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Bringing Down the House races home

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A movie that began in a rather annoying fashion, i.e. an Internet conversation, revolved into a quality comedy courtesy of Steve Martin and Queen Latifah's comedic mastery, yet was not without its shortcomings.

Surprisingly, Queen Latifah's acting performances did not peak with *Chicago*. Paired with Steve Martin, the rapper/actress proved she could handle comedic acting beautifully and successfully craft an overall funny film with the veteran comedian.

Bringing Down the House, in short, is a film about a workaholic, divorced tax attorney, Peter Sanderson (Martin), who engages in an online romance gone wrong when his anonymous chat partner turns out to be a fugitive stereotypical ghettoized woman, Charlene Morton (Queen Latifah), who then insists on Peter handling her case. Aside from that basic plot summary, the movie had its frustrating moments: one, Peter allowing himself to be walked all over by Charlene, and two, the ill-tempered ancient heiress and

Peter's potential billionaire client's testiness throughout the whole film suddenly vanishing into a willingness to smoke up with two brutes.

Note, furthermore, that this is not the first film to deal with the issue of race in a comedic manner; hello, it's called every Chris Rock movie ever made. What makes *Bringing Down the House* different, however, is that a rich white man embraces a lifestyle completely foreign to him, turns his life around, and not only lives happily ever after, but saves the woman whom he initially thought was ruining his life. This movie does not only pokes fun at the stiff white archetype, but transforms that character into yet another stereotype—one representative of black culture. And since it was Steve Martin being ghetto, it was naturally fantastic.

Maybe it's just me, but the film echoed the scenario of *To Kill A Mockingbird*: a black nanny takes care of the lawyer's two children. The difference in *Bringing Down the House* is that Charlene only puts up with degradation in exchange for Peter's help, whereas Calpurnia is indentured. Charlene is her own proud, intelligent woman. Why, then,



when the entire film celebrated her greatness as a person, did Peter restart his business with a new office, resolve relations with his ex-wife and overall vastly improve his life while Charlene's situation, though she was proven innocent, showed no rise in stature? While Peter's condition was ameliorated, Charlene merely remained a sex object to Peter's friend Howie (*American Pie*'s Eugene Levy).

Race, moreover, as with many other films, has become a joking matter, and *Bringing Down the House* epitomizes this notion.