

The Evolution of "Blackface" and Black Stereotypes in American Culture and Mass Media

Darlene W. Natale

Right: From the Collection of the Smithsonian
National Museum of African American History
and Culture



Panel chair and presenter: **Darlene White Natale, PhD., Faculty UNCP**
Early Blackface, Minstrelsy, and Blackface in Film.

Presenter: **Clejetter Cousins, M.A., Faculty UNCP**
Blackface on Television, stereotypical black roles, and blackface as a costume.

Presenter: **Kim Flanders, PhD., Faculty Penn State University Scranton**
Corporate communication approach and discussion of Snapchat and their blackface filter.

Presenter: **Mark W. Beekman, M.A., Faculty Kent State University**
Digital blackface, emojis, and social media. The need for more scholarship and discussion on the topic.

AUDIENCE/PANEL DISCUSSION



Balaclava knit top black

by Gucci

\$890

Select a Size

Sold Out

Product details

Style 548540 X1680 1125

Laura Eka @Sweet_N_Lo



WTKR

ortham

Alma Mater: Virginia Military Institute
 Interest: Pediatrics
 Quote: There are more old drunks than old doctors in this world so I think I'll have another beer.

A third of Americans say blackface in a Halloween costume is acceptable--at least sometimes

White adults twice as likely as blacks to say using blackface for a Halloween costume is acceptable

% saying they personally think that a white person using makeup to darken their skin so they appear to be a different race as part of a Halloween costume is ...

| | Always acceptable | Sometimes acceptable | Rarely acceptable | Never acceptable |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| All adults | 15 | 19 | 16 | 37 |
| White | 18 | 21 | 16 | 35 |
| Black | 5 | 13 | 13 | 53 |
| Hispanic | 11 | 17 | 15 | 35 |
| Rep/ Lean Rep | 24 | 26 | 16 | 21 |
| Dem/ Lean Dem | 8 | 13 | 17 | 51 |

Net 34 (Always + Sometimes acceptable)
Net 53 (Rarely + Never acceptable)



Note: Nets are calculated prior to rounding. Share of respondents who answered "not sure" or who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019.

18- to 29-year-olds are least likely among whites to see blackface as acceptable

% of whites saying they personally think that a white person using makeup to darken their skin so they appear to be a different race as part of a Halloween costume is ...

| | Always acceptable | Sometimes acceptable | Rarely acceptable | Never acceptable |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Ages 18-29 | 11 | 15 | 23 | 41 |
| 30-49 | 19 | 20 | 15 | 36 |
| 50-64 | 20 | 25 | 13 | 29 |
| 65+ | 17 | 21 | 16 | 36 |
| High school or less | 21 | 23 | 14 | 26 |
| Some college | 21 | 24 | 15 | 33 |
| Bachelor's degree+ | 12 | 17 | 19 | 46 |

Note: Share of respondents who answered "not sure" or who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019.

Majority of Americans say wearing another culture's traditional dress as a costume is acceptable

% saying they personally think that a person wearing traditional dress from a country or culture other than their own as part of a Halloween costume is ...

58% -- OK to wear traditional dress of another culture as costume

| | Always acceptable | Sometimes acceptable | Rarely acceptable | Never acceptable |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| All adults | 26 | 32 | 15 | 13 |
| Net 58 | | Net 27 | | |
| White | 31 | 35 | 14 | 10 |
| Black | 14 | 28 | 17 | 22 |
| Hispanic | 20 | 26 | 17 | 15 |
| Rep/ Lean Rep | 40 | 32 | 10 | 6 |
| Dem/ Lean Dem | 17 | 32 | 18 | 18 |

Note: Nets are calculated prior to rounding. Share of respondents who answered "not sure" or who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019.

ZULU



"The Zulu club was founded in response to the racism that was present in Mardi Gras where black people were not allowed to participate" in the parade-day celebration.



Second graders in Atlanta wore paper masks over their faces during a black history performance of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "We Wear the Mask."

When did darkening skin --or
blacking up begin?

Did it ever end?

Othello (1604) and Verdi's Otello (1887)

Scholar John Strausbaugh found a difference between the actors darkening up and Blackface-- they did not make the Moors into caricatures.

