

David Oyelowo Refuses to Glamorize Darkness in New Film

David Oyelowo is a talented actor. His recent starring roles in *Selma*, *Nightingale* and *Lee Daniels' The Butler* have all won him awards and critical recognition. But for his most recent film, *Captive*, he's had to tackle a unique challenge: avoid looking cool.

In the new faith-based drama *Captive*, Oyelowo plays escaped murderer Brian Nichols. The movie is based on a true story. In 2005, Nichols killed four people in his escape from an Atlanta courthouse; he also stole cars and kidnapped a young woman, Ashley Smith, before he was brought to justice.

And yet despite all of those crimes, Oyelowo says it was surprisingly difficult to prevent viewers from seeing Nichols as the film's hero.

"We had to work very hard to make sure that Brian Nichols didn't come off as a cool kind of James Bond-like character, because you have all the cinematic touchpoints ... that we actually associate with heroes," Oyelowo explains. "I'm running around in a suit. I've got two guns. I'm killing people. I had to work very hard to make sure it didn't feel glamorous, make sure it felt cold-hearted. ... That was pretty surprising, the fact that Brian Nichols in a lot of movies could be deemed to be 'cool.'"

Oyelowo would normally be repelled by this sort of role. As a strong Christian, he believes he has a moral obligation to both God and his children to uphold godly principles both on and off the screen. That doesn't mean he will never show darkness in his films. Rather, it means the light must always defeat the darkness; he refuses to glamorize sin.

Most Hollywood actors wouldn't take such a bold stance, but Oyelowo believes that films can be powerful means for improving culture—or for corrupting it.

"My worldview is very much borne out of my faith, so therefore I am an artist who believes that what I put out into the world has an effect, and therefore I have to be responsible for that," he says. "There are some who say that films and what they portray don't affect an audience. I would vehemently disagree and say that those are irresponsible individuals who probably know they're putting bad stuff out there but don't want to claim responsibility for it."

Oyelowo says he wasn't drawn to *Captive* because Nichols was some sort of "cool" Hollywood antihero. He was drawn to the film because of the true hero: Ashley Smith.

"I play a murderer," Oyelowo says. "I play someone who does reprehensible things, but the reason I wanted to see that story told is ultimately a miraculous circumstance ensues whereby this woman's life is changed for the better. ... I mean, Ashley Smith actually credits Brian Nichols as a kind of savior of hers. She feels her life probably would have remained the same without Nichols infiltrating her apartment."

Prior to her kidnapping, Smith was addicted to methamphetamine, which was ruining her life. In an interview with *Charisma*—available in the September 2015 issue—Smith explained that God used Nichols to get her attention and to turn her life around. After escaping Nichols, Smith quit drugs, got saved, got married and now travels the country inspiring others.

Hollywood needs these powerful stories told by talented Christians like David Oyelowo. Thankfully he has no plans to stop anytime soon. He's working on a couple of new projects, including a 1940s romance called *United Kingdom*.

When asked what motivates him to excellence, Oyelowo was quick

to reference the Bible: "Anyone who knows the parable of the talents knows that the parable in the Bible illustrates being given gifts that God wants you to invest in and multiply. And I take that very seriously. That's it, basically. I work very, very hard at something I love doing."