

# Deconstructing the Industry

THE UPRISING OF ASIAN ACTORS IN WESTERN FILM

BASED ON EXPERIENCES FROM THE DOCUMENTARY

"SLAYING THE DRAGON: RELOADED"

FACT SHEET

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The film industry has utilized oppressive and misleading stereotypes throughout *its* history. Specifically, Hollywood has successfully maintained stereotypes about Asian women through harmful fetishization and exoticization. However, the introduction of new digital formats and increased opportunities for Asian individuals to both direct and act in authentic films has catalysed a necessary paradigm shift against media.

## HOW HAS THE PARADIGM SHIFT AGAINST MEDIA BEGUN?

Increased globalization and technological advances have diversified traditionally "white" areas of the world and Asian people now have a greater presence online streaming forums and popular media.

Through immigration and globalization, conventionally "European" Western populations have become increasingly multicultural and the result of this

is an increased representation of Asian American women and men on multiple forms of media distribution. This targets the Eurocentric media narrative by normalizing other "races" on screen and providing opportunities for other Asian Americans actors. We now see Asian Americans frequent classrooms, television and new lead roles of films as a means of disrupting mainstream discourse.

Films like *The Motel* and *The Debut* begin gaining traction and highlight Asian characters more in depth through accurate depictions

of family life and community. Additionally, *Saving Face* demonstrates the Asian American story while challenging heteronormative binaries often present in relationships expressed in "white" media. *Saving face* demonstrates cultural accuracy, legitimizes same-sex relationships and confronts existing stereotypes.

Asian American Cinema has begun to disrupt pervasive stereotypes regarding male/female characters.

Expansion of the "multi-plex" has created spaces beyond Hollywood for artistic expression, creativity and autonomy for Asian Americans.

Media now expands into self-publishing, beauty, art and creates relatability and identity.

## How can YOU challenge harmful discourse?

### In a few ways...

1. ACKNOWLEDGE AND CRITIQUE THE UNDERPINNINGS OF OPPRESSIVE STEREOTYPES. QUESTION THEM AND BRING ATTENTION TO THEIR INACCURACY.

REMEMBER THAT "RACE" IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PRIVILEGED AND IS STILL USED AS A POWER & CONTROL TACTIC. "RACE" HAS NO BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION AND IS PURELY A STRATEGY OF DIFFERENCE.

3. SUPPORT FILMS AND DIRECTORS WHO CONTINUE TO DISASSEMBLE AND DECONSTRUCT THESE HARMFUL RACIALIZATIONS.

EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH VARYING RACISMS ARE REPRODUCED AND UNDER WHICH CIRCUMSTANCES/HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES HAVE ENABLED THEM TO BE.

5. BE ACTIVELY ANTI-RACIST THROUGH BEING CRITICAL OF MEDIA. MODERN MEDIA IS CONTROLLED BY PREVAILING EURODOMINANT IDEOLOGIES AND THUS RELY ON HIERARCHIAL AND DATED POWER SYSTEMS.

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## CITATION

Kim, E. (Director). (2011). *Slaying the Dragon: Reloaded* [Documentary]. Asian Women United. <https://webapp.library.uvic.ca/videos/view.php?vfn=Slaying-the-Dragon-Reloaded.mp4>

## Why is this important?

People cannot relate to these [stereotyped] characters because they're foreign, subhuman or superhuman..."  
- Yun Suh



The inability for Asian individuals to relate to Asian characters in film is due to the tendency, as stated by Robin Kelley for media to "brown faces" but "whiten characters." By making Asian characters "racially" ambiguous Asian women are reduced down to merely bodies who play white characters.

It seems like it may be a kind of tongue-and-cheek portrayal of those types of images, but on the other hand - you have to be in on the joke. My question is, are we all in on the joke, and who is laughing?  
- Sylvia Chan-Malik



This quote demonstrates the importance of critiquing *WHO* is distributing media, and under which biases and power structures are they doing so. Additionally, it brings attention to the fundamentality of understanding trajectories of thought and whose perceptions remain dominant.

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

"RACE":

A societal construct that maintains divisions amongst groups of people based on their skin color. The groupings of individuals based on "race" are used to oppress individuals through subordination and false senses of power in order to advantage white people and white supremacy.