INS 101/102

**Questions of Representation**

As you begin to work on your analysis skills, you’ll find that in many cases it is quite difficult to understand who or what is being represented, who or what is being under-represented, and who or what is being irresponsibly represented. The questions (below) are designed to get you thinking about representation both in terms of the clips/videos we watch together in class and also those you experience on your own (or, for your media makeover assignment). Not all of the questions will be relevant to your makeover project so pick and choose the ones that best suit the media you have chosen to think about.

We are going to focus on stereotyping (remember, the single story?) as the means to enter this conversation. You’ll have to think about how and why stereotypes negatively impact people, and how and why this negative impact matters. As part of these questions and this assignment, you’ll want to keep the following concepts in mind: Orientalism/othering, hegemony, conflict, the single story, race, gender, sexuality, social status, income level, etc. These ideas can all be connected to this exercise and to issues of representation generally. You’ll be asked to make connections in the media you are analyzing, to show that you are able to connect the ideas and theories you’ve been introduced to in this class with the media you are presented with but also the media that you choose as the source material for your project. Seeing how many of these concepts are connected is important to understanding why this assignment and why this conversation matter, especially outside of the classroom.

Remember, power always plays a role in these attitudes/ideas.

**Questions**

1. Are there any stereotypes you can identify in this media? Give examples.

There were many stereotypes seen in the video. Some included the Black African men at the beginning of the video who were dressed in some “tribal” clothing. The other was of the Native Americans who were on horses and dressed in stereotypical Native American traditional clothing. In this scene you can see them on horses with face paint and with guns which is a recurring stereotype seen in many forms of the media. Last but not least were the Russian men dancing in the snow. In this scene the snow is a stereotype in itself as most people believe that it is always snowing in Russia.

1. Who or what do the stereotyped individuals/groups represent?

The black men seen at the beginning of the video dressed in “tribal” wear and face paint are meant to represent Africans. This can be seen through their dressing and also the environment that they are in which is in the wild. This scene embodies all stereotypical ideas of Africa and Africans. The other was the scene of six men dancing in the snow in front of a building that resemble the St. Basil Cathedral, this particular scene is meant to represent Russians. Lastly, the scene of the group of people dancing in traditional clothing with head pieces and paint on their faces are meant to represent Native Americans and their culture.

1. What “single story” is it giving the audience about the character in question? Is this single story (potentially) harmful to that individual, or the group they represent? Is it harmful to someone else? Explain.

For the scene that supposed to represent Africans the single story that is being given to the audience is that Africans live in the wild and that they are still far behind in their ways of living. It shows that Africa is not a developed place but some savanna where lions and other wildlife live. This single story which has been told not just in this music video but in many story books and movies is very harmful to African people as it gives this image to other people from other places that they are not progressive or in other words developed. It shows Africa as one place instead of a continent with different countries and different cultures. It creates this notion that Africans are uneducated people who live in the wild. With this idea, Africans are then seen as not just ordinary people but barbaric people who live in the wild. It creates this sense of othering

Another group that was not accurately represented are the Native Americans. In the scene you see them on horses with guns while others dance around. This scene just like the one of Africans is one stereotype that has been used over and over again in the media. And embodies the essence of the ignoble character. It tells the single story that Native Americans are these warriors that ride on horses and have guns. It also does not specify what Native American tribe they belong to. This representation is harmful as Native Americans are seen as violent characters.

1. How might we re-imagine this stereotype to be more balanced and progressive/equitable?

One way that this stereotype could have been more balanced is if they did not just represent each group as one way. An example is the African representation given in the music video. The tribal wear the men had was unknown and neither did we get to find out where in Africa these men are from. Same could be said about the Native Americans. There are so many tribes, having put them all as just one is not an accurate representation. The producers of the music video could have done more research on which specific tribes and cultures they would like to represent. This way even if they may not have managed to touch on all cultures you still have an accurate representation. And many people can know that there are many tribes with very different cultures.