

# Hiding in Plain Sight (2012)



Even when the Blackmons have dinner with his mother, Darius does not mention that they are homeless. (c) Bridgestone Multimedia Group

**NOTE TO READERS**—If you like this movie—and have Amazon’s Prime service—[the movie is streaming free of charge in early 2019](#). Amazon’s movie list is constantly changing, so enjoy the movie soon while it’s easily available. Here’s my review ...

This faith-based film is distinguished in that it is not a “come to Jesus” story but one dealing with a serious issue that ought to shame our get-as-rich-as-you-can-by-any-means culture—the issue of homelessness. We see, in the plight of the Blackmons, a proud middle-class family quickly plummeting from prosperity to homelessness once the parents lose their jobs, that homelessness cuts across all races. The fact that they are African American is of less importance, the message being that virtually *all* working class Americans are in danger of losing their homes. Because they are imbued with middle-class pride the question of too much of it getting in the way of recovery is central to their story.

Darius and Josephine Blackmon (Kelly O’Neil Jackson and Sharice Henry Chasi) enjoy attending church with their two children, Kendra and Michael ([Aaliyah Muhammad](#) and [Devion](#)

[Camp](#)), and then eating Sunday dinner at the home of his mother Ida Mae (Irma T. Hall). Both parents lose their jobs but do not reveal this to even Ida Mae, the parents keeping up a front of prosperity at church and at dinner. They are denied unemployment compensation and all too soon deplete their bank account. Unable to keep up their mortgage payments, they are evicted and reduced to living out of their car, barely affording gasoline. They park and sleep in it in a sparsely settled part of town underneath a highway overpass—and it is during the cold weather season.

Another story that will intersect with theirs is that of school teacher Kevin Allen (Martin Ezelle), who dips into his family funds to buy classroom supplies or to help a needy student. His wife Terri (Rachael Webb) is upset that he is spending family funds on students and their families—and then she meets the family and understands.

Darius and Josephine vainly try to stay well groomed, but this is difficult with just a few public bathrooms available to them for hygienic purposes. The Blackmon's suffered so much that there came a time when I wanted to shout at Darius to lay aside his pride and tell his mother, she being the kind of person who would gladly have taken them in. By not revealing his impoverished status, he feels additional pressure from the church, the pastor telling him that he expects a generous pledge for a current project. Given its apparent size, I would have thought the congregation might have had a fund to help destitute members. It seems ironic that relief for Darius comes not from the church but from teacher Kevin Allen. His offer of what Darius needs in order to land a job is "the miracle" the family has been praying for.:

The film makers may be faith-based, but they understand that a caring neighbor is often the miracle needed rather than some glowing phenomenon from the sky. Despite the starkness of the situation—Darius really loses his temper at one point, and almost his faith—the film is full of moments of grace. We see

examples of it in the sequence in which the family is stopped by the police, and at school, when his teacher confronts Michael about the stolen lunch, and of course when fellow teacher Kevin Allen helps several students, including Kendra. Although I still think [\*The Saint of Ft. Washington\*](#) is the best of the films about the homeless, this is a good family night film at church or home.

*This review will be in the February issue of VP along with a set of questions for reflection and/or discussion. If you have found reviews on this site helpful, please consider purchasing a subscription or individual issue in The Store.*