

Opinions and Editorials

Blacks portrayed in reality TV perpetuate stereotypes

The Hilltop Editorial Board
BLACK COLLEGE NEWS WIRE

As drama queen New York told fellow contestant Bootz on "Flavor of Love" Season Two, "You're clicking . . . but you're clicking down." That's the state of reality television shows featuring blacks.

Just in the past year, cameras have followed the lives of Lil' Kim heading to jail, DMX being his usual angry self and Keyshia Cole visiting her former crack-addicted mother in jail. We've had two seasons of Flavor Flav looking for love (or just company for the night) and a new show set to feature Three 6 Mafia's move to Hollywood.

Though we are not judging the lives of these entertainers, there is no reason they should be glorified.

The reality is, reality television is the perfect product for network officials. The

shows are cheap to make and keep viewers glued. And people love them.

Therein lies the problem. Stations wouldn't keep cranking out these shows if there weren't an audience waiting to devour them. Lil' Kim's "Countdown to Lockdown" set rating records for BET. These shows are byproducts of society's increasingly overwhelming obsession with celebrities.

We in the black community must pay closer attention to our television image.

We don't have many opportunities on television to combat the image of a knife-flailing New York or grill-shining Crunchy Black, so these reality shows may seem like just entertainment. But their impact can be devastating.

Most of us know reality television isn't really real, but many of those who watch, including the youth, do not.

We are witnessing the McDonald's-ization of television with this newest wave of black reality shows, as one Hilltopper pointed out.

These shows are cheap, gobbled down and very successful, and you aren't sure what you ate until it is digested. Just as the effects of McDonald's are seen in the obesity of children, will these reality shows that are not real at all show their impact 20 years from now?

Big networks are making big money off the ignorance of our people (Ashton Kutcher is executive producer of Three 6 Mafia's show), and that should never be OK.

Preparing to go to jail should not be elevated, and using the restroom on yourself is not television-worthy. Only when we as consumers turn off the television will these caricatures of blacks begin to fade. Many of



Black College Wire photo
Flavor Flav, an '80s icon, reemerged to portray an image that has sparked controversy in the black community in his hit television show.

today's black reality shows appeal to our lowest level of intelligence and civilization. So let's all upgrade our taste. You want reality? Read a book.

From the Editor:

First glance determines first chance

Erin C. Perkins
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"Hi, my name is . . . and I am a . . . majoring in . . . I would like to . . . with your company." No matter how redundant the cliché, first impressions mean everything. Selling oneself can be a difficult challenge, especially if students walk into an employment or internship possibility unprepared because the first few minutes of any conversation are crucial to a first impression. Sometimes those words are the only way to truly "sell" a student's personality, goals and skills to potential employers.

Second chances in life are rare and few in between, so it is very important to make the most of every first impression because it may be the only chance one gets to leave your footprints on the minds of those who you seek to gain employment opportunities.

Self-confidence is key to presenting a positive self-image. It has a unique way of rubbing off on others and leaving them remembering you, which is actually what a student should most want: to be remembered.

After attending the Howard University Job Fair in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 18 and 19, I had the opportunity to converse with several high-profile professionals and recent graduates who shared valuable insight to help deliver a class-act first impression.

"I only remember students who introduced themselves to me. I cannot recommend anyone [for an internship or employment] that I did not meet," Aliya S. King, professional freelancer (*Vibe*, *Upscale*, *The Source*, *Vixen* and *King*) shared.

It is very important to make one's presence known when attending professional events where students may encounter an individual from a field that they wish to enter. Go up and introduce yourself to that person. Even if you do not have a question, you can still make an effort to make your name known. For example, King suggested that a student should say "I enjoy what you shared and discussed today, I would like to introduce myself." Networking is essential because one never knows when they may want a contact or reference for future opportunities.

"Dress to impress" is an old montage, but it still applies. Students should wear clothes that are flattering, yet remain appropriate, which means clothes that fit, but are not too tight or too loose and cause you to constantly play tug-of-war with ill-fitting clothes.

Keep it simple, wear your clothes, do not let them wear you.

Eye contact and firm handshakes are a must because they will make or break you. Look whoever you are speaking to directly in the eyes throughout the conversation to show confidence, to express interest and to give respect.

The number one rule is to be true to your best self and express a welcoming confidence including your abilities, strengths and ambition.



PERKINS

'Minority Stereo-types' not so minor

Tamika Green
NEWS EDITOR

You know them. You watch them. You may even enjoy them. They are popular sitcoms with the token "black guy," or other minority figure. You know the one that appears to be thrown into the mix solely to provide some diversity, but who has no real role in the show.