Othello and Blackface



nineteenth-century actors in Othello. Images from the Folger Shakespeare Library collection.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actors in the role of Othello. (l-r) Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, Tommaso Salvini, Thomas Grist, Edmund Kean. Images from the Folger Shakespeare Library collection.

...By the time we get to *Othello*, we do have these sort of references not just to one kind of skin blackening technique, but perhaps to several. Right, so, the "sooty bosom" reference, really, goes back to the sort of medieval practice of using coal to darken the skin.

...in the 16th century, we find other practices. Primarily, the ones that I find striking, was that, particularly in court masques, actors would use cloth or the skin of animals to literally cover their necks, their hands, even their faces, to simulate blackness. And so, that's why I use the term prosthetic, because it is a kind of prosthesis. **Race becomes a kind of prosthesis that one can use to impersonate somebody else. Blackness is a kind of object or thing that is presented for the speculation of the audience...**" Ian Smith

Queen Anne was the first white to blacken herself in 1605 when she had Ben Johnson write her a masque so she and her ladies could portray Africans.

Rogin further claims that blackface was a product of European Imperialism.

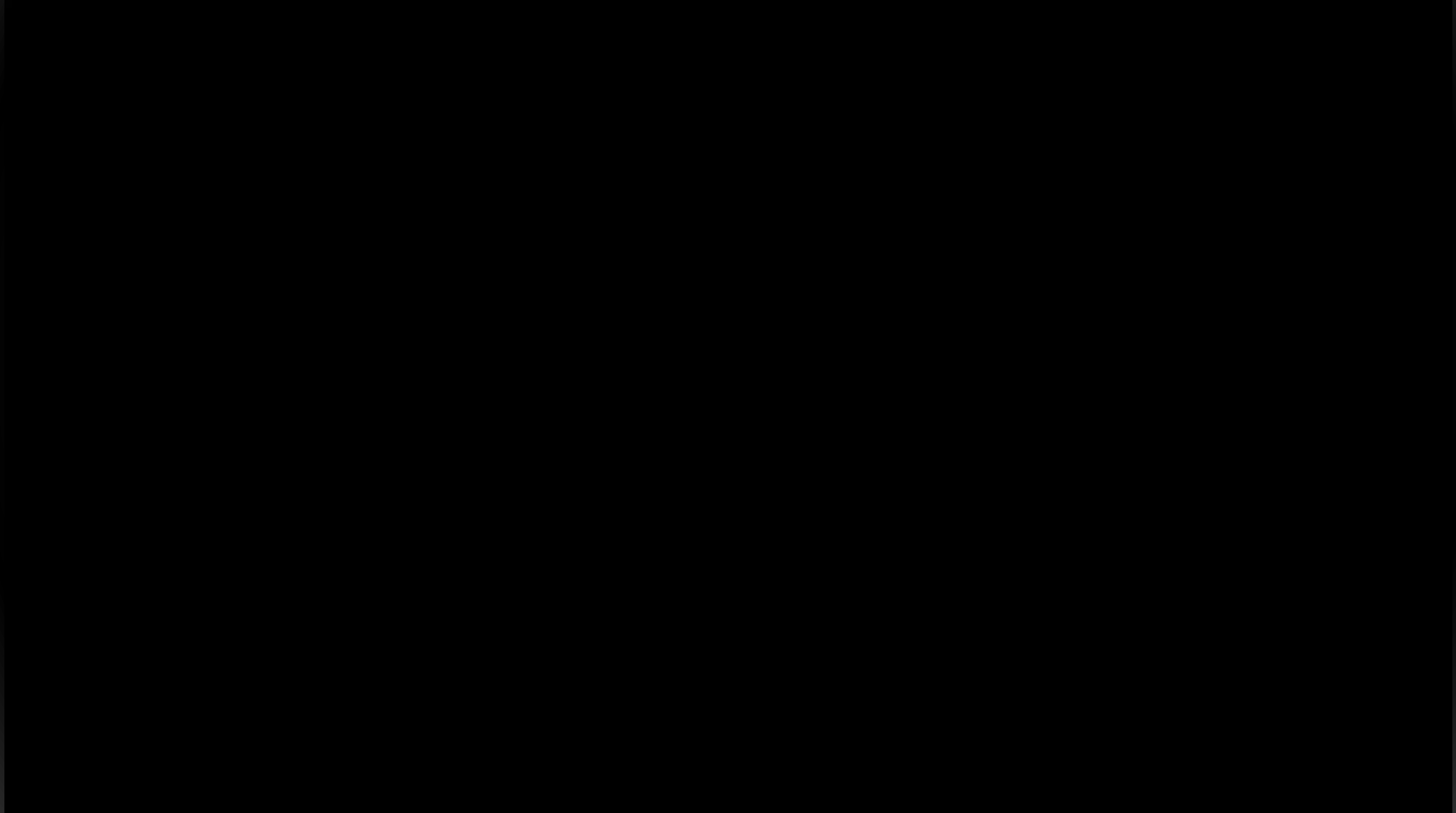
After the civil war, Blacks
began to perform in
blackface in minstrels.

