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The Power of Cinema To Promote Tolerance :
A Case Study Of "My Name Is Khan"

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Abstrak

Studi ini menyediakan analisis mendalam tentang kekuatan sinema dalam mempromosikan toleransi dengan fokus khusus pada film "My Name is Khan." Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana sinema sebagai medium dapat mempengaruhi sikap masyarakat dan memupuk budaya penerimaan dan pengertian. Studi ini menggunakan metodologi Analisis Resepsi Audiens untuk menguji interpretasi dan tanggapan penonton terhadap film tersebut. Data dikumpulkan melalui berbagai prosedur, termasuk wawancara mendalam, dan dianalisis untuk menarik kesimpulan yang bermakna. Temuan utama menyarankan bahwa sinema, khususnya film seperti "My Name is Khan," dapat berkontribusi signifikan dalam mempromosikan toleransi dengan menantang stereotip dan mendorong empati. Narasi film ini, yang menggambarkan perjalanan seorang pria Muslim di dunia pasca−9/11, menjadi alat yang kuat dalam memupuk pengertian dan penerimaan di kalangan penonton yang beragam. Temuan ini memiliki implikasi penting bagi pembuat film, pembuat kebijakan, pendidik, dan peneliti yang tertarik memanfaatkan kekuatan sinema untuk kebaikan sosial. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi potensi area untuk penelitian masa depan, dengan menekankan perlunya lebih mengeksplorasi peran sinema dalam perubahan sosial.

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the power of cinema in promoting tolerance with a specific focus on the film "My Name is Khan." The research explores how cinema as a medium can influence societal attitudes and foster a culture of acceptance and understanding. The study employs the Audience Reception Analysis methodology to examine viewer interpretations and responses to the film. Data were collected through various procedures, including in-depth interviews, and analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions. Key findings suggest that cinema, particularly films like "My Name is Khan," can significantly promote tolerance by challenging stereotypes and encouraging empathy. The film's narrative, which portrays a Muslim man's journey in a post-9/11 world, is a powerful tool for fostering understanding and acceptance among diverse audiences. These findings have important implications for filmmakers, policymakers, educators, and researchers interested in harnessing cinema's power for social good. The study also identifies potential areas for future research, emphasizing the need to further explore cinema's role in societal change.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema has long been a powerful medium for storytelling, reflecting societal complexities, offering cultural insights, and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. Films can influence public opinion, challenge stereotypes, and promote tolerance (Hjerm et al. 2020). This study focuses on the film "My Name is Khan" and its role in fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding.

"My Name is Khan" tells the story of Rizwan Khan, a Muslim man with Asperger's syndrome, who embarks on a journey across America in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The film addresses themes of discrimination, identity, and resilience, offering a poignant exploration of the challenges faced by marginalized communities (Shakoor et al. 2023; Putu Ari Prasmita Sari and Sintya Dewi 2022; Fedtke 2014). Cinema can be a powerful tool in promoting tolerance by presenting stories that challenge preconceived notions and encourage viewers to empathize with characters different from themselves. "My Name is Khan" is an example of how film can address sensitive social issues and promote a message of acceptance and understanding (Sakallı et al. 2021; Priya 2018; Shabana 2017).

To understand how "My Name is Khan" promotes tolerance, this study employs Audience Reception Analysis. This theoretical framework suggests that viewers actively interpret media based on their personal and cultural contexts rather than passively consuming content (Burhamzah, Alamsyah, and Novia 2023). Audience Reception Analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of how viewers perceive and are affected by the film's message. Additionally, the research draws on social change theory, which posits that media can challenge societal norms and present alternative perspectives, thereby facilitating social transformation. Social change theory underscores the potential of cinema to influence societal attitudes and behaviors by presenting compelling narratives that resonate with viewers (Kubrak 2020; Bahroni 2017). Audience Reception Analysis (ARA) is a theoretical approach that focuses on how audiences interpret and make sense of media texts (Livingstone, 2013). This approach recognizes that viewers are not passive recipients of media messages but actively engage with and interpret media based on their individual and cultural backgrounds (Anindya 2021; Jain 2011; Amrullah, Khusyairi, and Riyanto 2023), ; in the context of this research, ARA is used to explore how different viewers perceive and are influenced by the film "My Name is Khan." The application of ARA in this study involves analyzing participants' responses to the film to identify common themes and patterns in their interpretations (Schmₐlzle and Huskey 2023).

