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‘Black-ish’s “Please, Baby, Please” Is As Poignant As Ever Given Current Times

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“Please, Baby, Please,” the previously [skipped episode](#) on ABC’s *Black-ish*’s sitcom begins with a storm. While it’s a physical storm, it manifests as a storm that reverberates throughout the entire Johnson family. Andre ([Anthony Anderson](#)) is wide awake recalling time rapidly changing – from polar ice caps melting to animals disappearing. As Sam Cooke’s “Change Goin’ Come” plays in the background, the patriarch of the family acknowledges that he’s scared about the current times. Show creator Kenya Barris announced his [thought process](#) on Twitter when writing this episode. This episode provides an outlet for its Black male characters to not only show the emotion of uncertainty and confusion of that time period but the different generations of Black trauma.

Writers [Kony Barris](#) & [Peter Saji](#) provides an outlet within this episode for its Black male characters to not only show the emotion of uncertainty and confusion of that period but how it shows up throughout one family’s timeline. “Hope” and “Juneleenth,” which occurred earlier in that season put issues and Black history at the forefront of the show’s fourth season. Now that “Please, Baby, Please,” has found a home on Hulu, the episode feels predictive and rightfully unbending on the issues that Black America faces.

Andre tries to comfort his youngest son, Devonte and starts to read from Spike and Tonya Lewis Lee’s children’s book *Please, Baby, Please* (complete with a voiceover from Spike). This sets the precipice for cartoonish depictions of our current and former presidents; “the Shady King” (President Donald Trump) and “Prince Barry” (former President Barack Obama). The Shady King is shown as being a divider of the nation. Prince Barry showing hope within a country that once enslaved Black people. One would imagine that these stories would inspire some intense discussion, especially one year removed from the inauguration.

These stories are not without some push back. Bow ([Trace Ellis Ross](#)) while trying to sleep, states how scary this story is. Perhaps a bedtime story isn’t the right time to be telling Devonte of the ills of the world. With things like white nationalist rallies, home is really where your haven is. Andre speaks with Pops Johnson ([Lawrence Fishburne](#)) and his character can give him some historical context to this. Pops speaks of the KKK, the 1960s, and both conclude that racism is more out in the open. There was a considerable backlash to Obama’s two-term presidency and that for every step Black people take forward, the country seems to take two steps in the other direction. This speaks to the anxieties many faces in 2020. The saying is to not remember the past, you are doomed to repeat it.

It seems like the initial fears as to why this episode got put to the side was the discussion of Colin Kaepernick’s kneeling protest. To be honest, it’s one of the best parts of the episode that foreshadows the places we have arrived. Andre and his oldest son, Andre Jr. ([Marcus Scribner](#)) are discussing the many opinions of Kaepernick’s protest – with Andre Jr. being conflicted on how to feel. Andre speaks of [Muhammad Ali](#), [Arthur Ashe](#), [Tommie Smith](#), and [John Carlos](#) – athletes who have protested in causes they believed in who have been blacklisted or arrested for it. As the argument comes to a head, Andre Jr. comes to the deliberation of fighting for the right to protest, even though he doesn’t know what to think. Protests are supposed to raise awareness and make things uncomfortable. That’s how change is brought about.

“Please, Baby, Please” places optimism and understanding within it’s younger characters. When Andre speaks to Jack ([Miles Brown](#)) and Diane ([Marsai Brown](#)), he’s confronted with the problem of climate change. A problem that many younger people worry about given that they will have to deal with the repercussions of it. They ask him about electing *Al Gore* in 2000 and why the older generation hasn’t fixed things. With all the youthful further, they declare that they will be the ones to fix it.

Fast forward to two years later – everyone from professional sports teams, protests, and even police officers are kneeling. It feels like it’s almost been commercialized to an extent. The death of [George Floyd](#) has set off incremental change – and with that, a perceived acceptance that the Black experience within America is vastly different. Art is supposed to challenge and speak to us in ways that conventional conversations can’t. It begs a certain question that coincides with the protest acceptance and the release of this episode – why does the black experience have to lose so much to be listened to? In 2018, we were faced with the deaths of [Michael Brown](#), [Trayvon Martin](#), and [Sandra Bland](#) amongst many others. Now, many are marching in the memory of [Floyd](#), [Breonna Taylor](#), and [Elijah McClain](#). The man who exercised his right to protest a cause is still without a job in the professions that he loves. To be Black in America is to know that unfortunately, you will lose things or lives in order to gain progress.

Is America better when this episode was created? Well, we can say that more people have joined the fight on social issues. Racism is still rampant, we haven’t made a collective attempt to control COVID-19 and threats leveled against the post office coupled with rampant voter suppression darkens the fate of our upcoming elections. The episode ends with most of the family sleeping together in the parent’s bedroom – riding the storm out together. Andre declares to Devonte that there will always be family to go to. To go back to Bow’s point, home seems to be the safest place. Given the pandemics, that has never been more true. For Black people, there are multiple caveats to feeling safe in a place that seems to reject them. Maybe that’s the point that Barris and Saji were trying to make in this episode. It’s all in Andre’s dialogue, ‘tomorrow or maybe the next day, the sun will come out.’

Black people will always try to find the solving lining in optimism in challenges that have been plaguing them for centuries. However, given all the history stated in this episode – when will that optimism be rewarded with actual long-lasting change?

Photo Credit: ABC

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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host, and photographer since 2014, Marjani Rawls has been stretching the capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 70 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

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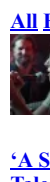
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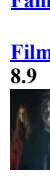
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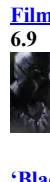
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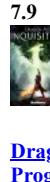
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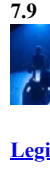
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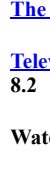
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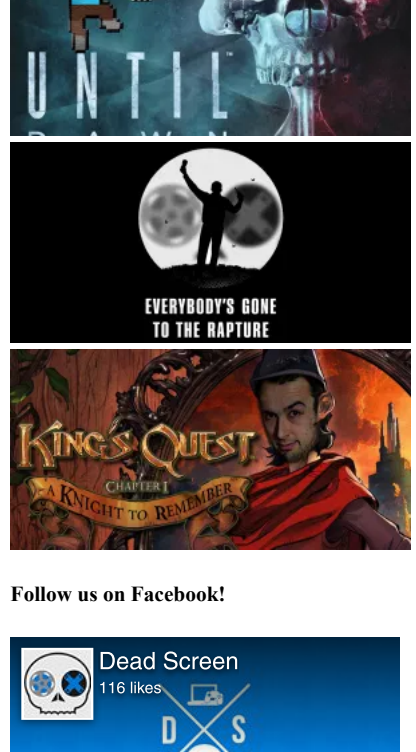
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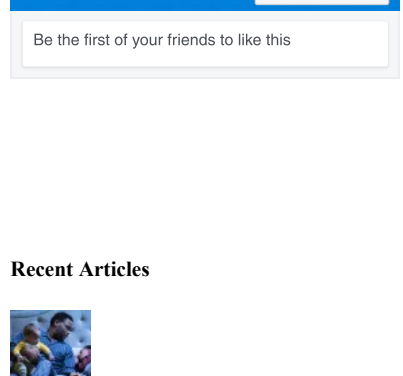
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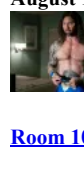


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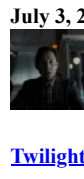
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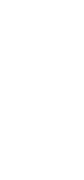
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