These characters typically tend to be everyday working class types, such as the waiter, teacher, store clerk, etc. But do you ever find yourself thinking "Was the

only reason the show cast that person is so there could be a black (or other minority) character in the show? It is such a negative way of thinking, but is there any truth to that?"

I have noticed that of all minorities, blacks are more represented in television. However, the way in which we are represented is what creates the problem. Countless negative stereotypes show up in these programs. This needs to change.

Although, you can sometimes find minorities in

more powerful positions, such as judges or doctors, you may still get the feeling that he or she is just placed into the show to make the cast appear more diverse.

Also, shows that have a black character as one of the main cast members often tend to be portrayed in a certain way. They are often shown as "thugs" or "smart mouths." This is not a fair portrayal of blacks.

We are not all "ghetto loudmouths" who like to get in your face. So why must we continue to be shown this way? Rarely are we depicted as intelligent or successful characters. Every black female does not say "Oh, no you didn't!" and the only interests of black males are not money, cars and women. Predominantly white

shows like ABC's *Will & Grace*, a comedy about a straight woman and a homosexual man who live together, very rarely have minority characters, other than the ever-present Hispanic maid Rosario.

Of course there are always a few exceptions to anything. Some shows do depict blacks in a positive light. FOX's *House*, a show about the daily goings on at a hospital, has a black doctor played by Omar Epps. The same can be said for ABC's *Grey's Anatomy* which has a similar theme. It has three blacks and one Asian in its cast.

Television executives need to include more positive images of blacks in their sitcoms. Until this occurs, the stereotypes will continue to prevail over the truth.



GREEN

Ask La'Chelle

Q: I am very serious about my academics. I work very hard and I earn good grades, but I feel like my pockets are becoming very empty. I want to get a job to earn more money, but I don't want this to interfere with my school-work. I really want both a job and good grades, but I just don't know how I can balance the two.

A: Academics are very important; matter of fact, they should come before anything. I understand the wants and needs of the average students and sometimes the money that family and other relatives send is just not enough.



LA'CELLE

You will just need to search for a job that can accommodate your class schedule. Most employers understand that you are a college student and that you can only work certain days, so they are willing to accommodate your schedule. The most important thing to remember when having a job and going to school is knowing how to manage time; setting time out to work and time out to study is very important.

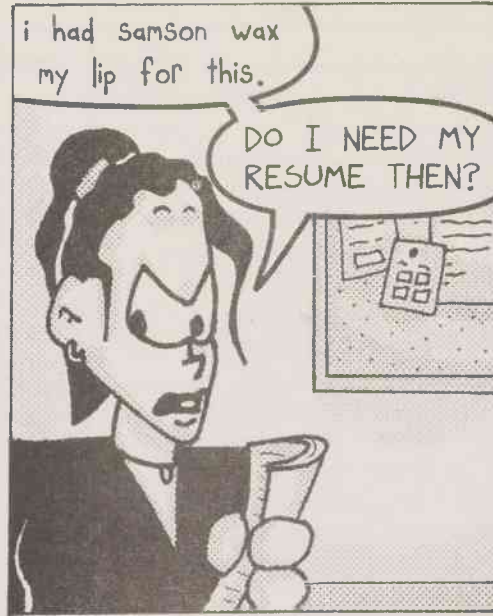
You shouldn't get caught up in working so much that you slack off in your academics.

Q: Being an out-of-state student from Maryland can be very hard at times; I don't get to go home much; I don't know many people from where I am from. Sometimes I feel like an outcast. I want to make new friends but I am shy. Do you have any suggestions?

A: Being a college student, period, can be hard. There are thousands of students from various locations who attended Winston-Salem State University. Meeting new people, especially those who you want to become your friends, can also be a challenge, as well as being lonely. WSSU has some clubs and organization particularly for those students who live in the northern states. Maybe you should try to look into these organizations to see how they can help benefit you. I am sure that these organizations have several people with whom you can share common interests. In making new friends, being yourself is the key factor in creating long-term friendships.

Q: I am failing my biology class; but I can't drop it because I need it to graduate. How can I get

help?
A: If you need this class to graduate and are not able to drop it you should try to find a tutor. When your professor passed out the syllabus, he or she probably provided the class with his/her office hours and contact information. Take advantage of these office hours and contact information. Continue to go to class, take notes and study hard. You should ask questions when you do not understand something, continue to visit your professors during office hours, call, and e-mail. Do whatever you can to show the professor that you are trying; show him/her that even though you are failing that you are taking some type of initiative to get the work done. If the professor feels that he/she cannot help you, ask him/her to put you in contact with someone who can.



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