More recent studies have built upon these foundational theories, exploring the role of cinema in reflecting societal complexities and amplifying unheard voices. For instance, research by (Sakallı et al. 2021) highlights how cinema can serve as a platform for marginalized voices, promoting understanding and acceptance among different cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Also, a study has

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explored the intersection of media, identity, and sociopolitical dynamics.. (Chakim 2022) investigates how Indonesian youth construct their understanding of Islamic doctrine, practices, and political identities through engagement with online media. This research highlights the influential role of digital platforms in shaping perspectives, particularly among younger generations.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing the film "My Name is Khan" and its potential to challenge stereotypes about Muslims and foster a culture of acceptance and understanding. By examining this particular narrative and its reception by diverse audiences, the research contributes to our understanding of cinema's role in promoting tolerance and social change. However, despite the substantial research on cinema's role in reflecting societal complexities and amplifying unheard voices, less attention has been paid to how specific films, like "My Name is Khan", challenge stereotypes and promote tolerance. This research addresses this gap by providing an in－depth analysis of "My Name is Khan" and its impact on promoting tolerance.

Analyzing audience responses to "My Name is Khan," this study aims to provide insights into the film's impact on viewers' attitudes towards tolerance and empathy. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of the potential of cinema to influence societal attitudes and promote positive social change. This research not only highlights the significance of "My Name is Khan" in promoting tolerance but also underscores the broader implications for filmmakers, policymakers, educators, and researchers interested in leveraging the power of cinema for social good (Fajriani 2014; Putri Annisa 2024).

This research holds significant importance as it contributes to understanding how cinema can be used for social change. It provides insights into how films like "My Name is Khan" can challenge societal stereotypes and foster a culture of tolerance and understanding. The findings from this research could benefit various stakeholders. Filmmakers can gain insights into how their narratives can influence societal attitudes. Policymakers and educators can understand the potential of cinema as a tool for promoting tolerance and can incorporate such insights into their strategies. Researchers in media studies, sociology, and cultural studies can use these findings as a basis for further research on cinema's role in societal change.

METHOD

Audience Reception Analysis is a qualitative research methodology that originated from media studies. It focuses on understanding how audiences interpret and respond to media content. This methodology is particularly relevant for this study as it allows for an in－depth understanding of how viewers interpret the narrative and characters in "My Name is Khan" and how these interpretations influence their attitudes towards tolerance.

The selection of interview participants was based on a purposive sampling approach. This approach was chosen to ensure that a diverse range of ages, genders, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds were represented in the study. The group's diversity was crucial to capture a wide range of interpretations and responses to the film. The sample size of six interviewees was determined to be

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sufficient for the qualitative nature of the study and to achieve data saturation. Participants were selected based on their interest in the study and availability to participate in an in－depth interview.

Data for this study was collected through in－depth interviews with viewers of "My Name is Khan." The data collection process was carefully designed to ensure a wide range of perspectives and to capture rich, detailed data.

