

Intouchables

[The Intouchables](#) (1:48, 2010, [8.6](#), [75|93%](#)) is a French drama based on the real events of a rich quadriplegic and his unlikely, tough immigrant caregiver. A strange name, but this is just because the original French title was left untranslated (meaning “untouchables”). This is a nod to how both the disabled and immigrants are often looked upon by the rest of society, be it due to disgust or to uncertainty, or to a well-meaning but ultimately too-gentle-to-be-useful approach. This review marks the first non-sports themed movie I’m reviewing, but the elements it touches on are clearly the same ones seen in the world of sport and exercise psychology, so this theme is conserved.

The movie starts with an endearing clip of Driss, a black Frenchman with a no nonsense attitude, barging in on the interview process of potential caregivers for the white quadriplegic, Philippe. Dismantling racist attitudes, you’d think right away, would be at the core of this movie – especially this idea of someone from the ‘hood turning the white collar life of the local rich suburb upside-down. Not so.



Sincerity: often the missing element in therapy. Here, Driss does his share to fix the problem.

This movie is mostly focused on just one simple truth: that therapy is often too bundled up in theory and sensitivity, and not on treating the patient as a *person*, to be maximally

effective. It reminded me of an [Invisibilia podcast](#) I once listened to, where they put the whole idea of “dis”-ability on its head. The whole thing is well worth a listen, but the bottom line is that society’s *expectations* of a **disabled** person being **unable** to do something are exactly what contributes – if not outright creates – the disability. The classic example is that of Daniel Kish, a blind man who leads a surprisingly “normal” life:

Returning to *The Intouchables*, Driss ends up getting hired, going through some typical growing pains – as expected from the vast difference between his before and after socioeconomic statuses, and – outside some sexism, a surprise homosexual twist, and a few otherwise cheesy elements, does his caregiver job extremely well. The issue of countertransference isn’t brought up at all, but then Driss isn’t a trained professional. Still, his form of sincere therapy, and of not babying his patient, is what I found most worth noting in this film. After working in physical rehab for close to ten years, this is the biggest element I find missing from it all.

Ratings? [★★★](#). Character and plot development are fairly stereotypical, so only half a point across the two. Complexity and originality also suffer, receiving only half a point each, with an additional half-point because it’s in French, which is always fun hearing. Recommendability? A full point – another great family night favourite, or something for a high school or junior year university health studies class.