Blackface emerged in the U.S. in the “early nineteenth century from the new cities of the market revolution...minstrelsy enacted the urban white desire to acquire African American expressive power and supposed emotional freedom without actually freeing the slaves.”

Michael Rogin

Jump Jim Crow Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice

"The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow" episode 1, PBS



1830s: As popularity of “Daddy” Rice’s **Jim Crow** grew, the name was used as a demeaning term for blacks.

Years after character was no longer popular, **JIM CROW** was used to describe an onslaught of anti-black laws.

**Jim
Crow**
Repressive
anti-black
laws

“Separate
but Equal”



White swimming pool sign

HAPPY ARE WE DARKIES SO GAY

PARODY on favorite AIR from OPERA LA BAYADERE

WRITTEN & SUNG BY

G. P. Christy

His Majesty's Minstrels

New York. Published by Jaques & Brother 36 Broadway

Allegretto. *p*

f

Hap-py are we..... darkies so gay! Come, let us sing and

laugh while we play..... We darkey min-strels' fa-vo-rite lay, With a

Entered according to Act of Congress A.D. 1847 by Jaques & Brother in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York.

CHRISTY'S MELODIES

AS COMPOSED AND SUNG BY THEM,
AT THEIR CONCERTS WITH UNFINISHED SUCCESS.

G. P. CHRISTY AND T. VAUGHN

1. HAPPY ARE WE DARKIES SO GAY
2. JIM CROW POLKA
3. FAREWELL LADIES
4. MY PRETTY YELLER GAL
5. SNOW DROP ANN
6. LILLY OF THE VALLEY

7. GINGERS WEDDING
8. MY PRETTY VIRGINIA GAL
9. GONE TO ALABAMA
10. ROSA DIAM
11. WALK IN THE PARLOR
12. CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINIA
13. CHRISTY'S POLKA
14. ABBIE'S POLKA

Edwards P. Christy

NEW YORK Published by JAQUES AND BROTHER 36 Broadway



Billy Van, the monologue comedian, 1900. This image is available from the United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division