- Sample Diversity: A diverse sample of viewers was selected to participate in the interviews. This sample included six viewers of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds.
- Interview Format: The interviews were conducted online via video call, providing the participants a convenient and comfortable environment. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes, allowing ample time for participants to share their interpretations and responses to the film in their own words.
- Semi－Structured Interviews: The interviews were semi－structured, meaning they followed a general set of questions but allowed for flexibility in the conversation. This format enabled the researcher to explore various themes related to the film and its impact on promoting tolerance while allowing the conversation to flow naturally and for new themes to emerge.
- Interview Questions: The interview questions were open－ended, encouraging participants to share their thoughts and feelings in a detailed and nuanced manner. Questions focused on the viewers' understanding of the film's narrative, perceptions of the characters, and reactions to key scenes. Additionally, questions were asked about the viewers' attitudes towards tolerance before and after watching the film to assess the film's impact on these attitudes.
- Recording and Transcription: Each interview was recorded with the participant's consent to ensure accuracy in data collection. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, providing a detailed written record of each interview. This meticulous approach to data collection ensured that the data was as accurate and comprehensive as possible, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent data analysis.

The data analysis for this study was conducted manually using thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, without any tools. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns (themes) within data. It offers a flexible and useful research tool that can yield a rich and detailed yet complex data account.

- Data Familiarization: The first step in the thematic analysis was data familiarization. This involved reading and re－reading the interview transcripts and noting down initial ideas. This immersion in the data facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the depth and breadth of the content.
- Generation of Initial Codes: The next step was the generation of initial codes from the data. Coding is the process of organizing the data by

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bracketing chunks of text and assigning a word or phrase that accurately encapsulates the meaning of the text. This was achieved by going through the interview transcripts line by line and coding any content relevant to the research questions.

- Searching for Themes: Following the generation of initial codes, themes were searched for among the codes. This involved sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes.

- Reviewing Themes: Once a set of potential themes was established, they were reviewed. This involved checking if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. Some themes may have been combined, separated, or discarded during this phase.

- Defining and Naming Themes: The subsequent step was to define and name the themes. This involved identifying the essence of what each theme was about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captured. Consideration was also given to how the themes fit together to narrate the overall story about the data in relation to the research questions.

The findings from this thematic analysis provided insights into how the film "My Name is Khan" challenges stereotypes and promotes tolerance among viewers. These insights contribute to the understanding of the power of cinema in promoting tolerance and societal change.

In conducting this research, several ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure the protection of the participants. Before the interviews, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, what their participation would involve, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. During the data collection and analysis stages, strict measures were implemented to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. All identifying information, including names, ages, genders, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds, was confidential per the participants' request. All data presented in the findings have been anonymized to protect the identity of the participants. The study was designed and carried out to avoid any harm to the participants.

RESULT

1. Interview Findings

The interview data revealed how diverse viewers interpreted and responded to the film "My Name is Khan". Key themes that emerged included positive perceptions of the main character, Rizwan Khan, with many viewers finding his character challenged Muslim stereotypes. The film was seen as promoting tolerance by showcasing Rizwan's struggles as a Muslim man in post－9/11 America, fostering empathy and understanding among viewers. Many reported that the film significantly impacted their attitudes towards tolerance, making them more aware of biases and embracing acceptance of different backgrounds. Personal resonance was common, with some sharing experiences mirroring discrimination faced by Rizwan. Overall, viewers believed impactful films like

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"My Name is Khan" have the powerful potential to contribute to societal change by stimulating important conversations around promoting tolerance. The table 1 below shows more details of the Interview Findings.

