

‘Reservation Dogs’ Is At Its Best When Focusing on the Authentic Representation of Native People

BY

[TAVIUS ALLEN](#)

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Steal, lie, and cheat; the only way to escape a sedated half-life and make it to a place where dreams come true--California.

No owls are included in the making of *Reservation Dogs*, a fact that seems strange to note for non-Native viewers. The one appearance of a statue in the likeness of an owl, found in the third episode of the series, crudely blurs the eyes of the creature. Culturally, owls are harbingers of death noted to have eyes made from the nails of spirits, and it's details like this that set *Reservation Dogs* apart from many of the depictions of Indigenous characters on screen. The care for Native American lore and characters is fully drawn instead of being stereotypes. Steal, lie, and cheat; the only way to escape a sedated half-life and make it to a place where dreams come true- California. Those are words that the *Reservation Dogs* (glibly named by an enemy), hitch their every action on. The series takes place at a Native Reservation in Oklahoma and follows four indigenous characters Bear (D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai), Elora Danan (Devery Jacobs), Cheese (Lane Factor), and Willie Jack (Paulina Alexis) striving to leave their humble reservation to make it in California while grieving the death of one of their friends. The FX original dark comedy released on Hulu is groundbreaking in its representation of Native voices in front and behind the camera, making it one of the only shows of its kind. This rests a large responsibility on the series to display truthfully what has largely been an ignored or caricatured demographic on screen.

The film and television industries have a history of projecting racist stereotypes on many groups, and Indigenous characters have usually fallen into two camps. One imagines Indigenous people as savages and another imagines them as spirit guides to main characters physically and emotionally lost. The number of films that have found them to be the villains of the narrative is most evident in Westerns of the early 20th century through the 1960s. Following in that stride, contemporary examples of Indigenous representation have relegated these characters to the sidelines or a mystification that finds their traditions to be otherworldly, almost like a guiding force for characters of other cultures to pull. The *Simpsons* and *Futurama* utilize this trope to varying degrees, invoking a spirit guide to lead Homer back to his family and the native Martians being aggressive mystical people respectively. The *Lone Ranger* is among the films in recent years that have delegated Indigenous representation as unimportant as casting Johnny Depp as the character, Tonto. This revival of *The Lone Ranger* was also concerning in the original series perpetuating racist tropes of their own; a character already problematic in origins and fulfilling many of the tropes of Native Americans (Tonto didn't speak English and acted as a guide to the *Lone Ranger*) was bound to insult. In short, Native representation in film and television has been a rocky terrain.

Where does *Reservation Dogs* land on its representation of the Native American people? The series performs well when it focuses on the perspective that the characters possess by being contemporary members of a Native American reservation village. Rather fittingly, the series takes into account the history of Indigenous characters on screen and subverts those tropes through comedy. *Reservation Dogs* takes the idea of a spirit guide and pulls back its layers to lampoon the realities of such an occurrence along with its limitations in viewing Native people. Bear, one of the protagonists of the series, meets a guide that sticks with him throughout the first season. This figure communes with Bear on a purgatory-like plain after he and his friends are attacked by a rival gang wielding...paint guns. Striking up a monologue for Bear, Spirit (Dallas Goldtooth) offers words of encouragement that mostly ring hollow and are undercut by his ineptitude. Spirit is a warrior who died at Little Bighorn, and it's important to note that he didn't die fighting but was killed by his own horse on the way to the battle, attempting to divulge wisdom to Bear. This scene comes along with the same sort of reverence visually that is to be expected when spiritual events such as these happen for Native characters, but there's a clear intent to point at the dissonance of those dream sequences with the comedy that not every Native spirit could be a pearl of wisdom touting influential figure.

Spirit follows Bear throughout the first two episodes of the season in moments less and less akin to a reassuring figure and more in line with Bear's insight into his heritage. There's a sense that the dream sequences that involve Spirit are representative of Bear and his friend's desire to leave the reservation, viewing his home as more as a burdened dead-end place where people die. This is further accentuated by the groups' knowledge of their friend Daniel's (Dalton Cramer) suicide. *Reservation Dogs* manages to be in conversation with the history of Natives on-screen while commenting on the current feelings of Native adolescents.

