

DISNEY PORTRAYS SOCIETAL ISSUES IN ZOOTOPIA

by YESSICA NARANJO

Sloths, sly foxes, and adorable bunnies are probably what come to mind when you think of Disney's new animated film, *Zootopia*.

The movie, filled with anthropomorphic animals, is a nothing less than a masterpiece, bringing the world of animation and storytelling to a whole new level.

Zootopia follows the story of Judy Hopps, a sweet bunny who pursues her childhood dream and becomes the first rabbit police officer. Despite graduating top of her class, Judy faces discrimination in the police force and is assigned to parking duty rather than the important missing mammal cases. While on parking duty, Judy meets Nick Wilde, a sly fox with whom she forms an unlikely partnership. From there, the duo begin searching for Mr. Otterton, one of the missing mammals. That leads to a surprising series of events that keeps viewers on the edge of their seat.

Without a doubt, *Zootopia* is Disney's best animated films since *The Lion King*. Aside from its undeniably cute animals, the film brings up a lot of risky, but prevalent messages.

Right away, the movie hits you with one of its central themes, "you can be anything." But along with that theme is the message that you need to work hard in order become anything you want to be.

Judy doesn't quit when she's constantly told that she can't be a bunny cop. Instead, she works hard and shows everyone that even a small bunny can be a big cop.

Riskier messages revealed in the film show prejudice, racism (in this case, specism), and discrimination in *Zootopia*. While at first everyone seems to live in harmony, it is quickly exposed that each species is still stereotyped. Bunnies are carrot farmers, sloths run the DMV (clever, clever

Disney), and foxes are sly con artists. While it may at first seem comedic, it's clear that each species struggles with their stereotypes, as well as stereotyping each other.

One example is when Judy's parents give her a bottle of fox repellent before her train ride to *Zootopia*. Judy claims she doesn't need it, but finds herself carrying the bottle throughout the movie, a fact that later on goes to hurt and offend her unexpected partner and friend, Nick.

After some predators begin to mysteriously go savage in *Zootopia*, prejudice becomes a lot more common. In one scene, a bunny mother scoots herself and her child

away from a tiger that sits next to them on the train. Like many other scenes, it speaks volumes, reminding us that, like in *Zootopia*, prejudice still exists.

Aside from its obvious message, the movie is filled with easter eggs, including clear references to *The Godfather* and *Breaking Bad*.

Kids will enjoy it, teenagers and parents will enjoy it even more.

It's cute, it's funny, it's clever, and an inevitable classic. *Disney*, you've done it again.