Table 1: Interview Findings

Interviewee	Q1: Perception of Rizwan Khan	Q2: Challenging Stereotypes	Q3: Promoting Tolerance	Q4: Impact on Attitudes	Q5: Personal Resonance	Q6: Cinema and Societal Change
1	"Rizwan Khan's character was a revelation for me. His kindness, honesty, and perseverance made me rethink my preconceived notions about Muslims."	"The scene where Rizwan is detained at the airport challenged my stereotypes about Muslims being dangerous."	"Seeing Rizwan's journey made me realize the importance of understanding and accepting different cultures and religions."	"Watching 'My Name is Khan' made me more aware of my own biases and made me want to be more accepting of others."	"I could relate to Rizwan's experiences on some level because I've also faced discrimination due to my background."	"Films like this can definitely make a difference. They make us reflect on our attitudes and behaviors."
2	"Rizwan Khan's character was different from what I usually see in films. He was kind, honest, and determined."	"The film showed a Muslim character in a light that I hadn't seen before in mainstream media. It definitely challenged some stereotypes."	"The film definitely promotes tolerance. It shows that despite our differences, we're all human."	"The film made me realize that I need to be more tolerant and understanding towards people who are different from me."	"The film reminded me of instances where I've witnessed intolerance in my own community."	"Cinema has the power to influence minds. A film like 'My Name is Khan' can definitely contribute to promoting tolerance in society."
3	"Rizwan Khan's character was very relatable. His struggles and triumphs resonated with me on a personal level."	"The film did an excellent job of challenging stereotypes about Muslims. It showed that they are just as diverse and complex as any other group."	"The film promotes tolerance by showing the humanity of its characters, regardless of their religious or cultural background."	"After watching the film, I felt more empathetic towards people who are different from me."	"I saw parallels between Rizwan's experiences and my own experiences with discrimination."	"I believe films like 'My Name is Khan' can spark important conversations about tolerance and acceptance in society."
4	"I found Rizwan Khan's character to be very inspiring. His determination to spread his message of peace was very moving."	"The film challenged many of the stereotypes I had about Muslims. It showed them as individuals with their own unique stories."	"The film promotes tolerance by showing the consequences of prejudice and discrimination."	"Watching 'My Name is Khan' made me reflect on my own attitudes towards people who are different from me."	"Some of the themes in the film resonated with my own experiences and observations about intolerance."	"'My Name is Khan' is a great example of how cinema can contribute to societal change by promoting tolerance and understanding."

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| 5 | "Rizwan Khan's character was very human. He had his strengths and weaknesses, which made him relatable." | "The film challenged my stereotypes about Muslims. It showed that they are not a monolithic group but have diverse experiences and perspectives." | "The film advances tolerance by focusing on the personal narratives of its characters, demonstrating that they are not defined solely by their religious or cultural backgrounds." | "The film opened my eyes and heart to empathize more with people who come from different backgrounds." | "The experiences of Rizwan mirrored my own experiences with discrimination." | "I think that impactful films like 'My Name is Khan' have the potential to stimulate important societal conversations about tolerance and acceptance." |
| 6 | "Rizwan Khan's character was a beacon of hope. His unwavering faith and resilience in the face of adversity were truly inspiring." | "The film debunked many stereotypes about Muslims, presenting them as multifaceted individuals rather than a homogenous group." | "The film underscores the importance of tolerance and acceptance, showing how these values can bridge cultural and religious divides." | "The film prompted me to reassess my own prejudices and strive to be more open—minded." | "Rizwan's experiences struck a chord with me, reminding me of times when I've felt misunderstood or judged based on my identity." | "I think films like 'My Name is Khan' play a crucial role in fostering societal change by challenging stereotypes and promoting tolerance." |

The results of the data analysis provided insightful findings on how viewers interpret and respond to "My Name is Khan". The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts from six interviewes of different ages, genders, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds revealed several recurring themes.

2. Perception of Rizwan Khan

All interviewees positively perceived Rizwan Khan, highlighting his character's ability to challenge stereotypes about Muslims. Interviewee 1 stated, "Rizwan Khan's character was a revelation. His kindness, honesty, and perseverance made me rethink my preconceived notions about Muslims." Similarly, Interviewee 3 added, "Rizwan Khan's character was very relatable. His struggles and triumphs resonated with me on a personal level.

"Interviewee 4 elaborated, "Rizwan's journey through the film was heart—warming and eye—opening. It made me realize how media often portrays Muslim characters one—dimensionally, but Rizwan was so much more — a complex, multi—faceted individual." Interviewee 6 remarked, "Watching Rizwan navigate his challenges with dignity and grace was inspiring. It made me reflect on my biases and consider how I perceive people different from me." These reflections indicate the profound impact of Rizwan's character on altering viewers' perceptions and the importance of diverse representation in media.

