



BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

EP44 - *BOJACK HORSEMAN*, WHITEWASHING, AND DIANE NGUYEN

HEY EVERYONE. A QUICK WORD ABOUT TODAY'S SHOW. IF YOU DO WATCH *BOJACK HORSEMAN* AND HAVEN'T YET FINISHED SEASON 5 YET, NOW'S GOOD TIME TO PAUSE THIS EPISODE AND WAIT FOR ANOTHER TIME. BEWARE. HERE BE SPOILERS. YOU'VE BEEN WARNED. OTHERWISE GO FOR IT, AND ENJOY THE SHOW.

IF YOU HAVEN'T WATCHED *BOJACK HORSEMAN* IT'S AN ANIMATED SHOW THAT'S BEEN ON NETFLIX SINCE 2014. AND DON'T LET THE FACT THAT THE MAIN CHARACTER IS A HORSE AND HIS FRIENDS ARE A MIX OF HUMANS, DOGS, CAT, PENGUINS, AND OTHER FRIENDS FOOL YOU. THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT A SHOW FOR KIDS. IN FACT, IT'S BEEN APPLAUDED AS A SHOW THAT TACKLES INTENSE AND IMPORTANT ISSUES LIKE DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION, AND THE #METOO MOVEMENT.

THE SHOW CENTERS AROUND *BOJACK HORSEMAN*, A HORSE THAT, AS THE OUTRO MUSIC REMINDS US EVERY EPISODE, IS AN ACTOR WHO BACK IN THE 90S WAS IN A VERY FAMOUS TV SHOW.

THERE ARE A WHOLE SLEW OF MAIN CHARACTERS INCLUDING PRINCESS CAROLYN, *BOJACK'S* PERSIAN CAT AGENT; TODD, A CONSISTENTLY UNEMPLOYED BUT LOVABLE HUMAN WHO CRASHED ON *BOJACK'S* COUCH ONE NIGHT AND THEN NEVER LEFT; MR. PEANUTBUTTER, A RETRIEVER LAB MIX WHO IN THE 90S WAS *BOJACK'S* SITCOM RIVAL BUT WHO IS NOW CLOSE FRIEND; AND DIANE, WHO - WELL DIANE'S A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED.

I'M MORGAN JAFFE AND THIS IS BURST YOUR BUBBLE.

DIANE IS A LOT OF DIFFERENT IDENTITIES IN THE SHOW. SHE'S A WRITER, GHOSTWRITING *BOJACK'S* MEMOIR AND LATER AS A TWEET GHOSTWRITER FOR A MEDIA AGENCY AND EVEN AFTER THAT A WRITER FOR AN ONLINE FEMINIST MAGAZINE. BY THE END OF SEASON 5, SHE'S A CONSULTANT FOR *BOJACK'S* TV SHOW - THE SOUNDING FEMINIST VOICE, AS IT WERE. AT ONE POINT SHE WAS SET TO BE A ROMANTIC INTEREST FOR *BOJACK* - BUT NOTHING EVER HAPPENED BETWEEN THEM. NOT REALLY - AT LEAST. IN 5 SEASONS SHE DATES, MARRIES, AND DIVORCES MR. PEANUT BUTTER. AND EVEN THOUGH SHE NOW LIVES IN LA, SHE'S ORIGINALLY FROM BOSTON - A DAUGHTER AND A SISTER IN A VIETNAMESE FAMILY. BUT I SUPPOSE I WENT FROM MOST TO LEAST IMPORTANT - AT LEAST THAT'S HOW IT FEELS WHEN YOU WATCH THE SHOW.



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DIANE MAY TECHNICALLY BE A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN, BUT BOJACK HORSEMAN CONSTANTLY IGNORES HER CULTURAL BACKGROUND, CHOOSING INSTEAD TO USE HER RACE FOR JOKES AND TO WHITEWASH DIANE'S EXPERIENCE.

FOR EXAMPLE DIANE'S LAST NAME IS NGUYEN, AND AROUND 40% OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE SHARE THAT LAST NAME.¹ YET EVEN THOUGH NGUYEN IS SUCH A COMMON NAME, MANY AMERICANS WHO AREN'T VIETNAMESE DON'T KNOW HOW TO PRONOUNCE IT. AND EVEN THOUGH NOT INTENTIONALLY, I KNOW I'M SAYING IT JUST AS WRONG. AND I GET IT. I DON'T HELP. IT'S THE TONE. VIETNAMESE IS A TONAL LANGUAGE AND I M NOT GETTING THE TONE RIGHT. IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER I CAN'T EVEN SAY "SONG" CORRECTLY. YES THAT'S HOW I SAY S-O-N-G. "SONG." "SING A SONG." THERE'S SOMETHING WITH MY MOUTH. EITHER WAY I DON'T HELP. I GET IT. I'M PRONOUNCING IT INCORRECTLY TOO. AND THAT'S WHY WE NEED MORE PEOPLE REPRESENTING THEIR OWN CULTURES.

BUT DIANE'S LAST NAME IS A RUNNING JOKE ON THE SHOW. WHILE SOME CHARACTERS WILL PRONOUNCE NGUYEN CORRECTLY, MANY SCREW IT UP OR EVEN AVOID SAYING IT AT ALL.

