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Shattered Glass:

Extra Credit Movie Review

Every journalism student should be required to watch *Shattered Glass* (2003) at least once before they graduate or enter into the major. That was my conclusion after Brooke White, Muhammad Ali, Justin Carville, and I watched the movie. Although this was my second time watching the film I was left a bit uneasy as well as the others. This uneasiness was a mixture of pity for Steven Glass and a desire to never fabricate, plagiarize or anything of the like, *ever*.

The movie *Shattered Glass* is about a young journalist named Steven Glass who worked for *The New Republic* in the late 1990s. He was the publication's star reporter until one day his work, "Hacker Heaven" fell into the hands of an online publication called *Forbes Digital Tool* who investigated the story and discovered that it was a fake. Glass tried to cover it up by taking fake notes, creating a fake website, and a fake a voicemail. Personally, I believe he was clever; just not that clever.

When I thought of all the time he took to cover his tracks he could have taken to find a good story. I did take into consideration that he was in school and probably stressed; however, according to a CBS article "Stephen Glass: I lied for Esteem" by Rebecca Leung, he fabricated his articles because he "loved the electricity of people liking my stories. I loved going to story conference meetings and telling people what my story was going to be, and seeing the room

excited. I wanted every story to be a home run” (Leung). I was not sure how I felt when I read this. I just know that what he did was wrong.

The New Republic was the not the only magazine the young reporter wrote for. Glass contributed to *Rolling Stone*, *New York Magazine*, *Mother Jones*, *Harper's*, and *George* (Bissinger). Knowing the major magazines he wrote for made me wonder, how could the other publications not notice flaws in his stories? Was it because *The New Republic* was a trusted magazine? Were his stories so amazing that because they wanted it to be true they did not check it thoroughly? Whatever the case may be, when his editor, Charles “Chuck” Lane, discovered that Glass was fabricating his work, he first tried to help Glass in finding his sources. When he found that Glass’s sources were not real, Lane decided to suspend him for two years but after discovering that Glass fabricated about 23 articles he was fired.

I wondered why Glass allowed a movie to be made about this incident. I remember Jayson Blair from chapter 10 of *The Elements of Journalism* by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel who plagiarized his material and realize that I do not recall a movie about him. I also wondered why Kovach and Rosenstiel did not mention Glass in their book. Then I remembered that Glass’s situation took place before Jayson Blair’s plagiarism and maybe the authors wanted updated information.

Through this film I learned how important fact checking is and how important it is to stay with the facts. I think this movie encouraged me to want to ask more questions meaning, if I am stuck on something like what article to write I should ask for help. Also I am convinced that there are ways to make your articles interesting while still sticking to the facts. Overall the film

scared me into wanting to be 100% truthful in everything *especially* my work. Once again, this film should be a requirement for *all* want-to-be journalism majors.

Works Cited

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