

T.D. Jakes Appalled Hollywood Still Considers Christians a Niche Audience

As both an African-American and a person of faith, I have watched with great consternation while the missing reflection of the world in which I live in was previously being poorly served. So says T.D. Jakes, megachurch pastor of The Potter's House, in a op-ed he wrote for *Variety*.

While he applauds the newfound proliferation of products that serve the burgeoning faith and family film market, he says he remains appalled that this sector is still being discussed from a niche-market perspective.

"I'm certainly aware that our great country is not a monolith with regard to faith or family or race for that matter," says Jakes. "Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine how 140 million consumers constitute a niche. More accurately, this group should be considered a majority of the market that deserves adequate attention at the box office as well as the television screen."

As he sees it, if we can forge a union that allows a market driven by authentic relativity rather than a shotgun wedding that ends in a plundering box office, we must start from the development stage of production to create lucrative offspring called "quality entertainment."

"In creating such a union, we must also be aware of the sensitivities of this population without alienating the mainstream populace, which may not share the same core values but will support quality entertainment that isn't exclusive, but rather inclusive, of a broad-based need for budget-friendly, family-friendly fare," Jakes writes.

He points to *Heaven Is for Real* as an example of an successful faith-based film that makes the genre harder to ignore.

“Hollywood may have to override its own skepticism in order to reflect faith on film,” he says, “and recognize that it needs to ‘go green’ at the box office by partnering with those who have an instinct to increase the diversity of entertainment options for a previously underserved and poorly served consumer market.”