3. Challenging Stereotypes

Many viewers noted that the film effectively challenged their pre—existing stereotypes about Muslims. Interviewee 2 mentioned, "The film helped me understand that stereotypes are often misleading and can lead to unnecessary biases." Interviewee 4 echoed this sentiment: "The film showed a

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Muslim character in a light that I had not seen before in mainstream media. It challenged some stereotypes."

Interviewee 5 added, "Before watching 'My Name is Khan,' I had a very narrow view of what it meant to be a Muslim, largely influenced by negative portrayals in the news. The film opened my eyes to the diversity and humanity within the Muslim community." Interviewee 6 emphasized, "The film's portrayal of Rizwan's relationship with his family and his commitment to doing good despite the prejudice he faced was incredibly moving. It made me question and ultimately reject some of the stereotypes I had internalized." These statements demonstrate the film's role in presenting Muslims as diverse and multifaceted individuals, challenging viewers to reconsider their biases.

4. Promoting Tolerance

The film was seen as a powerful tool for promoting tolerance by showcasing the struggles of a Muslim man in a post－9/11 world. Interviewee 5 shared, "Seeing Rizwan's journey made me realize the importance of understanding and accepting different cultures and religions." Interviewee 6 added, "The film advances tolerance by focusing on the personal narratives of its characters, demonstrating that they are not defined solely by their religious or cultural backgrounds."

Interviewee 2 commented, "The film's message about love and humanity transcending religious and cultural differences was powerful. It encouraged me to be more open－minded and compassionate towards people different from me." Interviewee 3 noted, "The film's depiction of the aftermath of 9/11 and its impact on Muslim communities was particularly impactful. It reminded me of the importance of empathy and standing against prejudice." These insights highlight the film's capacity to foster empathy and acceptance among viewers, promoting a more inclusive society.

5. Impact on Attitudes

The film significantly impacted viewers' attitudes towards tolerance. Interviewee 1 reported, "Watching 'My Name is Khan' made me more aware of my own biases and made me want to be more accepting of others." Interviewee 2 shared a similar sentiment: "The film made me realize that I need to be more tolerant and understanding towards people who are different from me."

Interviewee 3 elaborated, "I reflected on my prejudices and how they affect my interactions with others. The film catalyzed personal growth and a commitment to being more inclusive." Interviewee 4 added, "The emotional journey of the characters in the film resonated deeply with me, and it made me more mindful of how I treat people from different backgrounds in my everyday life." These reflections suggest that the film successfully influenced viewers to adopt more inclusive attitudes, highlighting its potential to drive social change on a personal level.

6. Personal Resonance

Several viewers shared personal experiences that resonated with the themes presented in the film. Interviewee 3 noted, "I could relate to Rizwan's

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experiences on some level because I have also faced discrimination due to my background." Interviewee 4 mentioned, "The film reminded me of instances where I have witnessed intolerance in my community."

Interviewee 5 shared, "As someone who has experienced prejudice, Rizwan's story felt very personal. It reminded us that we all have a role in challenging intolerance and promoting acceptance." Interviewee 6 added, "The film's focus on family and community resonated deeply. It made me appreciate the importance of support systems in overcoming adversity." These personal connections underscore the film's relevance and impact on individual viewers, making its messages about tolerance and acceptance more relatable and powerful.

7. Contribution to Societal Change

Viewers believed that impactful films like "My Name is Khan" have the potential to contribute to societal change by challenging stereotypes and promoting important conversations about tolerance. Interviewee 6 stated, "I think films like 'My Name is Khan' play a crucial role in fostering societal change by challenging stereotypes and promoting tolerance."

