

Afro Samurai

Afro Samurai is an anime that combines inspired American media (MTV influenced soul and hip-hop) and the epitome of the samurai, the "Way of the Warrior" or bushido, as idealized by Yamamoto Tsunetomo's book, Hagakure. Bushido is a spiritual guide that an idealized samurai would abide by, but is also the center of conflict in Afro Samurai, clashing with the anime's morbid theme: revenge. The five-episode series shows the trials of African protagonist, Afro, and his struggle between the "Way of the Warrior" and his obsession to avenge the murder of his father.

Bushido is a Confucian-influenced Japanese code of conduct that can be compared to Western chivalry. This code focuses on seven core virtues: moral righteousness (rectitude), courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honor, and loyalty. Two associated virtues include respect for elders (filial piety) and wisdom. However, the ultimate aim in life, according to bushido, is to be in constant preparation for death and die a good death with his honor intact, because to die a 'good death' is its own reward. In Hagakure, it is said that "When there is a choice of either living or dying, as long as there remains nothing behind to blemish one's reputation, it is better to live."

But the statement is contradicted with "When there is a choice of either dying or not dying, it is better to die."

This paradox explains that samurai do not need to chase death in time of peace, until faced a calamity where bushido tells the samurai to take the honorable choice, to accept in face of certain death and embrace it.

In the anime, Afro's honor is tainted when the main antagonist of the series, Justice, slays his father. Afro combines revenge, the desire to avenge his father, and bushido, the demand to restore his own honor by following the path of almost certain death, as the core ideals in his life. Revenge was the first motivation instilled in Afro's mind the moment he witnessed his father's death. Bushido was somewhat taught by a teacher Afro respected and had reason to stay with his new family that adopted him, following the reason that "it is better to live."

Afro's urge to avenge the past and that bushido requires the restoration of his honor brought pain, death, and grief to his foster family, and the death of the adored teacher. At an age just barely past adolescence, Afro immediately realizes his mistake. He then comes to the conclusion that his only resort is to, as Afro says, "my aim is to only move forward", but carries the guilt and burden that forms in Afro's subconscious. This form becomes a character named Ninja Ninja, constantly pushing Afro follow the other path; the opposition of bushido, to survive and live. Ninja Ninja reminds Afro that the "Way of the Warrior" was the reason that his family has died, voicing doubtful thoughts out loud and to stray Afro from death.

Jinnosuke, Afro's best friend, grieves over the death and suffering that resulted from Afro's choice. His only will to live almost eclipses Afro's reason to avenge his father, ironic that both seek revenge. In the battle between the Jinnosuke and Afro, Afro sheds his guilt when Ninja Ninja symbolically 'dies' during the fight.

When Afro faces his nemesis, Justice announces that to be 'God' in the universe is not just owning the Number One headband, but to own all the headbands. To own all the headbands would result in no one being able to challenge him, and therefore he would live forever. However, this is not the bushido way, because it is to avoid death and constantly cling to life. Afro, after succeeding in defeating Justice, in a sense is set on the path of life, but with his honor intact. Afro then follows the virtues of the bushido, but since he owns the Number One headband, would constantly be prepared to die a good death, something that everyone who abides by bushido wants. Thus, at the end of the series, Afro finally achieved a life where it is better to live. That is until the Number Two challenges him, as seen as the conclusion of the series when Jinnosuke, who survived the encounter between him and Afro, challenges Afro again.

Final - Revamped entirely. Studies the combination of Bushido and Revenge and the incorporation that drives plot.