LAUGHLAND

A Merry Minstrel Book



T.S. DENISON & COMPANY PUBLISHERS CHICAGO

1909 book offered
Do-It Yourself
Minstrel show
routines

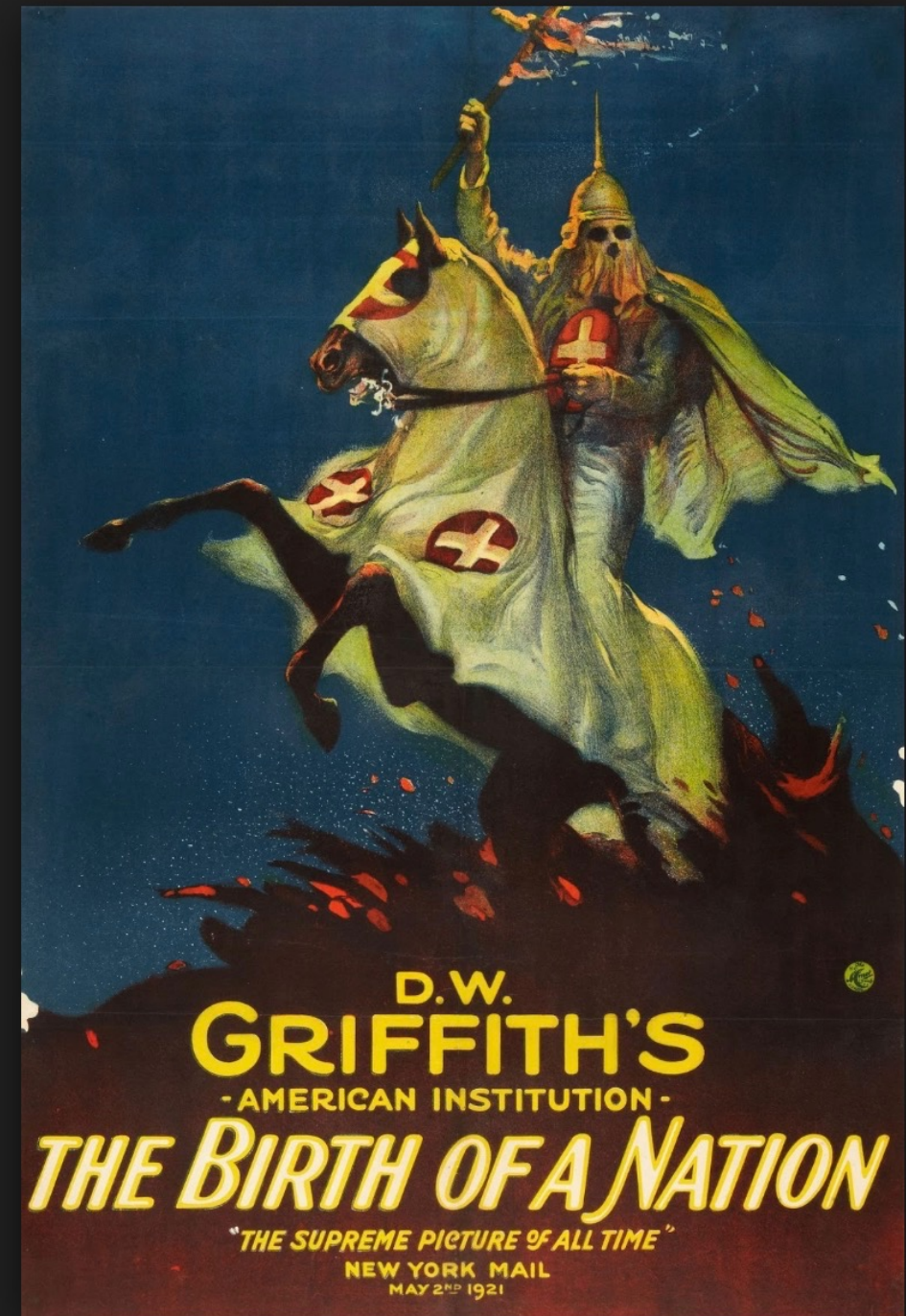
IMDb:

Director: D. W. Griffith

Written by Thomas Dixon, Jr. adapted from his novel: "The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan")

NAACP said that by portraying the clan as the saviors of civilization, "it gave a cloak of respectability to racial prejudice--and gave it to the widest audience in history"

Nick Clooney



Cast white man in blackface as villain who stalked a white woman.

Rather than succumbing to the black-faced thug, the woman threw herself off a cliff.

Minstrels began to fade in the 1920's and 30's, but in 1927

THE JAZZ SINGER, Al Jolson
Racial stereotypes still sell

The Jazz Singer (1927)

The season passes --
and time heals --
the show goes on

Swing Time (1938) - Fred Astaire



Everybody Sing (1938) Judy Garland





The cover of an American minstrel show songbook, which depicts a performer dancing in costume and blackface makeup, published by Belmont Music Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1938.

Hulton Archive / Getty Images

Hottentots

First recorded in the late 17th century and was a name applied by white Europeans to the Khoikhoi. It is now regarded as offensive with reference to people and should always be avoided.



More Recent Films

- Tropic Thunder
- Soul Man
- Bamboozled
- Trading Places

Cle Cousins

From Blackface to Stereotypes in Sitcoms



Sanford & Son



The Cosby Show



black·ish



abc

Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Kimberly J. Flanders

Assistant Teaching Professor of Corporate
Communication



PennState

Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

- Brief History of Blackface
- Brief overview of Situational Crisis Communication Theory
- History of SnapChat
- SnapChat's Introduction of Bob Marley Filter
- Applying SCCT to SnapChat's Use of Bob Marley Filter
- Future Considerations
- Conclusion