Though the series does great work of disposing of harmful tropes directed towards the Native community there are still negative representations of Black culture and people. This is seen in the show's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to hint at a character's inflated ego or lack of awareness. A dream sequence of sorts was even formulated as a rap music video throughout the fourth episode that was associated with Bear's deadbeat father who comes equipped with cornrows and sagging pants. Along the same lines, the first episode finds the gang of friends confronted with a Black man who drives a truck that the main characters stole. Immediately this scene devolves into a dream sequence that reveals Bear's perception of this character as an aggressive Black man scolding and threatening violence against him. *Reservation Dogs* make major strides in Native representation but still perpetrates anti-black sentiments.

This series focuses closely on characters often underrepresented on screen but there must be a better arrangement of the elements of the series that punch down at other oppressed groups. Dream sequences may be used to reveal sentiments, debunk history, and even speak with contemporary or historical ideas by way of visual storytelling. However, these sequences must be challenged by the story to dream of a better representation for all oppressed communities. New episodes of *Reservation Dogs* premiere Mondays on FX on Hulu.

Doom Patrol is the Rare Superhero Show Driven by Character Instead of Saving the World

The HBO Max series returns for its third season September 23.

A ***Doom Patrol*** episode is not made up of epic conflicts between *good* and *evil* on a galactic scale, where the fate of the entire universe rests on the sound judgment of a proverbial hero. Of course, there's always a healthy dose of absurd calamities found in the HBO Max series. Entire story arcs feature a menagerie of villains brandishing outlandish schemes attached to their comic book origins. However, villainy still doesn't take center stage. In the current Hollywood boom of comic book films and television series, *Doom Patrol* stands out by centering the emotional journey of its heroes.

Similar to another massive DC project, ***Joker***, *Doom Patrol* creates character-driven narratives formulated to display an emotional depth often uncommon to the genre of superheroes, because the series focuses on heroes who didn't necessarily want the job. Almost all of the main cast that makes up the team's roster lived particularly normal...moderately successful lives; by approaching the idea of a hero from a different angle, the series acts as a redemptive arc, lamenting where the characters originated and the lives they've lost while acknowledging the strange new path that lies ahead. This journey to accepting the new life that they lead choosing to help others, despite their chasms of personal growth, still ahead resituate this series as a step above other superhero TV series.

Narrated by a madman, the first season of *Doom Patrol* found a fledgling team concerned by the disappearance of the man that brought them all together, the Chief (**Timothy Dalton**). This being the central conflict of the season, each member deals with their connection to the Chief, even including the person who abducted him, the aforementioned madman narrator, Mr. Nobody (**Alan Tudyk**). Through convoluted and often mind-bending storylines guided by the perception that Mr. Nobody elicits in his narration, characters are given their quest through selfhood.

Cliff Steele (**Brendan Fraser**), a former Nascar driver loses his life due to a wreck he caused that supposedly killed his whole family. Nevertheless, this man's brain is brought back to life and placed in a robot.. (This is the sort of show where that's the most logical course of action for him to regain his old life.) Cliff's growth comes with him attempting to reconcile the horrible things he has done as a father during the 80s — philandering and parental neglect mostly. Of course, in any other series, Cliff's retribution would come through fighting a huge monster and possibly sacrificing himself before offering a heartfelt apology to all of those he's hurt, but the *Doom Patrol* squad usually fights those monsters while persisting in its characters dealing with their issues. These journeys are interwoven into the narrative, with characters learning that ignoring their past and their current lives leads to nothing but more strife, from Crazy Jane (**Diane**

Guerrero) allowing Cliff to replace the Chief as her father figure recentring herself in control of her own body, Rita Farr (**April Bowlby**) building the courage to save her teammates despite her appearance, Larry Trainor (**Matt Bomer**) fighting alongside his Negative Spirit without loathing its presence, or Cyborg (**Jovian Wade**) learning to be Victor Stone, and letting go of the insurmountable notion of hero.