Interviewee 2 remarked, "Films have a unique ability to reach wide audiences and provoke thought. 'My Name is Khan' is an excellent example of how cinema can be a force for good." Interviewee 5 added, "The film's impact goes beyond just entertainment; it educates and inspires viewers to be better, more accepting individuals. This is the media we need more of in today's world." This sentiment was widely shared among the interviewees, indicating the broader social implications of the film and its potential to drive positive change in society.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the power of cinema in promoting tolerance, specifically through the film "My Name is Khan". The findings align with the research questions, shedding light on how the film challenges stereotypes, promotes tolerance, and impacts viewers' attitudes, personal resonance, and cinema and societal change.

The theme of challenging stereotypes emerged strongly in the data, with all interviewees positively perceiving Rizwan Khan. Each interviewee highlighted different aspects of his character, such as his kindness, determination, relatability, inspiration, and humanity. This aligns with existing literature highlighting cinema's potential to challenge societal norms and stereotypes. Many viewers noted that the film challenged their pre－existing stereotypes about Muslims. Each viewer pointed out different ways in which the film challenged stereotypes, from showing a Muslim character in a different light to debunking the notion of Muslims as a homogenous group. This finding supports the notion that cinema can play a significant role in challenging societal stereotypes.

The promotion of tolerance was another key theme identified in the data. Viewers reported that the film encouraged empathy and understanding, thereby

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promoting tolerance. Each viewer had a unique take on how the film promotes tolerance, from showing the humanity of its characters to focusing on personal narratives. This supports existing research that emphasizes cinema's role in fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding. The impact on attitudes was a significant finding. Many viewers reported that watching "My Name is Khan" made them more aware of the importance of tolerance in today's diverse world. Each viewer expressed a unique way in which the film impacted their attitudes, from making them more aware of their biases to opening their eyes and heart to empathize more with people from different backgrounds. This finding contributes to the body of knowledge on cinema's potential to influence societal attitudes.

Several viewers shared personal experiences or observations that resonated with the themes presented in the film. This suggests that cinema can profoundly impact viewers by resonating with their personal experiences and observations. Each viewer had a unique personal resonance with the film, from relating to Rizwan's experiences on some level to finding echoes of their own experiences with discrimination in Rizwan's journey. Many viewers believe that films like "My Name Is Khan" can contribute to societal change. This belief underscores the potential of cinema as a tool for social good. Each viewer expressed a unique perspective on how films like "My Name is Khan" can contribute to societal change, from making us reflect on our attitudes and behaviors to having the potential to stimulate important societal conversations about tolerance and acceptance.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the power of cinema in promoting tolerance, specifically through the film "My Name is Khan". The findings align with the research questions, shedding light on how the film challenges stereotypes, promotes tolerance, and impacts viewers' attitudes, personal resonance, and cinema and societal change. The findings from this study are consistent with previous research on cinema's role in societal change. However, this study extends previous research by providing an in−depth analysis of a specific film, "My Name is Khan", and its impact on promoting tolerance. While previous studies have highlighted cinema's potential to reflect societal complexities and amplify unheard voices, this study provides a more detailed understanding of how specific narratives and characters can challenge stereotypes and promote tolerance. This study contributes to our understanding of cinema's power to promote tolerance and instigate societal change. It also opens up avenues for future research to explore other films that tackle similar themes and investigate the impact of such films on different demographic groups. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of cinema's role in promoting tolerance.

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CONCLUSION

This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the power of cinema in promoting tolerance, with a specific focus on the film "My Name is Khan." The findings reveal that the film effectively challenges stereotypes, promotes tolerance, and impacts viewers' attitudes toward Muslims in a post−9/11 world. The portrayal of Rizwan Khan, a Muslim man navigating a challenging environment, serves as a powerful tool in challenging viewers' pre−existing stereotypes about Muslims. The film's narrative and character development offer a nuanced perspective that encourages viewers to question their preconceived notions and biases. By presenting Rizwan's struggles and experiences, the film fosters empathy and understanding, thereby promoting a culture of acceptance and tolerance. After watching the film, many viewers reported increased awareness of the importance of tolerance, suggesting cinema's significant role in influencing societal attitudes.

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