

Cultural Daily

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There Goes The Neighborhood

Tiffany M. Hobbs · Wednesday, June 6th, 2018

A few years ago, I wrote a piece for another outlet, now-defunct, compressed under the weight of its own scandal. That piece was on the looming gentrification in my neighborhood, and how negligent cops were polarizing their care of the current residents versus that of the new white ones. I didn't know then that gentrification would become a word used in jest to drive lackluster comedies starring formerly loved comedians and actresses toward relevancy.

There is so much sadness in the fact that these once-beloved black stars are so pressed for roles that they'll take cultural and economic rape, and use gentrification as a comedic tool for ratings. The fact that Blackness is erased faster than ever in the inner city of every state in this country has deemed itself worthy of laughter, but not to keep from crying. The preview was a horror film represented in 22 minutes sans commercials, framing the new CBS show, *The Neighborhood*, forcing us to get acquainted with that which aggressively works to get rid of us as people but not us as culture- the white family that moves into a black neighborhood. This—this IS America.



Starring Cedric the Entertainer (not Donald Glover) and Tichina Arnold as well-to-do parents and homeowners in a presumably black neighborhood, *The Neighborhood* centers not their wonderful accomplishments in this economic downturn, but instead focuses on a white family—The Johnsons (oh, the irony)—moving in next door, and their innocent want and need to acclimate to their new surroundings. The black folks in this case are used to alienate the poor little white folks who want to invoke Rodney King and just get along. The show works hard to wag its finger. The Johnsons shouldn't be hassled because of the color of their skin. What an interesting revelation! This show is racism's friendlier cousin- the one who means well and is often misunderstood. It allows the viewer to see the sociologically impossible possibility of black people in this country being racist towards white people. In *The Neighborhood*, society cognitively ignores that its punchline is not one that benefits from revealing the ability of black folks to be racist, but instead neglects to focus most on the inability of white folks to admit that THEY are. Instead of that admittance, we get a new, shiny primetime sitcom where these nice white people and their innocent American family are regarded as necessary for the progression of a neighborhood once shamefully stagnated by segregation. There's no talk in the trailer of that neighborhood being successful prior to this gentrification.

On the contrary, *The Neighborhood* aims to portray this place as being in need of the romanticized, utopic features that integration brings. For whom, they don't say. But there is a logical and healthy assumption that can be made which sees the black residents as benefiting from their new white

neighbors.



The supporting cast adds on to that painfully unfunny joke. There are bug eyes and loud laughs and at many points, if you are a black person with any inclination of how gentrification works, your hand found its way to the mute button of whatever you used to view the trailer. It was as difficult to watch as the hopeful but failing resuscitation of a dying acting career. Speaking of which, another tragedy in this reveal is that Tichina Arnold has clearly given up her role as Pam in the reboot of *Martin*. Here, we meet new woman who is used as fodder to make gentrification more palatable. Again, the black woman becomes an accessory to our own demise. You would think that the owner of WorldStar, a Kardashian, or Gary Owen/Michael Rapaport wrote the script. When people speak of passive aggressive violence, this is what they're talking about.

The Neighborhood is a violent depiction and trivialization of a true reality in the colonization of neighborhoods of black America. I live in one. And I have also seen my black counterparts hurry over to the new white neighbors in hopes of acceptance via making themselves look as non-threatening as possible. And there's nothing less threatening at this moment in a history than a black person hugging a white person. Don't kneel. That'll get you fired. But a handshake or hug? They won't call the cops on you today for sure! Devonte Brown was brutally sacrificed months ago, murdered by his white adopted mothers who paraded him in front of cameras during the Michael Brown protests, resulting in photos of him hugging white officers for the appeasement of whiteness, not the vindication of black pain, going viral. He looked afraid. His mothers were proud. Today, he and his siblings are dead, casualties of the narcissism of white supremacy. He was 15.

The Neighborhood is one big masturbatory hug to that same vengeful supremacy. And again, they are so damn proud of themselves.

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