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Brooks Better Not Come Back

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Brooks Better Not Come Back

Abstract

Every time a new season of the Bachelorette starts, I tell myself that I won't watch this season—that I won't give in to the trashiness and the petty drama which is the Bachelor. But I can't help it. Season after season I'm hooked and 17 seasons later... here I am. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

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Disciplines

Gender and Sexuality | Politics and Social Change | Race and Ethnicity | Social Psychology and Interaction | Women's Studies

Comments

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SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

BROOKS BETTER NOT COME BACK

August 5, 2013

Every time a new season of the Bachelorette starts, I tell myself that I won't watch this season—that I won't give in to the trashiness and the petty drama which is the Bachelor. But I can't help it. Season after season I'm hooked and 17 seasons later... here I am.



For those of you with a stronger sense of self-control than me and have never seen the show, the concept of the show is that one man (Bachelor) or woman (Bachelorette) searches for their true love in a group of 25 contenders of the opposite gender. If ever there was a recipe for a guilty pleasure, this is it.

And I do mean “guilty.” I do enjoy the show each and every season, but I understand that there are more than a few problems with the shows’ premise and the way that it plays out on television.

To start with, the producers have never chosen a Bachelor or Bachelorette who was not white, and most times the contenders are overwhelmingly white as well. Many contenders of color that do make the cut of 25 are quickly eliminated in the early rounds. A [2012 lawsuit](#) by two African-American men brought more attention to this racial dynamic, which had already received plenty of media attention.

When executive producer Mike Fleiss was asked if there would ever be a bachelor or bachelorette who was not white, he awkwardly replied, “I think Ashley is 1/16th Cherokee Indian, but I cannot confirm. But that is my suspicion! We really tried, but sometimes we feel guilty of tokenism. Oh, we have to wedge African-American chicks in there! We always want to cast for ethnic diversity, it’s just that for whatever reason, they don’t come forward. I wish they would.” Whether it is truly lack of interest or simply [economics](#) is a matter of debate, but regardless, part of my guilt stems from the fact that the show perpetuates the myth that the romances worth watching are between two beautiful rich white people.

White people of the opposite sex, that is. While a majority of Americans [support both](#) interracial marriage or same-sex marriage, apparently the producers of The Bachelor/ette do not feel that their audience is ready for either (even if Desiree [thinks](#) they are).

As I anxiously await part two of the season finale tonight, I look back at this season and am disappointed by the fact that these longstanding criticisms all apply to this season as well: almost all of Desiree's contenders were white, all were straight (most likely), and all can easily fit into the category of "beautiful." I knew these things from the beginning, but somehow had hoped that Desiree's modest upbringing would allow her to see past the "Hollywood glamor" and set her apart from previous seasons. It seems, though, that she loved stringing along man candy in her extravagant adventures more than caring about their feelings.

Audiences around the country were shocked when Brooks, the front runner this season, and the clear "winner" of Desiree's heart, told her he did not love her and left the show. I had great respect for him because he would rather end their slow, [awkward](#) relationship than fake one so he could go island hopping, as is typical for season finales. And maybe I'm bad at reading people or naïve about how much planning goes into these shows, but it seemed like Desiree was genuinely upset when Brooks told her he didn't love her. So, it makes me hopeful that at least one person is able to look beyond razzle-dazzle and realize that the foundation of a good relationship is still a good relationship. With everything around them being so artificial (vacations sponsored by foreign travel offices, TV cameras, elimination-style dating process) it seemed that Brooks walking away was an admission that being on the show does not guarantee mutual feelings.

Despite these criticisms, this is an overwhelmingly popular show. It seems as though ABC has created a perfect recipe for (economic) success. It gets great ratings because, well, there is everything their audience would want: attractive men and women, mind-blowing travels and experiences, romantic, candle-lit dinners, and of course, the possibility of falling in love. But money, thin girls, ripped men, and champagne are not secret ingredients that can simply be stirred together to manufacture love. In fact, only 3.5 couples out of 26 total seasons of the Bachelor and the Bachelorette have stayed together: Trista and Ryan, JP and Ashley, Molly and Jason, and Sean and Catherine (status pending). The recipe works to create ratings (and money) for the producers, and does that well. For the rest of us, its just guilty pleasure.

Of course, if Brooks comes back tonight, the show's lies about romance will be affirmed once again. And ten million people will be watching.

And despite the well-deserved criticisms of the show, I will be indulging in my guilty pleasure.

I hope she chooses Chris.

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Editor

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