Misery may love company but in this case, the company has made these characters better; the culmination of this growth is most indicative in the final episodes of Season 1. The team finds the Chief by delving into aspects of his past and the connections each member has with him —illustrated by an unsettling amount of run-ins with enemies from the Chief's past. Finding him in a white void, where Mr. Nobody resides, the Doom Patrol are set to wage a mighty battle to save their savior. his discovery, however, is laced with barbed revelations that threaten to undo the introspective work the heroes have undergone. Instead of a rescue mission, this becomes a revelation about the nature of the man each hero had a connection to and looked to as a beacon: The Chief caused the accidents that have placed the characters in all of their self-loathing hells. Spiraling out as a result of this event are possible futures, rewrites, and back-tracking, carried out by the team through dream sequences to avoid their new reality. By accepting the revelation that the Chief manufactured their traumas to find a way to live forever and take care of his daughter, the team saves the day. For, while that's a plot twist that would lead anyone to villainy, despite the awful implications the team still choose to be superheroes — saving the day with a whole truckload of baggage attached to themselves.

A superhero show like no other, the *Doom Patrol* envisions a grim yet grounded territory for its heroes to weather. As ironic as it may seem for a source material associated with absurd art movements and philosophical concepts, this series grasps its own kind of reality to explain the sets of emotions that color the lives of reluctant superheroes. The story legitimizes the emotional journey of these characters by encouraging them to work through their issues, rather than saving the day and thus being magically absolved of all their problems. The unveiling of the Chief as the true villain, the one who enacted the journey of all the heroes within the Doom Patrol, brings forward a novel twist for the heroes: All of the members of the team must reconcile their new lives with the things that they've learned were lies.

Every member of the team is thus left endeavoring to lead a new life despite the lies that held a past life together falling apart, all in order to take up the mantle of the superhero. *Doom Patrol* nudging toward this direction is what makes this superhero series something special: a study in character that is squarely focused on growing its subjects through introspection, rather than the external markers of righteously heroic feats.

Doom Patrol returns on September 23, 2021.

How 'Get Out' Inadvertently Started a Wave of Black Trauma Films

BY

[TAVIUS ALLEN](#)

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Jordan Peele has inspired a whole new sub-genre, but are the successors missing the mark? Representation on screen for marginalized communities has often been marred by stereotypes and tokenism, especially involving films that fit tightly into their respective genres. The horror genre has linked itself to problematic tropes since its creation. Films capture the collective fear of an audience by manifesting those fears into a being. George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* involves similar sensibilities to its horror narrative. The film dramatizes red-scared fears and lands on a denouement concerned with the state of the world birthed from those fears. Historically, those beings have been metaphors for marginalized communities or individuals equated to outsiders, not to mention the unique sub-genres of horror that these stories create. From monsters to psychological terror, to social commentary, and slashers, horror has inspired sub-genres that inform what a given society may find as a threat to their existence—the uncanny.

Get Out, a 2017 film written and directed by Jordan Peele, recontextualizes the position of one marginalized group in the horror genre by centering their story arc. The burgeoning of film as a medium positioned Black people as monsters, as aggressors to the often white status quo. This portrayal has deep roots in white supremacy (look to the *Birth of a Nation* as a pillar of this depiction of Black people) and has motivated the visual aesthetic and themes of the horror genre. Of course, this depiction waned and was replaced by Black characters becoming harmless, one-off, sidekicks, or tokens first to die. Horror films reached a plateau with their inclusion of Black characters as easy pickings. However, *Get Out* took this trope and turned it on its head. In response to Obama-era liberalism and the trope of tokenism in horror, the film explores the experience of being a Black person in seemingly progressive white spaces, noting that there's an inherent horror in dealing with people who completely divorce themselves from their role in white supremacy. *Get Out* affirms Daniel Kaluuya's character by making him the protagonist fighting against the monsters of the film. The film's grammar then repositions itself to account for this perspective in horror that is often overlooked: the fears of Black people in circumstances that are governed by white people add a subtext to every scene of the film. The new point of view that *Get Out* introduced gave voice to the Black experience.

