

Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 20th April at 7:30pm
A United Kingdom (2016)

UK | 1h 51min, cert PG-13

Director; Amma Asante, **Stars;** David Oyelowo, Rosamund Pike & Tom Felton

In 1947, Seretse Khama, the King of Botswana, met Ruth Williams, a London office worker. They were a perfect match, yet their proposed marriage was challenged not only by their families but by the British and South African governments. The latter had recently introduced the policy of apartheid and found the notion of a biracial couple ruling a neighboring country intolerable. South Africa threatened the British: either thwart the couple or be denied access to South African uranium and gold and face the risk of South Africa invading Botswana.



David Oyelowo

On Ruth Williams and Seretse Khama's love story.

The wonderful thing about Ruth Williams and Seretse Khama is even though they were from different countries, different cultures, even though they were living in a time period where there was very real and apparent opposition to a black man and a white woman being together, they fell in love with each other's soul[s]; they fell in love with each other's intellect; they fell in love with each other's love of jazz. They managed somehow to cut across and past the racial divide and it was almost as if, once they had fallen in love and were reemerging from that haze, that suddenly the reality of what they had allowed themselves to feel made itself known in the shape not only of familial opposition — both from Ruth's family and Seretse's family — but governmentally.

On the political opposition to their marriage

Bechuanaland, as Botswana was called back then, was a protectorate of the United Kingdom, and so therefore Great Britain had a say in what was happening in Bechuanaland. South Africa was in the midst of instituting apartheid. But also, Great Britain was beholden to South Africa because it needed South Africa's uranium to fight the Cold War; it needed South Africa's gold because the coffers were highly depleted after the second world war in the U.K. And South Africa was threatening to leave the commonwealth. So these two people getting married just across the border in Bechuanaland ... was something South Africa was just not going to allow, and South Africa had a lot of leverage.

On the similarities between Khama and Martin Luther King Jr., who Oyelowo played in the film *Selma*

Both men had that attribute that I personally admire the most in human beings, which is an enormous capacity to love. And not just love in a thin, romantic Hollywood way — I'm talking about sacrificial love where you are prepared to put yourself on the line for others. And in the case of Dr. King, obviously, that was for a people; but with Seretse Khama, it was for both his wife *and* his people. And, you know, that's a real point of overlap that I could feel in my body playing both characters.

On whether, as an actor of color, he feels there are more roles for him now than there were before.

I can't lie to you and say I'm buried under an avalanche of scripts. And the reason I say that is, look, the breadth of what you hope will be coming your way isn't necessarily there. So, you know, I'm not going to complain about it, I'm not going to grow bitter in a corner. I just have to develop things that I want to see myself do.

Edited by Alex O'Reilly

