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Last week I saw a motion picture that I'm sure I will never forget. It's called "Come Back, Africa," and was filmed in secrecy a year or two ago in the Union of South Africa by a young American producer named Lionel Rogosin. I wish every adult in the U. S. could see this film.

There are no big Hollywood stars in Rogosin's production. Most of the "actors" in the piece had never before been in front of a camera, and you will be aware of that as you watch the screen. In fact, Rogosin told me the lack of professional gloss in the acting is intentional, for he hoped by using ordinary people from the real-life situation to gain a sense of the raw, naked truth that no studio-fabricated production could hope to reproduce. He has succeeded admirably.

For in this simple, straightforward tale of the everyday life of a human being with black skin in South Africa, Rogosin has peeled back the more obvious headlines and given us a startling insight into what a way of life built upon the fanatic doctrine of white supremacy can be. All of us were shocked by the ruthless shootings, beatings and mass arrests in South Africa in the past few months. But the artful documentation in "Come Back, Africa" of the slow but relentless stifling of a man's dignity, spirit and humanity itself is, in some ways, even more harrowing. For multiplied by the millions, this has been going on long before the headlines broke—and is going on today.

I think anyone who sees this film, and open-mindedly identifies with its leading character as he faces the mounting frustrations of his existence, cannot help but be greatly alarmed that such an organized, officially sanctioned system exists in the world today. The last time such a monster was allowed to run wild, we had to fight a world war to stamp it out. When our government and others in the free world continue to do business as usual in gold, diamonds, uranium and lobster tails with another such Hitler-like system, it becomes frightening to think of what could eventually happen.

It is also alarming in another sense. Though the South African pattern does not exist in all details in our own country, the basic ideas of American racial segregation and South African apartheid are one and the same. Few, if any, films have been made which as movingly document the effects of segregation upon Negro Americans. But the Supreme Court recognized the untold human tragedy inherent in the matter when, in its unanimous 1954 decision against the doctrine of "separate but equal," it declared that segregation affects the hearts and minds of Negro children "in a manner unlikely ever to be undone." Thus, the significance of "Come Back, Africa" is just as pertinent here as in South Africa.

I asked Lionel Rogosin why he made this film, since he obviously won't get rich by offering it to U. S. movie distributors. Rogosin—who also produced the prize-winning "On the Bowery" of a few years back—said he didn't get into the film industry to make money, but because he has certain feelings about society. He added: "To me, racialism is just about the worst crime there is."

Rogosin went to South Africa on his own and filmed the picture on the pretext of shooting a travelogue. If at any time the police had discovered the true nature of the film, he would undoubtedly have been deported and everyone connected with the film would have been in serious trouble. In fact, several of the whites who aided Rogosin have since had to flee the country, while others have been jailed. Rogosin said he only recently learned of some of this, since the government there has now made it a crime even to tell anybody that someone has been arrested!

"Come Back, Africa" makes a telling point ably and movingly. It is well worth going to see.