Image Via Universal Pictures

A landmark in its genre, *Get Out* forged a new path for horror films simply by undoing a trope. Many films with original premises have created sub-genres of their right, and *Get Out* is no different, creating a horror genre about Black trauma. Of course, the film inadvertently spawned many similar productions recounting the traumas experienced by the Black community, but with every great idea, a wealthy executive is waiting to exploit it to death. Many of the films found in the genre created by *Get Out* tend to have an exploitative angle. Rather than introducing new insight into the harmful nature of old tropes or providing catharsis to the people whose stories

are meant to represent, films in this genre frequently entertain a larger white audience. Characters are robbed of agency at the mercy of grotesque violence, demeaning language, or reaffirmed stereotypes, all for the enjoyment of the audience.

Them, a horror anthology series following a black family who moves to Compton during the Second Great Migration, is an iteration of the genre's failings that is often sickening to witness. In the hands of creators who inflict horrible circumstances upon Black characters without any semblance of nuance or character growth. A character who loses out the most in this series is Lucky (Deborah Ayorinde). She falls victim to abuse by the show's white characters at every turn. Before the family leaves for California, she is brutally raped and has to watch as her infant is murdered, only to be gaslit by her husband, Henry (Ashley Thomas), when the family arrives in California and is still discriminated against. The traumas hold up the foundations of the series; they're so ingrained in the structure of the series that without them, the entire story would topple just as the story inevitably did when the conclusion of the season is the Emory family taking up arms against everyone else in their neighborhood. The only truth reached through the exploration of Them's trauma is racism was bad during the Great Migration.

The missteps of the genre manifest in unclear intent. Many films that emulate Get Out's success pull pieces from the puzzle without having a clear thesis statement. The films depict traumatic events with no clear movement forward. Antebellum, starring Janelle Monae teases a plot involving time travel and black characters escaping enslavement in its trailer, but the actual film is about modern-day racists capturing Black people to create an amusement park for enslavement. The former idea of the film displayed in the trailer offers much more agency and nuance than the story that unfolds. Films like Karen and Distant Strangers have similar stereotypical pitfalls that embody their stories, entrapping the black characters into situations of no return, no nuance, and criminally no entertainment value. The genre has devolved into empty yelling into an abyss of trauma.

Image Via Lionsgate

Though the prospect of horror films about Black trauma looks bleak, there is still a need for films dealing with the subject matter. Get Out struck a chord with audiences of color, specifically because it explored Black trauma through horror and its insistence on nuanced interpretations of that experience. However, the downside of a film employing this delicate subject matter is the point being missed. It's not the reliving of the trauma that guides Get Out, it's the overcoming. Many have deemed this genre to be irredeemable, but there may be hope if the films begin to understand the true audience that their stories should be meant for--the communities that those stories are based on. Instead of stamping out the genre this circumstance should be proof of a need for wider reaching narratives about Black characters in media.

Black Art As High Art: A Closer Look At Black Entertainment

I just want to be ratchet

Tavius Allen

Sep 06, 2018

UNC Greensboro



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:African_Family.jpg

Insecure is a television program that I've always been in love with, but I never realized why until now. The show is thoughtful the visuals, the storylines, the characters are all meticulously crafted to create a cohesive and believable story. However, it's kind of ironic that I only realized my love in a tiny of throwaway moments, but perhaps this is important to understanding the story that the Insecure writers are trying to craft.

In this week's installment (spoiler warning if you haven't seen it, also what are you doing with your life if you haven't seen it?) Issa has sort of a breakthrough with

her job and subsequently with Daniel; they both have been tiptoeing around the whole living situation and all the insecurities they were both facing come to a head. This is all well and good for an Insecure episode, an app amount of tension boiling under the surface and an ample material for countless mirror dream sequences. However, my point of interest for this episode comes from a scene between Daniel and his niece.

Daniel's Niece, Jada who is portraited by Nia Chanel makes a comment that Daniel's music. Jada says something along the lines of "your music is great, but sometimes I just want to be ratchet." This minor hint of her point of view speaks volumes about Black youth. In a world where children are being killed for playing with toy guns, this assertion is revolutionary. Insecure as an entire program is revolutionary because it grasps for humanity for people of color. This is achieved by the depiction of all the characters in the show as people rather than stereotypical caricatures. Daniel, for example, was the narrative center of this episode and we see a deeper side to his character rather than the usual BDE he exerts then smoothly exits to stage left with.

