

Parasite: a heart-breaking human comedy

By: M. H. Lagarde

17/03/2020



There are several reasons why the film **Parasite** made history by winning many awards —the Oscar Award in the category of Best Picture was one of them.

Besides being the first film to break the language barrier — the first non-English language film in winning a major award in the Oscars —, a fact that put an end to nine decades of dominance of English-spoken films in the world’s most important event in the film industry. According to the critics, “Parasite” is a tragicomedy about the history of a family of hustlers who tries to get the most out of a wealthy family. Directed by Bong Joon Ho, this film stood out for its witty plot — from a cinematographic approach — and the jury members could not look the other way.

“Parasite” competed in Hollywood after doing so at the Cannes Film Festival last May, where it is said the response was so astounding that the jury led by Mexican Alejandro González Iñárritu voted unanimously to award the film with the *Palme d’Or* prize.

Likewise, some say the role played by Neon independent film distributor, headed by Tom Quinn, was paramount. He made the film win in the SAG Awards and paved its triumphant way to the Oscars.

But there is no doubt that “Parasite” will transcend, break every single barrier, and become a

blockbuster because of its subject: the great, existing inequalities in modern capitalism.

Not by chance many of the film shots took place in basements; namely, the basement of the Kim's family or the basement of wealthy family Park.

Bong's film portrays lots of South Korean citizens who picture themselves as "dirty cockroaches," those belonging to low-income families who almost quitted their dreams of having a decent home or improving their social status to become "golden cockroaches," a in South Korea where excessive prices of houses in recent years as well as a stagnant economy have undermined the people's support to president Moon Jae-in.

The sharp critic to modern South Korean society made by Bong Joon-ho reveals the hardship of several families in Seoul. In 132 minutes, this tragicomedy thriller shows the contrast between some slums and the glamorous life represented in fancy places within the capital city, as well as the ongoing parasite relationship between rich and poor people. Ahyeon-dong, one of the slums representing the poor neighborhood where the Kim's family lives, is actually located underground at the Seongbuk-dong neighborhood, known as the South Korea's Beverly Hills.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), inequality in South Korean economy, on par with that of UK and Latvia, is one of the highest in the world and has worsened in recent years.

In 2019, the Institute for Health and Social Affairs in South Korea carried out a survey, which "proved more than 85% of citizens felt there were "huge" pay gap within the society and people need to belong to a wealthy family to succeed."

Nonetheless, the uniform distribution of incomes among South Korean population is way better than other nations such as the US, where the gap between wealthy people and poor citizens is — following the universal health care and immigration — one of the campaign issues for Democrats with a view to the 2020 Presidential Race.

It is outrageous to some people that with all the wealth generated by the US, there are still 40 million people living in poverty and inequality rate does not decrease even when the economic indicators increase.

According to Mark Price, researcher at the Economic Policy Institute, with headquarters in Washington DC: "The incomes of the top 1% have doubled in the last three decades and a

half.”

According to the BBC, Philip G. Alston — UN Special *Rapporteur* on extreme poverty and human rights — released in 2018 a quite categorical report where he stated that the US is the richest nation in the world with higher levels of income and wealth inequality.

“Extreme inequality means the transfer of the economic and political power to an elite group of individuals, who will certainly take profit of it in line with their personal interests,” Alston said.

If all of it is happening in the most powerful economy of the capitalist world, then it is actually much worse in underdeveloped nations. Park’s fancy house, designed by a famous architect, and the parasites who try to survive in the basement, are also a picture of a world where the migration waves — from south to north — are increasingly frequent. The scorn the Kims feel, while smelling poor people, is similar to that of thousands of emigrants who are waiting in Mexico to cross someday the US border, but the wall built by Trump still impedes it.

Beyond his indisputable cinematographic skills, the director proved once again that real local art may sometimes result in universal art. The tragicomedy “Parasite” will be hailed in times where, according to the international organization Oxfam, released on the eve of the World Economic Forum Davos 2020, 2.153 millionaires have more money than 4.6 billion individuals (60% of the world population).

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz/CubaSí Translation Staff