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Annotated Bibliography

In the Netherlands, there’s a controversial character in Dutch Christmas celebrations named Zwarte Piet (Black Pete). Zwarte Piet has many physical characteristics in common with “blackface”, the racist practice where someone who’s not black bedecks their face to be reminiscent of racist caricatures from when black people were treated as second-class or third-class citizens, with, in the case of the Netherlands, solely white people playing as Zwarte Piet. For half a century, swathes of Dutch people have argued that Zwarte Piet is a racist caricature, and the continuation of this tradition is harmful to not only black people that live in and/or visit the Netherlands, but to the psyche of non-black people that live in and/or visit the Netherlands as well. On the other side of this debate, there are many Dutch people who claim that Zwarte Piet is just an innocent character beloved by children and is an integral part of Dutch Christmas traditions. This debate is coming to an end as we near 2020, with the general decision being to alter the appearance of Zwarte Piet to not be a flagrant racist caricature, with most cities simply dusting a little bit of soot on the faces of the Pieten. Was this the best decision for the situation though? My sources will cover the recent and current mindset of Dutch citizens towards Zwarte Piet, as well as the history of the character and whether the seeming final decision was really for the best.

Coenders, Yannick, and Sébastien Chauvin. “Race and the Pitfalls of Emotional Democracy: Primary Schools and the Critique of Black Pete in the Netherlands.” *Antipode*. Vol. 49, Issue 5, Nov. 2017, p. 1244-1262. Academic Search Complete, doi: 10.1111/anti.12328 . Accessed Nov. 16, 2019.

Coenders and Chauvin conduct an extensive survey of schools in the Netherlands, and how they responded to the rising controversy behind the figure of Zwarte Piet. The duo compiled a database of 6456 email addresses, one for every primary school in the Netherlands, requesting three times that they complete a survey that Coenders and Chauvin sent. About 15% of schools responded, reporting varying levels of change implemented in each school, ranging from no change whatsoever, to a complete removal of Sinterklaas celebrations, along with the reasoning behind the school’s decision. This study will be implemented into my essay to help display the general mindset of those in charge of Dutch children, and how the mindset may shift for future generations.

Hayes, Rebecca, et al. “Black Petes & Black Crooks? Racial stereotyping and offending in the Netherlands.” *Contemporary Justice Review,* Vol. 21, Issue 1, Mar. 2018, p. 16-32. Academic Search Complete, doi: 10.1080/10282580.2018.1415049. Accessed Nov. 18, 2019.

Hayes et al. propose a correlation between the relatively high crime statistics of black Dutch citizens and immigrants (compared to white Dutch citizens), and the perpetuation of Zwarte Piet. They point out how the character tends to alienate black people, which can prevent anyone not accustomed to Dutch traditions from fully integrating, as well as Zwarte Piet (and similar characters) giving Dutch police an ethnic bias. Hayes et al. warn that a lack of integration and having ones identity being undermined and erased by racist caricatures and stereotypes can turn the stereotypes into a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, making Zwarte Piet especially detrimental to Dutch society. This article provides a more in-depth look at how black people are gradually affected by racist stereotypes, and how supposed “non-racism” and “color-blind racism” can be incredibly harmful.

Hilhorst, Sacha, and Joke Hermes. “’We have given up so much’: Passion and denial in the Dutch Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) controversy.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* Vol. 19, Issue 3, Jun. 2016, p. 218-233. Academic Search Complete, doi: 10.1177/1367549415603381. Accessed Nov. 7, 2019.

Hilhorst and Hermes delve into the rising controversy behind Zwarte Piet by observing the behaviors of supporters of the “Pietitie” (translates to “Pete-tition”), a pro-Zwarte Piet Facebook group with over two million members (about an eighth of the Netherlands’ population.) They do this by analyzing the trend of the use of the keyword “passion” amongst the group members, and how group members generally respond to recent events. Hilhorst and Hermes also bring up many counter-points to the points made by members of the Pietitie, showcasing blind spots in the group’s arguments. This article will be utilized to inform the reader of the Pietitie’s side of the argument, as well as refutations to this side.

Mesman, Judi, et al. “Black Pete through the Eyes of Dutch Children.” *PLoS One,* Vol. 11, Issue 6, Jun. 20, 2016, p. 1-14. Academic Search Complete, doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0157511. Accessed Oct. 30, 2019.

Mesman and co. conduct a study on 201 Dutch children, ages 5-7 and of various backgrounds, to see what effect, if any, Zwarte Piet has on children’s perception of black adults. Mesman and co. first check how children describe Zwarte Piet, then had the children compare Zwarte Piet to other groups, and finishes with having the children assign characteristics to Zwarte Piet and the other previously mentioned groups. They conclude that a large majority of children tested do not really associate Zwarte Piet with black people, but more so with clowns. This study points to an issue with the anti-Zwarte Piet viewpoint that being exposed to Zwarte Piet will make children more prone to racist tendencies, which doesn’t seem to be the case.

Raboteau, Emily. “Who is Zwarte Piet?” *Virginia Quarterly Review.* Vol. 90, Issue 1, Winter 2014, p. 142-155. Academic Search Complete, <https://web-a-ebscohost-com.db25.linccweb.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=9b0ba9bc-bc61-4434-8b15-9360c849537f%40sessionmgr4008> . Accessed Nov. 5, 2019

Raboteau discusses her time living in Amsterdam and her experiences living amid both Sinterklaas celebrations and large, controversial events related to the more recent backlash that the celebrations have received. She discusses how the Netherlands’ history and the Dutch schooling system may play a part in many Dutch people’s aversion to facing the racism that is Zwarte Piet. She tells a bit of how the history of Sinterklaas relates to nearby countries’ Christmas celebrations, further exemplifying how out of place and racist the character Zwarte Piet is. This article discusses the mindset of many Dutch people and gives an insightful look into how they try to justify the continued existence of Zwarte Piet.