy environment for aspiring young athletes in the innercity. This admirable achievement is the subject of "Pride," a biopic based on the exploits of a real-life, role model.

Unfortunately, the movie is flawed in a couple of glaring respects. The first, in terms of its infuriating use of the n-word. In the film, the slur is never employed by Whites, not even by Ellis' squad's racist cross-town rivals, the Main Line Academy

Barracudas. But it is repeatedly used by Blacks, a glaring anachronism ignoring that the embracing of the offensive term by African-Americans is a relatively-recent development.

Why would a movie both about and entitled "Pride," feature characters demeaning themselves in such a fashion? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that first-time director, Sunu Goneru, was born in Zimbabwe and lived in South Africa until he came to Hollywood to make this picture. So, he was probably simply unfamiliar with American history, and that once upon a time it was Whites who primarily hurled the ugly epithet, not Blacks.

Another annoying aspect of the production is its indulgence in homophobic humor, referring to gays as "fruitcakes" and "Captain Panties," while generally intimating that it is not a safe thing to be a homosexual in the Black community.

Again, this is uncalled for

Luther Ingram dies at 69

ST. LOUIS (AP) - Luther Ingram, the R&B singer and songwriter best known for the 1972 hit "(If Loving You Is Wrong) I Don't Want to Be Right," has died. He was 69.

Ingram died Monday at a Belleville, Ill., hospital of heart failure, friend and journalist Bernie Hayes said Tuesday. He had suffered for years from diabetes, kidney disease and partial blindness, his wife, Jacqui Ingram, said.

Ingram performed with Ike Turner at clubs in East St. Louis, roomed with Jimi Hendrix in New York and was the opening act for Isaac Hayes. He recorded through the 1980s and performed in concert until the mid-1990s, when his health began declining.

"His instrument was his voice; his heart and head were his inspiration," said Hayes, a St. Louis journalist, disc jockey and author

of "The Death of Black Radio."

Ingram was born Nov. 30, 1937, in Jackson, Tenn. He started writing music and singing as a boy in a group with his siblings after his family moved to Alton, Ill., in 1947.

He had a five-year association with Memphis, Tenn.-based Stax Records during the height of its success. In 1971, Ingram and songwriter-performer Sir Mack Rice co-wrote "Respect Yourself" for the Staple Singers, which turned into Stax's biggest hit.

Ingram recorded "(If Loving You Is Wrong) I Don't Want to Be Right," in 1972 on Koko Records, which Stax distributed. The song was No. 1 on Billboard magazine's R&B chart and was later a hit for Barbara Mandrell. His other popular songs include "Ain't That Loving You (For More Reasons Than One)," "I'll Be Your Shelter" and "You Never Miss Your Water."

Boys Choir of Harlem founder passes at 62

NEW YORK (AP) - Walter Turnbull, who founded the Boys Choir of Harlem in a church basement and led the organization to international acclaim that included performances in the White House and the Vatican, died Friday. He was 62.

Turnbull died just after 3 p.m. in a New York City hospital, said his brother, Horace Turnbull. He said Turnbull had suffered a stroke months earlier.

"He was a genius of a man who managed to take his talents in bringing out song in young people who had no training," said U.S. Rep Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who helped raise funds for the choir. "To take that talent and turn it into academic achievement, it was just remarkable."

Turnbull's death marked the latest in a sad string of events for the famed choir, which has been reeling from scandal since a choirboy accused a counselor six years ago of sexually abusing him. City investigators chided Turnbull for his handling of the allegations.

The chairman of the choir's board, former New York Mayor David N. Dinkins, called Turnbull "a giant in American choral music performance and arrangement."

He said the board was dedicated to preserving the choir. The renowned institution has fallen into debt, and the 50-boy choir was evicted last year and now has a

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in a PG picture designed for impressionable tykes. What is it teaching them? — "Aim high in life, while reserving disparaging remarks to gays and fellow Blacks?"

Otherwise, "Pride" unfolds in fairly formulaic fashion for a sports flick, with Terrence Howard turning in one of his typically captivating performances as the charismatic coach. An afroed Bernie Mac is almost as

memorable as a marble-mouthed janitor, combination assistant coach, buddy, political lobbyist, matchmaker. And Kimberly Elise co-stars as hoop-eared Sue Davis, another combination character who is conveniently a love interest, a city councilwoman, and a child advocate all rolled into one.

The rest of the principal cast of recognizable stereotypes is rounded out by Tom Arnold as Bink the bigot,

Diana Ross' son, Evan ("ATL"), as Reggie the retard, Regine Nehy, as Wilhemina, the token girl, and Alphonso McCauley, who played bucktoothed Bucky in "Fat Albert," as another awkward dork. Well-intentioned, at best, "Pride," regrettably, doesn't show enough brotherly love for anyone to be proud of it.

Fair (1 star). Rated PG for mature themes, violence, profanity and ethnic slurs.

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