

All Light, Everywhere (2021) dir. Theo Anthony

Eyes terrify me. Everything that has to do with eyes. As a visual artist, if my eye sight was lost, I'd count that as equivalent to being dead. Theo Anthony's *All Light, Everywhere* opens up with an unusually close up shot of an eye (Anthony himself's), as he turns the camera on himself to reveal the optic nerve, which subtitles inform us connects the eye to the brain yet itself carries no visual information. Or, per the film: "At the exact point where the world meets the seeing of the world, we're blind."¹ Have I been blind all long? Am I basically dead to me?

All Light, Everywhere is a non fiction two-hour feature that tackles on several significant aspects of surveillance: cultural, technological, and philosophical. How easy it is for technology that is theoretically "objective" and "logical", to be manipulated, abused, and withheld. Through two main themes Anthony evaluates the invasion of surveillance/software into daily life, and that these developments are as torn apart with biased elements of racism and classism in society, especially in law enforcement.

The film goes on a tour at Axon Enterprise, an Arizona based company that manufactures the most popular brand of stun gun, the Taser. Following the tour gives an awfully awkward tone to the scene, as the Axon executive leads the camera with a demeanor that seems somewhat robotic and structurally *evil*; promoting their body cams and "non-lethal weapons" as a justified commodity in our lives (In this scene I felt for some reason an immediate disdain for him and if this person was in touch with humanity. Perhaps I associated this representative as Axon itself and what the film has suggested what they stand for). It is seen that Axon proudly possess a mass amount of body cameras, followed with police officers in Baltimore training in a seminar on how to operate the cameras in the field.

It's no longer a "secret" that so many young black people were/are being killed by the police and its racist and classist structure of profiling. The film openly exposes the surveillance technology that's being developed for law enforcement suggests a form of capitalism as below the belt: the cameras appear to be less an aid for helping citizens than a new form of manipulatable alibi for cops.

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In sync with Stanley Nelson's harrowing inspection of power and abuse in Attica, *All Lights* also lays out the constructional aspect of racism: there's always the "surface" that authorities manipulate you to see. What they don't realize that their ideology is so fundamentally racist and colonizing to the core, and it shows.

There's always the truth. And then there's the white men's story:

Ross McNutt is the founder of Persistent Surveillance Systems, holding public meetings in attempt to be granted permission of his drone hardware to fly over the city, recording the neighborhood from a God's-eye view (white man obsessing with the "God's-eye view, America, savior complex....?) Citizens at the meetings are almost entirely black, and many of them wonder why the surveillance is occurring primarily in low-income neighborhoods of color. McNutt, who's white, doesn't have an answer. He also shows himself filming the meetings—rhyming his invasion of privacy with McNutt's.¹

There's so much more than the surface of what's shown to us. "Never judge a book by its cover.", "Beauty is only skin-deep"... we've been taught and aware of this notion of idea that something that lays *underneath* or "beneath" is something deeper and sincere but they all must essentially be "romantically beautiful" — is it really though? What *Attica* and *All Lights*, *Everywhere* taught me is that the "beneath" can be fucking ugly and revolting. Why are there people who care, and then there are those who don't, and the ones who do are the only ones having to do all the work? I asked if I had been blind. The answer is yes; fixated on the conceptual fulfillment of the illusion of the "beneath" of the self, I was blind to everything else. (707 words)

¹ Bowen, Chuck "All Light, Everywhere Is a Head-Spinning Exploration of the Limits of Sight