

The Ghost in the Shell whitewash controversy.

Ghost in the Shell is one of the most beloved Japanese franchises. Started as a manga in 1989 by the name of Kokaku Kidotai ("Mobile Armored Riot Police") and got later adapted in different mediums such as anime movies, series or videogames. The 2 movies directed by the famous director Mamoru Oshii, boosted its popularity and even inspired the Matrix movie. An American live-action adaptation was released this year starring Scarlett Johansson as the protagonist, a casting choice that had immediately given rise to controversy.

The controversy is about the fact that Kusanagi Mokoto (or the Major), the protagonist of the series, is supposed to be a Japanese character and the story is supposed to take place in a futuristic Japan, so a lot of people have trouble accepting a white actor playing the role of a Japanese person. The so-called whitewash controversy has been heavily discussed since the announcement, going so far as to create an online petition of over 100.000 signatures asking to reconsider this casting choice. Live-action adaptations of popular anime are usually hated by both the original fanbase and the newcomers for either being unfaithful to the source material or just being poor movies and this movie was no exception. These adaptations tend to lose the glimpses of Asian culture in favor of an Americanization of the product with American culture and, of course, with white actors, which is considered "white-washing" the source material. People who agree with this controversy also tend to accuse the casting choice to be just a way to boost the popularity of the movie, by giving the lead role to a famous actor.

Of course, not everyone agrees with the existence of a casting issue for a lot of reasons that revolve around the storyline and the character itself. For instance, the Ghost in the Shell franchise takes place in a future where technology has evolved to the point of having nearly everyone being at least partially cyberized, if not entirely like the Major herself. For this reason, her character can basically have any look the creator wants without being limited by the manufacturing origin. Following the same line of thought, in most of the media representing the franchise, the character design is realistic enough to represent the obvious physical traits of an Asian person, which is not the case for the protagonist who looks more ambiguous than Asian. It's also impressive to note how much the live-action actress and the character played resemble each other, which can arguably make her an actually good casting choice.

In conclusion, regardless of the actual quality of the movie, the Ghost in the Shell fanbase seems to be mainly divided into two categories: those who dislike the main actress not being Asian, going as far as stating that they would never watch the movie because of it, and those who don't see why the main actress should necessarily be Asian, who usually like this casting choice.