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AAA 101

20 October 2022

Crazy Rich Asians

*Crazy Rich Asians* is a romantic comedy that is written by Kevin Kwan, who is a Singaporean American. He wrote this novel that then turned into a film and used an all-Asian cast to play the roles. This is a best-selling novel, and the movie has won many awards such as best picture. Originally when Kwan decided on turning this into a movie, he believed that it would only be watched by Asians, even though his idea was to spread the movie across North America. The movie sets the scene of a couple who travel to Singapore for a wedding. The main character Nick Young is from Singapore and is extremely wealthy because Kwan wanted to portray how wealthy the society is. There is a lot of history behind Singapore’s wealth, such as the fact that it is a major port city which flows in a lot of money due to its location. In the movie, there is often a comparison between those who come from old money versus new money. This is depicted because a lot of Chinese immigrated in the past to Singapore to work hard labor jobs. Kwan wrote this book off people he knew and related most to the character Rachel Chu because he often felt like an outsider even though he did grow up like Nick Young since families for him were meant to maintain a social status. The movie depicts how Chinese are not accepted unless they have a high social status and that there is a lot of class conflict. There is a lot of conflict within Asian American popular culture and Kwan portrays this is his movie and talks about his own thoughts as an author/creator on the matter.

The quote that we are examining describes Asian Americans in popular culture. Mimi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu believe that Asian American and popular culture are full of conflict and contradict. One main point to realize, is that it is very rare that we see Asian Americans on film or television. Also, when we do, it usually is Americans portraying their character. For example, Ashton Kutcher once played a character where he had his skin darkened to portray the Indian character he was supposed to be playing. In no circumstance is it appropriate to do that. Thessaly La Force writes “I, too, am half Chinese, though I have always been told (by other Chinese-Americans, by white people who were under the impression I was one of them) that I’m not the right kind of Chinese.” (Force,). Force was never seen on screen and was told that she isn’t the type of “Chinese” that the directors were looking for. She mentions how even after the film *Crazy Rich Asians* came out; you still are yet to see many Asian-American roles in film which is very sad. She believed that after a major film like so came to light that Americans would realize that there are not a lot of films that include and represent many Asian Americans. As a society we continue to grant white privilege for television roles. “A recent study by the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism showed Asian-Americans representing only 1 percent of all leading roles in Hollywood (the 2017 United States Census Bureau reported that there are 18 million Americans of Asian descent, or roughly 6 percent of the population).” (Force). This is an astonishing number of only 6 percent of the population portrays leading roles. While searching for actors for *Crazy Rich Asians*, theater schools were saying that they had not even had a graduate that was an Asian male in many years. There is so much conflict in popular culture and Asian Americans because they are not even given the opportunity or same equality to play such roles as those who are not of Asian descent do. Although, in other forms of popular culture Asian Americans have been able to make their name and receive more celebration. But why is this the case? Why are Asian Americans in ways heard but not seen? How can society change this and allow Asian Americans to receive the success that they deserve? People need to change their perspectives and reduce their stereotypes. Asian Americans are not seen in television, a huge form of popular culture. There is conflict here because of the stereotypes and biases people have around Asian Americans. To diminish these, we need to make a change and give Asian Americans the same opportunity those around them have in this field of art.

As for Kevin Kwan and other artists, they have many hopes for Asian Americans to flourish in popular culture. Many Asian Americans who are not creating forms of popular culture believe that they are starting to become more represented especially after the film *Crazy Rich Asians.* But many still feel that they are neglected and left out. Asian Americans are not nearly represented enough on screen, and it was amazing to see the cast of *Crazy Rich Asians* consist of almost all Asian Americans. Another amazing thing is that Kwan paired with director Jon M. Chu who is also Asian American to produce the film to his desire. Kwan says in an interview how his readers of his novel have a very myopic view of Asia. He worked closely with Warner Brothers to make sure that there were many different Asian Americans playing roles in his film so that they were able to be on the screen. His hope was that this movie would continue to raise awareness of how Asian Americans are not shown on screen and change this myopic view that the United States has on Asian Americans. His film is the first in twenty-six years to have an all-Asian cast! Kwan’s hope is that this gains viewers attentions to this fact so that they can change this moving forward. He mentions how everyone was educated themselves when coming up with the casts and learning about different ethnic groups. They were becoming more ethnic conscious. It is sad that they struggled to find so many Asian American actors and that they are not more out there, which correlates directly to their lack of representation in films. He also says that the lack of minimal actors in the United States is due to the cultural issues we have here. A huge factor that also played into creating and developing this movie was the support Kwan received from the Asian American community. Kwan states “It’s become kind of a touchstone for the hopes and dreams for a lot of people, especially creative people. And not only Asian Americans, but people from all over Asia. They want this movie to work because they want to see the floodgates open for more projects that are inclusive, that are diverse, that showcase these different worlds and these different people in a meaningful way.” (Paras). He hopes that this movie opens more doors for films that are diverse and include actors from different descents and ethnicities. It also can open doors for producers who seek to create work that is diverse as well. For example, the director Chu hopes to inspire the next generation of filmmakers to follow their dreams and not just the stereotypical occupations of those who come from Asian descendant. He explains how we live in a society that focuses on how much money you make and how that defines your success. When, success is doing something you are passionate about and fulfilling that dream. Their hope is for Asian Americans to ultimately pursue their passions and find their voice in the United States.

A story that relates to Asian Americans pursuing careers and following their dreams is Helen Zia’s Detroit Blues: Because of You Motherfuckers”. She describes how she went to school to become a doctor, following her parents and her Chinese heritage. Within two years, she hated it and quit because she no longer wanted to pursue her parents dream and went to find her own. She ended up discovering journalism, a form of popular culture and began writing. : I spent my days reporting on the life and trends that made Detroit dynamic. Asian American issues were not among them.” (Zia). She wrote about how the city was in a crisis, and that eventually Japanese became to blame since it was easiest. This was when Vincent Chin was murdered based on his identity. She explains how the news left out major details to his killing and how his race played a role. His story relates to the fact that many Chinese immigrants come searching for the American Dream to be accepted and yet feel unsafe and are never given the chance to even be accepted by their peers. Another reading, “introduction to America for Americans” strongly highlights how the United States is not accepting of immigrants and fuels this overall cultural issue and inequality. The United States has been known for allowing in many immigrants and refugees, allowing them to experience the American Dream. Yet, as Erika Lee states, “But the United States is also a nation of xenophobia. Even as it has welcomed millions from around the world, it has also deported more immigrants than any other nation- over fifty-five million since 1882.” (Lee). The United States has been built upon these cultural issues, which is affecting every aspect of life for Asian Americans. The United States has continued to blame their political and economic problems on immigrants when there are other problems at stake that are really to blame. She states how Xenophobia is affecting what is means to be American. The racism and xenophobia continue to affect the United States today and those who are striving to pursue their American Dream.

Asian Americans are very unrepresented in popular culture, especially in films and television. As a society, we need to educate those around us of these matters and continue to change this. Creators such as Kevin Kwan, hope to continue to change these cultural issues we have in American and raise opportunities for Asian Americans. Asian Americans suffer from stereotypes and biases that Americans have that restrict them from achieving their hopes and dreams in this industry. *Crazy Rich Asians* helped change the worlds view of the inequality Asian Americans face in this industry and hopes to be a turning point in the right direction.

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