

Cultural Daily

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This Is America

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, May 9th, 2018

*Editor's Note: Childish Gambino made Grammy Award history on Sunday, February 10, 2019, by winning both song and record of the year for **This Is America**. Sarah Elgart spotlighted the achievements of **This Is America** in dance and video in May, 2018. We're updating this post to celebrate Childish Gambino's win.*

A great guy I know works as a hotel Doorman in NYC, runs a non-profit foundation that serves needy people internationally on the side, is devoted to his kids, and loves and supports the arts. A black man, he believes that to change the system you've got to work it from within, so he voted Republican. He's convinced that to pass gun control laws in the US someone's got to try to get guns in the hands of black people. "That'll make the NRA give in to gun control real fast."

Actor/rapper Donald Glover, aka Childish Gambino (the name itself is so frickin' brilliant) and director Hiro Murai, squarely tackle the issue of America's wanton gun violence towards its own African American citizens and SO MUCH MORE in the latest video for Gambino's "This Is America." It's so spot on, it's frightening. Since it launched just four days ago, it has blown up on the web, making its way into prime time news shows where clips of it are being shown with newscasters discretely cautioning viewers about its potentially disturbing imagery even as it's being dissected for meaning.



This Is America

With a catchy tune that veers towards sweetness, and imagery and scenes that reference subjects ranging from inner city violence to our mistreatment of political prisoners, to the insidious presence of the Ku Klux Klan, the 2015 Charleston Church shooting, and our fascination with experiencing reality through the lense of our cell phones, "This Is America" grabs you by the jugular and doesn't let go. Choreographed by 23 year old Rwandan born Sherrie Silver, the dance itself is packed with imagery. With moves and expressions (watch Gambino's face) alluding to the racist archetypes of Jim Crow it pits the apparent innocence of the young dancers against the violence taking place in the background. And with regards to that keep your eyes peeled...there's so much happening back there it's like Helter Skelter on steroids. You're going to want to view it several times over just to try to take it all in.

What can one say except thank God we have artists like this. No wonder "This Is America" has already garnered over 34 million views and counting, is being praised by the likes of Trent Reznor, and why Jamie Lee Curtis called it "the must watch four minutes of the year and maybe

the decade.” It’s work like this that simultaneously says it like it is, but its very creation and success gives us hope and helps gets us through. With Good Ole Boys like Oliver North recently appointed as the new acting head of the NRA, this country seems more and more like it’s stuck somewhere between the traditional American cultural fare of a B comic book and a bad reality show.

But wait... that makes perfect sense, right? Because after all... *this IS America*.

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