

Lone wolf

By Cassandra Harlan

Despite diverse Black characters populating shows in the U.S. and across the pond, one curious thing stands out: on the rare occasion a woman and Black man lead are on the same show, the man will likely be gay.

This isn't some hotep, Hollyweird is afraid of an intense Black male rant. I take no issue with the men being gay. However, I'm curious as to why. Why the men, by and large, and not the women?

One great example is Gus Sackey (a bit on the nose there). His half smile and cocked eyebrows command the screen. He appears to be continuously judging others or smelling a foul odor, but he is unsure which one.

After his first moments on screen, it became apparent he would be the queer character. If Harper, the lead Black woman, were present, Hollywood, by convention, denies the existence of Black straight or bi men and women to co-exist-and possibly date-the horror of it all!

The lack of romantic partnerships between Black leads exists for less sinister reasons than you may believe, and I've heard several theories.

The one making the most sense is laziness. White people (*note whiteness is used as a construct here. If you haven't read, absorbed, and wrestled with the thoughts of Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, and or bell hooks, go and do the reading first!) are notoriously lazy. They do the very least while gaining the very most in exchange.

Creating Black characters whose lives are sexual, flirtatious, or emotionally intimate means doing either one of two things: Hiring more Black writers or attempting to learn about the Black culture in the location they are depicting.

Harper is a Black American who presumably came from an impoverished or working-class background, and Gus is a rich bastard from Eaton. The writers would have to research and understand the dating dynamics of these different individuals and reasonably find storylines reflecting why they chose one another.

Instead of doing this, writers will do what they do best: focus on themselves. Writers will create Black characters lusting after white people with whom they have nothing in common, who are not compelling, nor particularly kind, funny, attractive, or a good

friend, but whose main appeal is whiteness. Their only appeal is power and access to a more comfortable life.

And this is what takes place in the writers' room, laziness. And while part of the solution is hiring more Black writers (yay!) other factors are at play.

If you live in a Western country and consider yourself observational, what happens when the number of Black people increases in a primarily white environment?

Hiring more Black writers is a slippery slope to hiring more Black actors; then, you need Black beauticians to style their hair correctly. Listen to Meghan Markle's episode 2: Divas with Mariah Carey. Listening to two biracial Black women lamenting about their hair woes illuminates how if they are having issues with their hair being adequately cared for, imagine a Black woman with a 4c or 3b pattern of hair. Industry gets around this issue by giving Harper medium-sized braids.

And let's not forget one crucial piece: whiteness as the centerpiece. White people see themselves as the lead. So even on a show featuring a Black woman, her focus is pursuing, fucking, and befriending white men (she wants to make a ton of money and prove herself as well).

When Black people celebrate the achievements of creators like Issa Rae or Quinta Brown, we are celebrating our point of view is centered. It's not enough to have token Black characters on a show, but ones who reflect what takes place in the intimate lives of Black people. White people can figure this out, but if 75% of white folks in the U.S. do not have a non-white friend and Western society offers no rewards to white folks understanding cultures outside of their own, the motivation does not exist.