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

History of Blackface

- Term used to describe white performers who would darken their faces and wear clothing to mimic slaves
- Over 5,000 productions between 1751-1843
- Became the most popular form of entertainment in the United States



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Overview of Situational Crisis Communication Theory SCCT

- Crisis Communication Theory
- W. Timothy Coombs
- Organizations should identify the level of crisis responsibility needed to respond to a crisis
- Organizations should identify the reputational threat a crisis poses to an organization



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

History of SnapChat

- Originally named Picaboo
- Began in 2011
- Originally designed as a photo app that allowed users to send a picture that would disappear after ten seconds
- Conceptualized by three individuals:
 - Evan Spiegel
 - Reggie Brown
 - Bobby Murphy



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

SnapChat's Bob Marley Filter

- Released April 20, 2016
- Tribute to Bob Marley
- Consumers were outraged claiming “blackface”



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Is SnapChat's Filter Promoting Blackface?



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

SCCT and SnapChat

“in partnership with the Bob Marley estate” (cnnmoney.com, 2016)

“The lens gives people a new way to share their appreciation for Bob Marley and his music. Millions of Snapchatters have appreciated Bob Marley’s music, and we respect his life and achievements” (Ross, 2016)



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Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Master List of Reputation Repair Strategies (Coombs, 2007)

1. *Attack the accuser*: crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organization.

2. *Denial*: crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis.

3. *Scapegoat*: crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organization for the crisis.

4. *Excuse*: crisis manager minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis.

Provocation: crisis was a result of response to some one else's actions.

Defeasibility: lack of information about events leading to the crisis situation.

Accidental: lack of control over events leading to the crisis situation.

Good intentions: organization meant to do well

5. *Justification*: crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis.

6. *Reminder*: crisis managers tell stakeholders about the past good works of the organization.

7. *Ingratiation*: crisis manager praises stakeholders for their actions.

8. *Compensation*: crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims.

9. *Apology*: crisis manager indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Crisis Types by Attribution of Crisis Responsibility (Coombs and Holliday, 2002)

Victim Crises: Minimal Crisis Responsibility

Natural disasters: acts of nature such as tornadoes or earthquakes.

Rumors: false and damaging information being circulated about your organization.

Workplace violence: attack by former or current employee on current employees on-site.

Product Tampering/Malevolence: external agent causes damage to the organization.

Accident Crises: Low Crisis Responsibility

Challenges: stakeholder claim that the organization is operating in an inappropriate manner.

Technical error accidents: equipment or technology failure that cause an industrial accident.

Technical error product harm: equipment or technology failure that cause a product to be defective or potentially harmful.

Preventable Crises: Strong Crisis Responsibility

Human-error accidents: industrial accident caused by human error.

Human-error product harm: product is defective or potentially harmful because of human error.

Organizational misdeed: management actions that put stakeholders at risk and/or violate the law.



Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Future Considerations

- Comparing the position held by SnapChat with respect to the Bob Marley filter with similar situations that have arisen with other companies
- Comparing the position held by SnapChat with “blackface” filter and “yellowface” filter
- Comparing SnapChat after “blackface” to SnapChat after Kylie Jenner twee



Gucci's Response to "Blackface" Sweater



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SnapChat's Response to "Yellowface" Filter



"lens was inspired by anime, and was meant to be playful."



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Prada's Response to "Blackface" Keychain



“Prada Group abhors racist imagery. The Pradamalia are fantasy charms composed of elements of the Prada oeuvre. They are imaginary creatures not intended to have any reference to the real world and certainly not blackface. Prada Group never had the intention of offending anyone and we abhor all forms of racism and racist imagery. In this interest we will withdraw the characters in question from display and circulation.”



