

THE LITTLE MERMAID MAY HAVE JUST MADE A GROUND-BREAKING STATEMENT ABOUT REAL WORLD POWER DYNAMICS

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For the 90s kids, *The Little Mermaid* is more than just a fictional movie! It essentially encapsulates a significant phase of their childhood: when things were simpler, not to mention the sentimental value that comes along with the nostalgia this film offers to the same individuals who have now become adults. Perhaps this is why it has been a hot topic of discussion lately, not only in the West but also worldwide, given that it's part of pop culture! I still remember as a little girl, my dad showed me *The Little Mermaid* on our VCR, which used to be a privilege back then in Pakistan.

Such movies play a major role in narrative building and psychology for children who look up to these fictional characters and resonate with the romantic ideals such films have to offer.

The core belief that one day, a Prince Charming will come to save us deeply gets ingrained into the minds of young girls who are amazed by these Disney Princesses living in a magical world and start viewing their lives from that lens, forming unrealistic expectations. This is where filmmakers have a huge responsibility in terms of the narratives they build through their visual communication and storytelling.

As far as the current remake of *The Little Mermaid* is concerned, I believe the director Rob Marshall has paid particular attention to this aspect and made significant effort towards building a narrative in line with political correctness. A big step indicative of this was to cast a Black actress for a typically curated Caucasian character of 'Ariel'.

There have been mixed reviews regarding this decision. While feminists and leftists in the States are applauding the casting team for promoting diversity and inclusion by making conscious choices when it comes to storytelling, the right-winged conservatives are showing their

disappointment via hate comments and dislikes on Twitter. So much so that the Chinese have blatantly condemned the casting choice of a "Black Ariel".

This goes to show that unfortunately racism still prevails regardless of whether we're living in a so called 'developed' country or a 'developing' one. Even after the rise of 'woke' and 'cancel' culture, the problematic discriminatory mindset that marginalises particular races based on 'universal beauty standards' (essentially European standards of beauty) still prevails.

It's unfortunate that the world after so many decades of colonialism still continues to carry out oppression against particular races. It's just that the form of oppression has shifted and now taken the form of resistance towards representation of these previously colonised races in mainstream media.

The actress starring as Ariel, Halle Bailey, is not only a badass protagonist in the movie but also in real life! Along with her team, she has managed to not only showcase resilience and empowerment as Ariel, who alone goes and fights the evil sea witch, Ursula, and saves her prince charming, Eric, as well as her father, King Triton, all while raising her voice as the Black actress against the racial backlash her and her team are receiving!

Now if this isn't the epitome of bravery, then I don't know what is!

Halle goes on to share a quote to inspire young girls: "I want the little girls just like me who are watching to know that they're special, and that they should be a princess in every single way." She is setting a precedent by proving that representation matters!

While these typical privileged, right-winged, millennial American male critics may easily throw in hate comments about their childhood movie being ruined for "lack of better taste", think about how important it is for young Black and Brown girls to see someone who looks like them as the main heroine onscreen!

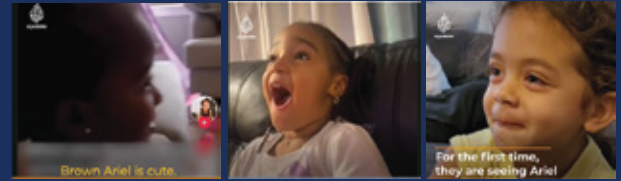
Parents go on to show the reactions of their kids to “Black Little Mermaid” and it’s the most wholesome thing ever!

Such representation will hopefully play a role in shaping the power dynamics for future generations!

Trevor Noah, a South African Comedian and Political Commentator insightfully sheds light on the double standards of the American society in his ‘The Little Mermaid’ special on The Daily Show. He not only points out the racist ideology being propagated by right-winged Americans but also counters their criticism by advocating for Halle’s unmatched talent as a singer for a movie that is literally a musical, which makes her an exuberant choice for the role!

An important point to note is how The Little Mermaid holds real world parallels with a fairly recent observation of racism yet again leading to mainstream media prioritising the story of the submarine tragedy featuring the deaths of a handful of rich and powerful (5 to be precise) over the boat tragedy involving deaths of approximately 700 racially marginalised immigrants sinking due to overload, who were migrating to Europe in hopes for a better future, “with Pakistanis singled out and forced below deck where their chances of surviving a capsized were less”.

So can we really claim that our post-modern world is free from the colonial mindset? Food for thought!



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