West Side Story Prejudices Vs. Gentleman’s Agreement Prejudices Essay, Research Paper

West Side Story and Gentleman s Agreement are two very different movies, yet with one basic underlying theme: prejudice. Prejudice has been present in our world since the dawn of civilization. Greeks and Turks, Whites and Blacks, Hitler and Jews, those hateful feelings between these, and many other, groups are unfortunately still present in today s society. Until people get a clear picture of what prejudice does, we may never know a day without it. In the movie West Side Story, the rival gangs in Manhatten (the Sharks and the Jets) are both prejudice against each other. But both gangs have common enemy: the authorities. When it comes the police, or any authority figure for that matter, both gangs stick up for each other. The Sharks are the Puerto Rican gang led by Bernardo. They are very passionate about what they believe in and would do anything to protect each other. The Jets, headed by Riff, is made up of boys with broken families and white skin. These boys all look up to one figure of respect named Tony. Tony falls in love with Maria, who is the much protected sister of Bernardo. Together Tony and Maria fight against the odds to be together, until he shot and killed almost instantly. Gentleman s Agreement centers around the life of Phil Green, a talented young journalist living in New York City. When asked to do a series of articles on anti-Semitism, Phil decides to pretend he is a Jew to get a victim s point of view on the issue. In the process, he meets a smart young woman names Kathy Lacy. Not knowing that he is a Jew , Kathy falls head over heels in love with Phil. When Kathy finds out that he is a Jew , she changes her opinion on Phil. She still loves him, but has kind of cooled her jets . After the articles are published, Phil tells Kathy the truth and all is well. In both movies, overcoming personal and social prejudices and true love are two major themes carried out by the main characters of each movie (Tony and Maria, Phil and Kathy). Tony and Maria had to get past society s thoughts about them being together, since they had no problem seeing each other for who they really are. On the other hand, Kathy had to surmount her own prejudice feelings in order for her relationship with Phil to work, the world around them did not care if they were together. New York City is a major hub of individuals. It s racial and ethnic diversity make it a prime setting for prejudice based movies. For West Side Story, the rough, tough neighborhoods of Manhatten were the backdrop for gang activity. While the upscale business world of downtown New York was chosen as the environment for Gentleman s Agreement. Both movies are set in New York City, but each one shows the great metropolis in a different light. The fact that prejudice is in both movies is an obvious similarity between the two. But each one depicts prejudice differently. The way in which prejudice is portrayed in West Side Story is very violent and physical. The teens settle their differences with fists and blades instead of talking things out. This could be due to the fact that they are still young, or because of the lack of guidance in their lives. Prejudice in Gentleman s Agreement is represented in a more civilized manner, even though the whole basis for prejudice is anything but civil. There are no violent exchanges or threats of injury or brutality. Since the characters in this film are adults, they are able to handle this immature subject in a more gentlemanly way, so to speak. In conclusion, there are many different ways in which one senseless matter can be portrayed. This one matter is prejudice. It can do as much damage as a knife if not more. The way in which prejudice is enacted upon determines it s severity. This can be different for every person, since people take prejudice in various ways. The way you view this injustice, can be totally unlike that of another person. But one thing stays the same throughout…prejudice is destructive.