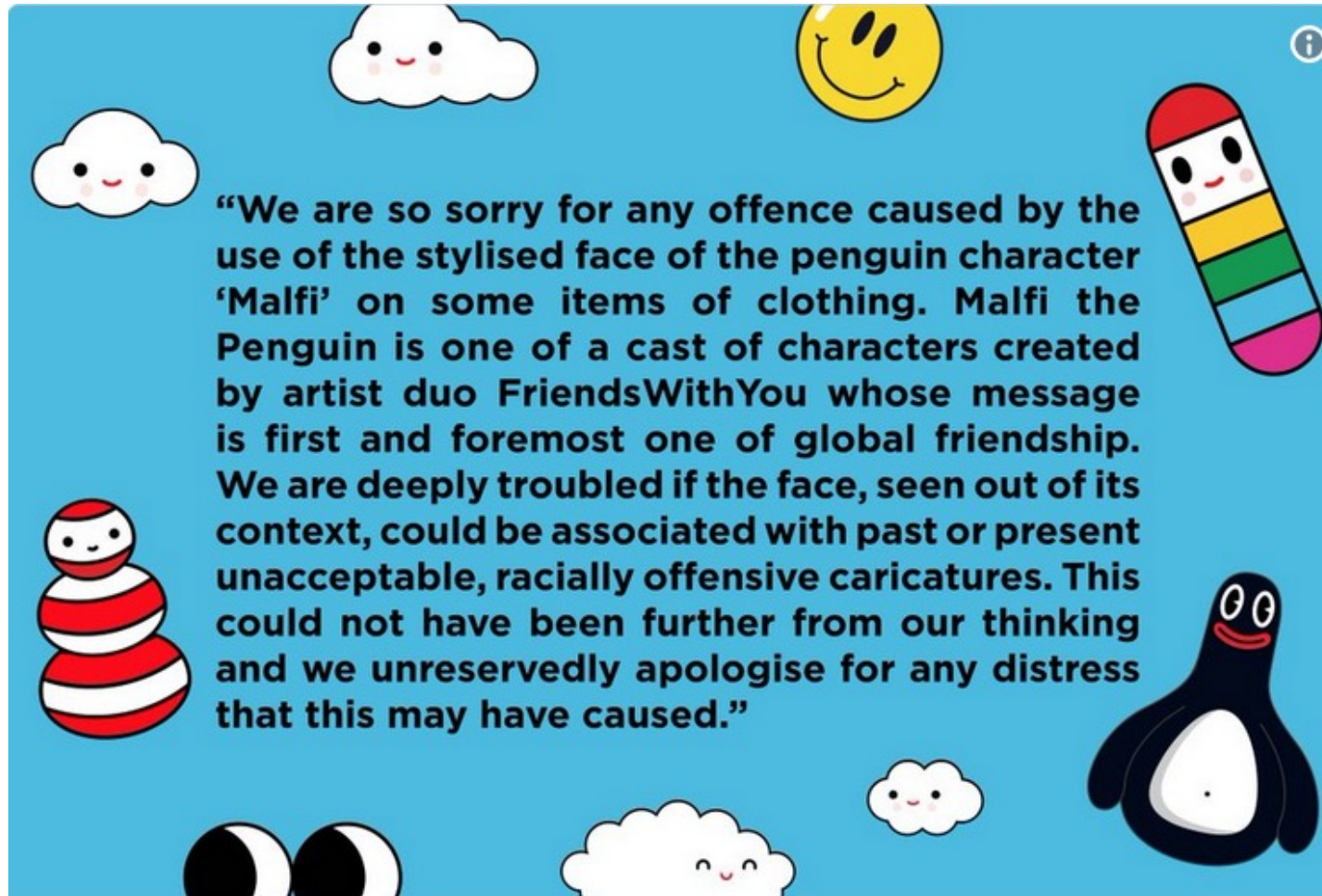
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Moncler's Response to "Blackface" Jacket



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Moncler's Response to "Blackface" Jacket



Katy Perry's Response to "Blackface" Slippers



“envisioned as a nod to modern art and surrealism.”



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Did Kylie Jenner Cost SnapChat over \$1 Billion Dollars?

 **Kylie Jenner**  @KylieJenner · 21 Feb 2018 

sooo does anyone else not open Snapchat anymore? Or is it just me... ugh this is so sad.

 4.9K  71K  363K

 **Kylie Jenner**   

@KylieJenner

still love you tho snap ... my first love

2:01 PM - 21 Feb 2018

5,953 Retweets 78,600 Likes



 863  6.0K  79K



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Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Conclusion

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Blackface in Corporate America: A Situational Analysis

Thank You!

