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## The Twilight Zone's 'Replay' Is A Timely Episode About the 'Monsters' of Racism and Police Brutality

Published on June 19, 2020, by [Murjani Rawls](#) - Posted in [Editorials 0](#)



*The Twilight Zone* has built clever and thought-provoking critiques of society since its inception. Who could even forget the classic episode, "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street?" Aliens manipulated a simple thing such as a small town's power supply and out came mankind's ugliness towards each other. The punchline was that we were the monsters all along. Things such as racism and classicism bring out the worst qualities within us.

Right now as I type this, America has been staring at its past and present history of racism. The death of George Floyd has led to massive protests, difficult and needed conversations, and small steps towards change. The great thing about media such as TV and movies is that it can utilize creative devices to display injustices. Sometimes, these stories are the reality checks we need. Small pieces of art that go farther and penetrate hearts and minds deeper than angry words can reach. This is what both director Gerald McMurry and writer Selwyn Seyfu Hinds exquisitely portrayed in 'Replay.' It's one of the most powerful and timely episodes within the first season of CBS All Access 2019's revival of *The Twilight Zone*.



Photo Credit: CBS All Access

We meet Nina (Sanaa Lathan), a single mother who is driving her son Dorian (Damson Idris) to college. During their conversation, she reveals that she has a camcorder. In a modern setting with the advancement of technology, a handheld camcorder may look out of place. There are two ways you can look at it; it's a play on an old *Twilight Zone* episode, "*A Most Unusual Camera*" and just think of parents in general. When a child is growing up, parents tend to hold on to things that remind them of the days where their child was younger. Thus, when they could protect them the most from the evils of the outside world.

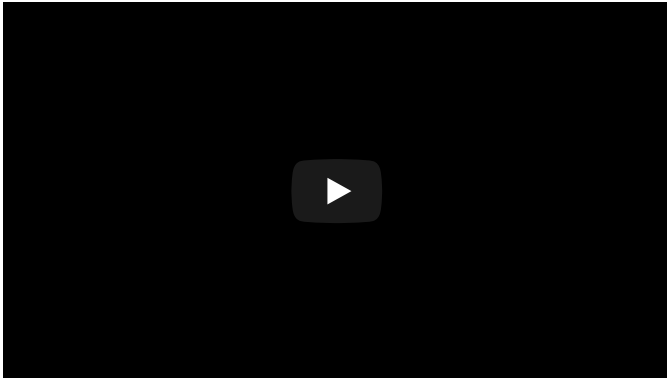
With this camcorder, she inadvertently discovers that she can rewind time itself. This comes into play when they both meet Officer Lasky (Glenn Fleshler), a racist cop that finds different ways to impede them on their destination. Whether it be not believing that Nina is the owner of her car or citing them for a phantom noise complaint. Each encounter leads closer to Dorian's death with their most basic of rights discarded. Lathan's performance is a stellar medium throughout the whole episode. Through her emotional state, she can convey the stressors that any Black parent has when they will do anything for their children to have a better life.

Nina tries everything to avoid a certain fate. Taking backroads. Staying in a hotel for a night. She even tries to appeal to Officer Lasky's empathy with a meal and stressing to him that Dorian is all she's got directly. Nothing works to avoid the gaze or Lasky's icy demeanor. There's a line that Nina says to her brother Neal (Steve Harris) towards the end of the episode; "No matter what route we take, no matter how nice or mean we are, there's nothing I can do!" In this episode, Nina is battling against both fate and the tragedies of her past. In losing her brothers to gun violence when she was younger, she leaves home in hopes to escape death. It's just a neverending cycle of being in survival mode. A constant that many Black families have to endure.

The only way that Nina and Dorian can overcome the plight of Lasky is not facing him alone. It's only when she returns home and enlists the help of her brother and the community, that it stops the prejudice in their tracks. One of the only weapons that we have to combat police brutality is to document it. It's only when Nina presses record on the camcorder and

confronts Lasky that things change. The only way out is through and there's strength in numbers in these cases. No matter how many times Nina rewind time with the camcorder, things continue to escalate. The character of Officer Lasky is more so a literary device. In 'Replay,' he is completely devoid of any emotion and is the embodiment of instances of police brutality. Black people can dress nicely or in this case have magic at their disposal and still not escape the jaws of racism.

In the end, the episode almost ends on a somber note. Much like previous episodes of *Twilight Zone*, there's always an invisible catch. Ten years later, an older Nina sees a grown-up Dorian with his daughter – camcorder still in hand. When the camcorder is eventually broken, it sounds like a gunshot. Nina has to let Dorian face the uncertain elements of systemic racism with no safeguard. With Black families, that's what their reality is. Black parents give their sons or daughters to the world that may find ways to hate them. An everyday venture to get something as simple as ice cream could end in tragedy. And all for what? Here, racism is the boogeyman. It's the monster under the bed or the abstract noises down a dark hallway. However, racism is only a puppet and the puppeteer is those who use it against other people.



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Author: **Murjani Rawls** View all posts by [Murjani Rawls](#)

Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host, and photographer since 2014, Murjani Rawls has been stretching the capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has as a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

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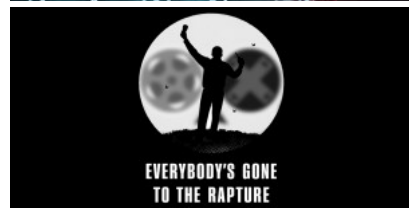
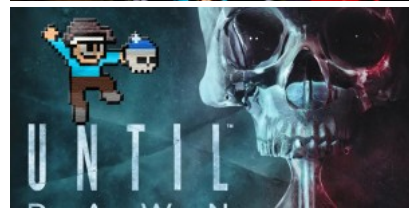


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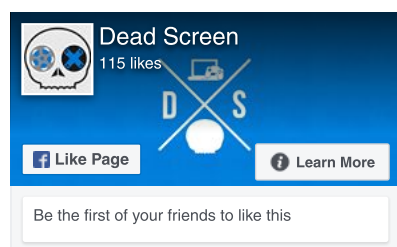
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