Insecure's restructuring of the perception of blackness coincides with a surge in black culture that does just that. Shows such as Random Acts of Flyness, Queen Sugar, The Chi, Atlanta, etc. All reimagine the commonly accepted narratives for black characters into new and inventive terrains. The Carter Family created an entire album about celebrating their blackness and aggressively claiming black art as high art, a point of view not widely accepted. If this is a new wave of entertainment then, I am excited to see what burgeoning stories lye on the horizon.

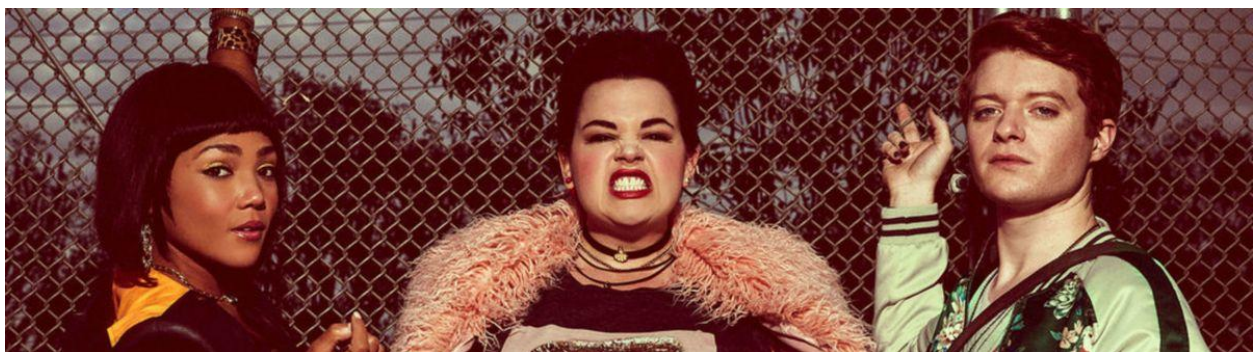
"Heathers" Is A Problematic And Forced Reboot

All possible theories of how the story will play out aside, one thing is for sure this reboot, "looks like hell."

[Tavius Allen](#)

Jan 29, 2018

UNC Greensboro



Subversion: the undermining of the power and authority of an established system or institution. Just as little reminder to the few people who are unaware of the meaning of the word subversion, because it seems that the Heathers reboot has used that word like a crudely written suicide note to cover up their mess (see the movie and understand the allusion).

Where to start with this awful rendition of most powerful clique in Westerburg High? I suppose the trailers for the show hold the most information, so I'll start there. "Heathers" was a dark comedy that commented on the power dynamics of high school, and in doing this the film positions three white, upper middle class girls at the top of the high school hierarchy; However, this is thrown into the streets and hit by truck in the reboot casting its main antagonist as a plus-size girl (as the trailer so apply corrected), a genderqueer individual, and a girl of color. Three marginalized groups that in no way embody what the original source material commented on. Marginalized groups such as the ones listed are placed in a strange position in this show because sure it does subvert the expectations of who can be popular, but this mindset only goes so far.

The problem with positioning these marginalized individuals in this way is it presents them on equal stand in our society, which is far from the truth. Believing that all the oppressed groups listed have been giving the same social standing as the majority is like believing because we had a black president racism is

automatically eradicated. Casting minority groups in an evil light only perpetuates the absence of their humanity in the media. Long story short, this isn't new. Positioning marginalized groups as evil is rampant all throughout Hollywood history, why do you think that there is so many movies now where the villain is from a middle eastern country? Not to mention, the change to Veronica who now is a blonde, average sized, and soft spoken. It's like this show was created out of a collective fever dream of suburban white kids who are upset that they can dance to rap and say all the lyrics they want (I'm looking at you Jake Paul).

"Heathers" brand of loosely satirical comedy pointed at liberal teens maybe the nail in the coffin for this program because through this comedy, the show has severely missed its possible niche target demographic, Tumblr kids who are obsessed with the original cult classic. One-liners like, "How Banana Republic" are dead ringers for awful. The Tumblr fan-base exploded with comments making the trending page, and most if not all the comments about the reboot were deprecating. I personally am not going to watch the show on the merits that I don't enjoy content that perpetuates stereotypes and directs subversion to the wrong group.

