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### “Black is in”: The Fetishizing of Black People

“Do they know I'm black?” the words of Daniel Kaluuya, while playing his character Chris in the Oscar award-winning hit, *Get Out*. Written and directed by Jordan Peele who is known for portraying the Black experience, follows Chris and his girlfriend Rose while they visit her parent's home. While Chris is not entirely sure of their feelings towards Black people, he takes the words of his white girlfriend Rose, and visits them anyway. This film covers a large range of social and racial issues that Black men dating outside their race, experience while encompassing that comedic horror aspect. The horror twist that Peele takes in this movie, is his perspective on mind control and the purpose of the sunken place. This approach gave the audience a deeper understanding of how white people want to have control over most things if not everything. In this paper, I'm going to analyze the film *Get Out*, and Jordan Peele's perspective on Black men in interracial relationships, race fetishes, and the history of racism in this country.

Jordan Peele is just one of many brilliant black movie producers that we see up and coming in today's film production. Going from comedy writing on “Key and Peele” skits to now directing movie hits like *US*, *Nope*, and *Get Out*, Peele's direction naturally targets the Black audience and the Black experience. The beauty of Jordan Peele's work starts with his predominantly Black cast and crew. As opposed to white movie directors who tell Black stories: *In the Color Purple* by Steven Spielberg, Jordan Peele's personal experiences with racism and knowledge of the history of this country, paid off with the attention to detail while directing this

film. A Black cast, in this case, allowed the story to flow while still explaining the micro and macro-aggressive racism that we feel to this day.

Historically, Black people have endured the worst between the years “1877 and 1950, thousands of Black men were lynched in the U.S and nearly 1 in 4 were targeted based on the allegations of rapping white women”(Madeo). Understanding the lies that white women would tell during that period helped the audience make sense of the role that Rose played in the film. Rose’s semblance throughout the film as if she was “unaware” that her parents were racists, was a great visual for how white women act still while knowing the truth. Throughout that era of lynching Black men, they were lynched for “delivering a letter to white women, for entering a room where white women were sitting and as Mr. Lee was, for knocking on the door of white women”(Madeo). Anything a Black man did, could result in his public death during that period and to this day.

With the outlaw of lynching, Black men are still envied and hated for all they have, and many still lose their lives for that exact reason. Whether it be from police brutality or just criminal attack, Black men lose their life earlier than white men. Recent data “shows a disturbing connection between police-related violence and emerging adults. The Washington Post found that police killings are the leading cause of death for young men in America, specifically young Black Men. In 2017, Black emerging adults, 20-24 years old were killed by police at more than triple the rate of white emerging adults” (Henderson et al). Understanding racism and this country's history, Chris's friend Rod's concern throughout the film, definitely makes more sense. 2017 was a massive year for racism in this country starting with former President Donald Trump. With the skyrocketing number of Black killings by police officers. The movie release was more of a conversation than most other political topics.

Now more than ever is the most exciting time to be a black director, according to author and educator Tananarive “This is an amazing time to be a horror creator and a horror fan, and I am seeing the impact on that, but it has been a long road” (Black horror Aesthetic). Dating back to when Black people were first featured in movies, in the 1950s to the 1960s, there was an evident role that Black characters played in movies. We were either into voodoo magic or played the dumb character that usually died first. In *Get Out*, Chris was able to subvert this notion, by not only surviving to the end of the movie but also catching on to what was happening to him and fighting, putting a stop to the tortious acts that the Armitages were doing. This relates to Carol Clover's Final Girl theory. Clover's Final Girl touches theory on women in film, usually, the virgins of the group, making it to the end and killing the monster that looms amongst the group. Being the Final girl, or in Chris's sake, The final man, they “evoke a sense of sympathy from an audience which needs someone to identify with (Clover 8)” (Boger 6). Watching such a controversial movie play out how it does, allows the audience to grasp Peele's use of the Final Girl trope. Without these genre cliches added to the movie, the plot would have been more serious and straightforward which Peele had intended originally.

This film portrays the envy that white people have for Black people based on the stereotypes that they made up. During the film, Chris has a meeting with an older white man to whom he was to give his body and he asks the question “Why us, why Black people” the man replies “People wanna change, people want to be stronger, faster, cooler” (Peele). These stereotypes about Black people are harmful in many ways, depicted well in this film. Peele's use of satire allows the audience to see the message that racism does not always have to be direct. The sad truth is that Black people have endured many of the situations spoken about in the film, bringing up the topic of race fetish. Many do not relate racism and race fetish to each other, but

they coincide more than we think. Many understand the word “fetish” to have sexual undertones, and in this case that still applies. Towards the end of the film, while Rose is on the brink of death, she says “You were my favorite” indicating that Chris was not the only Black man she has been with. We see Chris going through Rose’s things and he finds a stack of photos of Rose’s Black boyfriends before him, after thinking he was the only one. Finally understanding the situation at hand, Chris is painfully aware that he is next. In an era, so filled with overly sexualized men and women, Black male “porn actors have sex with white women, is a popular sub genre and BMW erotic novels specifically cater to the fantasy of crudely stereotyping Black male aggression and sexual domination. It’s as if the online commercialisation of sexual fantasy has globalized racial stereotypes and sent them freewheeling backwards...” (Hirsch). Stereotyping plagues any ethnic group but playing into these stereotypes for sexual reasons pushes those ethnic communities back years, without notice.

Early on in the film, we meet Logan, a young black man abducted at the beginning of the film, for their experimental use, later in the we see him accompanied by an older white woman which speaks to Chris’s concern. While a white man takes over the functionality of Logan's body, we get a glimpse of the real Logan once Chris takes a photo of him with the flash, which triggers a nosebleed. Logan then charges Chris, warning him to “Get out” before being dragged away by those around him. In many horror films, we do not get to see vulnerability in most characters let alone a Black character. To see the real Logan in that scene, trying to warn Chris about these people, shows a sensitive side of Black men that is never portrayed in the film. By the end of the movie, the audience gains a sense of compassion for Chris, and by the end most if not all are rooting for him.

To summarize, this powerful film speaks to the human race and our desire to live forever, stereotyping the Black man as the superior race, sets up the movie to have this profound message. Jordan Peele does a fantastic job of bringing those two worlds together to create the Oscar award-winning film that many still watch today. This movie touches on topics such as interracial relationships, race fetish, and our country's deep history of racism.

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