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Digital Blackface and Human
Representation on a Digital
Landscape: Expanding Territory

Mark W. Beekman



Some of the new emojis for 2019 announced by the Unicode Consortium (oversees emojis) [Sarah Mervosh](#) Feb. 6, 2019 The New York Times

What Is Digital Blackface? Dr. Aaron Nyerges

- The posting of “Black emotional reaction gifs” online or on social media threads
- Emphatic emojis can reinforce notions of Black people being overly emotional, comical
- Can be similar to historic Blackface characters and overly dramatic performances
- Question: Is this White hegemony? Modern entertainment, potentially with old time racial stereotyping?

The Newest American Generations: What Is The Takeaway Here?

- Having awareness of and discussing digital blackface and use of Black people and other races in potentially exaggerated ways
- How do young people think of/define 'being White' or 'being Black' in today's society?
- Question: Are youths 'colorblind'? Possible?
- How would they describe "being Black"?

Images of Culture and Race

- What cultural icons then stand to represent race and culture to our youth?
- The digital world IS the world to youth, from infancy onward
- Social learning from the digital sphere: arguably, more study needed

Awareness of Digital Blackface

- Pop culture magazines (The Guardian, Teen Vogue, and television programming-the BBC)
- Like with other racial issues, are we just not conscious of digital blackface?
- Is it taboo or too complicated to talk about?
- Do digital users just view digital characters as ***entertainment?***
Communication?
- Digital overlay of own face with 'black cachet'

Emoji, Animoji, Memoji....

- Digital self- identity continues to proliferate
- Some social scientists argue that future communication will be based on digital characters, their behavior and appearance only
- Stark (2018) argues that digital characters and figures are designed to approximate human identity, and-
- Much of human identity (body types and personality) is defined through stereotypes

Definitions

- What is considered to be unique to a particular race or culture?
- If this uniqueness is realized, is it to be celebrated? Much as artwork is celebrated
- Or, is uniqueness an avenue of mockery, used for entertainment and amusement by majority culture (White culture)?
- The need for superiority/supremity

Digital Representations

- Do artists aim to reproduce digital artifacts and characters that are discriminatory? No.
- However, our digital culture carries on and even reinforces racial categorizations and stereotypes, even unintentionally
- Representations of the human body are a 'social construct' that can be discriminatory
- Race is made visible/defined in the digital sphere by animated digital characters

The Bigger Question

- How do we represent race, nationality, cultures, personalities in the digital realm without being stereotypical/hegemonic?
- Where is the line drawn between modern entertainment and racial mockery?
- Biology and culture come together to create human representations, which artists reproduce with 'juicy' identities: *They sell.*

Digital Emotion and Behavior

- Human displays of emotion, personality, body types are given to digital characters
- Any of these can be stereotypical/exaggerated
- Stereotyping may then affect digital characters
- Digital characters are fascinating, addictive (social media, gaming, messaging)
- More personal customization with digital characters in the future

The Bigger Question(s)

- Will shifts in cultural/political values be driven by commonplace digital items like memoji?
- Cartoons and non-digital animation did this
- The digital world: The new field of rhetoric?
- (Stark, 2018): Digitized emotion is powerful: Can be used for *social construction* of race
- Social construction of genders, age, economic status: *Post-colonial hegemony?*

The Bigger Question(s)

- Human life continues to become more and more digitally influenced and mediated
- More social science study is needed
- Media attention to digital blackface can be good or bad (slant, stance, opinion pieces)

Facial Recognition Systems

- Becoming more common with smart phones
- “These animations serve as technical phenomena translating moments of affective and emotional expression into mediated socially legible forms” (Dr. Luke Stark, 2018)
- How can such digital material be used by companies for highly targeted marketing?

Emoji Skin Color Modifiers

- Robertson, Magdy, & Goldwater (2018) examined use of skin tone modifiers for emoji on Twitter
- Qualitative sample of 0.6 billion tweets, over 4 thousand users with profiles
- Overall prevalence of lighter skin tone modifiers used by predominantly lighter-skinned people (more lighter-skinned users)

Emoji Skin Color Modifiers

- More lighter-skinned people using emojis (digital access)
- Darker-skinned people more apt to modify skin tone to match their profile photos
- Skin modifiers overwhelmingly used for self-representations

Emoji Skin Color Modifiers

- Researchers feel that the Unicode Consortium has provided a wealth of diversity with emoji
- Twitter users self-represent, rather than trying to appear as someone different than their profile pictures
- Was no trend in making a mockery of others, at least in their appearance with skin tone
- Negative tweets did not reveal negative racial remarks

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