Of course, this new take on Heathers could be commenting a subculture of weirdly problematic liberals who in their attempts to make something forward thinking, through a mentality of not caring about labels, or suggesting because someone is member of one marginalized group it gives them the freedom to reclaim slurs. All possible theories of how the story will play out aside, one thing is for sure this reboot, "looks like hell."

5 Comedies To Watch During The Fall Season

October 18, 2018

A list of five comedies that will get you out of your post Halloween slump.

We've reached the lull in the year where Winter break is near, Halloween has passed, and we all avoid the lie that is Thanksgiving. However, this isn't the time to die from stress and lack of good holidays, instead you should watch some great television programs to fill those cold and barren downtimes. Here are five comedy shows that will be sure to keep your stress levels at a reasonable range, and brighten the greyest of autumn days, or make them greyer however you prefer your autumn days.

1. "The Mindy Project"

A show about an Indian-American, female, Gynecologist and all her adventures in love. This show is great to get a quick laugh on the darkest of days with its great blend of Romance, Comedy, and Drama not to mention the fact that the show is helmed by its starring lead, funny woman, Mindy Kahling.

"The Mindy Project" Streams on hulu every Tuesday.

2. "Will & Grace"

Another show for a quick laugh, and does inclusivity correctly. Of course, this is a reboot but no worries most of the ending of the last run is literally explained in the opening of the first episode of the season. If you're looking for a bit of wit in your life this is the show for you, where two gay men and two female friends deal with everything from politics to love in New York City.

"Will & Grace" airs every Thursday at 9/8c on NBC, and streams on hulu the next day.

3. "Superstore"

A workplace comedy that deals with disappointment and the mediocrity of some aspects of life very openly (this may be the one to watch if you need some catharsis). Superstore follows all the employees of a superstore and all the shenanigans that ensue daily.

"Superstore" airs every Thursday 8/7c on NBC, and streams on hulu the next day.

4. "The Good Place"

If you want to know what comes after this wasteland of boring holidays and life, look no further than The Good Place. Another comedy that is subtly depressing with a tinge of an optimistic spirit. Elanor is placed into the wrong afterlife and now asks for help from some unlikely friends.

"The Good Place" airs every Thursday 8:30/7:30c on NBC, and streams on hulu the next day.

5. "Black-ish"

A great family comedy that tackles many issues including racism, sexism, and postpartum depression in the modern age. Many of the stories relate to African Americans and black culture, it's a show to watch as a college student if you're feeling lonesome in the mundane times (school times).

"Black-ish" airs every Tuesday 9/8c on ABC, and streams on hulu the next day.

Stop "Rainbow-Washing" And Actually Do Something To Show You Are An Ally

Visibility is only the first bit of tea to sip, brands should be expected to do more than to place a ROY G BIV on their logos.

Tavius Allen

Jul 05, 2018



Front Gate Tickets

Another Pride Month has sashayed into our lives to remind all whom are a part of the LGBTQ+ community to stay true to themselves and brings on a wave rainbow colored everything. Store logos, t-shirts for sports brands, and even McDonalds once had a pride French fry cup and sure all these gestures are very nice for visibility of the LGBTQ+ community; however, for the most part many brands do nothing more than changing a logo for a month. Visibility is only the first bit of t to sip, brands should be expected to do more than to place a ROY G BIV on their logos.

There are exceptions to this trend. Many brands use some of the profits from the sold merchandise to give back to causes that support the mental health and safety of LGBTQ+ youth. From Abercrombie and Fitch to giving proceeds from the sale of their own crewneck sweatshirts to suicide prevention for LGBT+ youth to Apple sending donations to multiple LGBTQ+ advocacy groups. Action to words, or actions to logos seems like a logical transition for support of the community, but sadly many brands continue to use Pride as a marketing tool rather than to uplift the people the month-long celebration was made to serve.

