8-5-2013

Brooks Better Not Come Back

Helena E. Yang
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge

Part of the Gender and Sexuality Commons, Politics and Social Change Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, Social Psychology and Interaction Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/96

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/96

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.
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
Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, Bachelor, Bachelorette, race, interracial relationship, Hollywood interpretation

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

Comments
Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

This blog post is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/96
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 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.

Helena Yang ’14
Editor

http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/08/05/brooks-better-not-come-back/