However, there is another problematic aspect of continuing to sell merchandise to go towards LGBTQ+ causes: the people who buy the merchandise are members of the community or allies. So, who is being helped in this circular way of selling products? Members of the community and allies buy merchandise, the profits are split (not evenly) between the brands and whoever the rest of the money is going to be sent to (which is not a lot of money), and some of the proceeds go towards funding causes and groups but never an overwhelming amount. If the LGBTQ+ community is basically funding their own donations, why is there a middle man standing in the way of a larger amount of money to go towards causes?



fellow gays meme

reddit

What about the rest of the year? Though brands do participate in pride for a month, there is nothing stopping brands, besides maybe morals, from discriminating against their LGBTQ+ employees. In 2015 Burger King received a 55 out of 100 on the Corporate Equality Index(a measure for done by the Human Rights Campaign which evaluates company's adoption of nondiscriminatory

policies, creation of employee resource groups or diversity and inclusion councils, and engagement in public activities to support LGBT inclusion)while still pushing for an advertising campaign for the "Proud Whopper" which came in a rainbow wrapper.

This occurrence of hypocritically advocating for social change, yet continuing to participate in problematic behavior, or even cover up a past of problematic behavior is on brand now. Celebrities in recent years have even hopped on the unicorn's saddle (a failed attempt at coining a new idiom similar to jumping on the bandwagon). Said something problematic about a minority group, easy fix just rebrand as a advocate for social change. Katy Perry for example is a big proponent of this marketing style her entire album was supposedly dedicated to her awakening (whoever came up with this marketing for her must have an abundance of blood diamonds and secret sex dungeons for kidnapped kids). Nonetheless, Ms. Perry didn't stray far from her problematic past creating a single with some of the most homophobic rap collectives of today, The Migos. While the video was actually problematic for the image of women, it was meant to be empowering. Expecting more from musical artist is a fallacious endeavor that can only lead to enormous twitter threads of attacks against and for an artist, but many people continue to fall into the trap of shady motives held by the artist.

A remedy to all of this drudgery and cynicism is for the LGBTQ+ community to take action into their own hands and create their own groups that advocate for the protection of the members of their community and visibility of its members. However, it shouldn't be a fluke that a brand gets it right and does the easy work

and hard work that should be a basic act of decency. Change is slow coming, but someday conversations about being "fake woke" and exploitative marketing towards minority groups will be little to nonexistent.

Yes, Blackface Scarier Than Pennywise, Don't Do It

The unspoken rules of why black face shouldn't be a Halloween costume.

Tavius Allen

Oct 31, 2017



Halloween has come and gone and surviving another year of terrors, terrible costumes, and tremendous amounts of candy is a reward, but maybe a greater reward for this hectic holiday (that is only one night I would like to add) is not being disappointed to find your race was a costume at any event attended that night.

Black face, or any other costume that is appropriation or dressing up as the stereotypes of the race that someone must embody daily is problematic, and the reason for this being problematic, at least in the black community, is the history of black face. Black face was a discriminatory costume, usually worn by white people, and was popularized by a Caucasian musician named Thomas Dartmouth Rice. Minstrel shows (the official name of black face shows) have lived on in pop culture in infamy, and could stand as a representation of how people perceive racism. Black face implements stereotypes of black people specifically dark face paint, acting in a lazy demeanor, and speaking in an uneducated way.

The caricature that is promoted through black face is racist because its goal is to embody a racist view of black people, and that is what makes it an even more terrifying costume compared to Pennywise. Black face's success posits itself on the fact that many people will agree with the representation presented by it, meaning some people will agree with the stereotype presented or are complacent enough to allow those types of stereotypes to be accepted.

Nevertheless, modern black face is done for completely different reasons, instead of using it to perpetuate harmful views held about black people it's used as homage, which is still problematic. The desire to dress up as a character is harmless, but the act of painting your face to resemble someone's race is not because it diminishes an entire racial identity to a caricature. The clothes and behaviors are the costume, but a race is something that can't be removed. Society has made that abundantly clear.

Halloween is a holiday that is meant to be inclusive, an exploration what it feels like to be someone else for a night, but that's too fantastical of narrative to fully accept. The narrative of stepping into someone else's shoes only works in theory because even if you dress as them you can remove that costume you have put yourself into. We live in an imperfect world that has been skewed by many exclusionary behaviors such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Due to the implications of all these factors Halloween has unspoken rules, and not wearing black face is one of them.