CLIP: BOJACK COMPLAINS ABOUT DIANE'S "STUPID, IMPOSSIBLE TO PRONOUNCE LAST NAME."

YOU COULD ARGUE WITH THAT LAST ONE THAT THE SHOW IS TRYING TO PORTRAY BOJACK AND OTHERS MISPRONOUNCING DIANE'S NAME AS TERRIBLE PEOPLE, BUT THAT'S NOT HOW I SEE IT. *BOJACK HORSEMAN* TAKES DIANE'S LAST NAME - AND BY EXTENSION THE TRẦN'S AND THE LÊ'S AND THE PHAM'S - AND USES IT AS A JOKE. USES IT AS A PUNCHLINE.

AND ALL OF THIS, WITHOUT EVEN HAVING DIANE'S CHARACTER VOICED BY SOMEONE WITH ROOTS TO VIETNAMESE LIFE OR EXPERIENCES. YEAH HERE'S THE REAL PROBLEM: DIANE IS VOICED BY A WHITE WOMAN.

¹ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>



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IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW, DIANE IS VOICED BY ALISON BRIE, WHO HAS BEEN IN *MAD MEN*, *COMMUNITY*, AND IS NOW THE STAR OF ANOTHER NETFLIX SHOW, *GLOW*.

ORIGINALLY AN ASIAN AMERICAN ACTRESS HAD BEEN CAST AS DIANE AND HAD EVEN VOICED THE SHOW'S FIRST 4 EPISODES.² THE CREATORS HAVE NEVER RELEASED HER NAME, BUT SHE WAS SUPPOSEDLY CONTRACTUALLY OBLIGATED TO ANOTHER SHOW, AND SO THEY REPLACED HER.³ SHOW CREATOR RAPHAEL BOB-WAKSBERG OPENED UP AUDITIONS TO ANY WOMAN WHO WOULD AUDITION - REGARDLESS OF RACE.⁴

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT WAS PART OF THE COLORBLIND CASTING THAT'S BECOME MORE POPULAR IN RECENT YEARS, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE INTENTION OF COLORBLIND CASTING. I THINK IT'S TO GET MORE PEOPLE OF COLOR ON SCREEN.

AND I'VE HEARD THE ARGUMENT: "WILL ARNETT'S NOT A HORSE, BUT HE PLAYS A HORSE."⁵ *BOJACK HORSEMAN* IS A WORLD WHERE FAMOUS STARS ARE HORSES AND DOGS AND THE NIGHTLY NEWS IS READ BY A WHALE.

² Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

³ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

⁴ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

⁵ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>



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CLIP: PRINCESS CAROLYN HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH CAMERON CROWE, WHO IN THIS WORLD IS A RAVEN CONSTANTLY MISTAKEN FOR A CROW .

THEY NEVER HAD TO WORRY ABOUT RACE WITH THE ANIMALS, SO THEY PROBABLY FIGURED WHY WORRY ABOUT RACE WHEN IT CAME TO THE HUMAN CHARACTERS. IT'S ALL ANIMATION, RIGHT?

BUT I'VE ALSO READ AN INTERVIEW WHERE BOB-WAKSBERG SAID THAT THE SHOW AUDITIONED MULTIPLE ASIAN ACTRESSES, AND AS HE SAYS, WE "COULDN'T QUITE FIND WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR" AND THAT DIANE IS A "TRICKY ROLE" AND "A TALL ORDER FOR ANY ACTRESS."⁶ THAT JUST SOUNDS LIKE YOU WEREN'T REALLY TRYING. I JUST READ THAT AS AN EXCUSE.

NOW I'LL BE THE FIRST TO SAY THAT I'M A FAN OF *BOJACK HORSEMAN*. I MEAN, THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE. THERE'S DIANE'S NPR RINGTONES,

CLIP: NPR THEMED RINGTONES FROM IRA GLASS, *SERIAL*, TERRY GROSS, AND *ALL THINGS CONSIDERED*.

ALL OF THE PUNS,

CLIP: THEY'RE GOING TO BOND LIKE 007.

ALL OF THE ANIMAL PUNS,

CLIP: NAVY SEALS VS "REGULAR" KINDS OF SEALS.

AND THE SHOW POINTS OUT ALL OF THE PROBLEMS OF OUR HOLLYWOOD DRIVEN, TECHNOLOGY ADDICTED, SAD LITTLE WORLD.

CLIP: A CHARACTER THINKS SHE'S DOING A FULLY IMMERSIVE 3D SPIN CLASS - BUT THEN REALIZES SHE'S JUST BIKING.

⁶ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>



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I'LL BE THE FIRST TO BOTH ACCLAIM THE SHOW AND THEN TALK ABOUT WHY IT'S PROBLEMATIC.

THE QUESTION I GET MOST OFTEN IS DO YOU EVEN ENJOY POP CULTURE ANYMORE AND WHILE THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUSLY YES THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT GOING TO QUESTION WHAT I'M WATCHING. THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT GOING TO ANALYZE THE CONTENT AND ITS MESSAGE. WELCOME. HERE IS MY PODCAST. BECOME MY FRIEND IN REAL LIFE AND YOU'LL GET YOUR OWN MINI EPISODES THAT YOU DIDN'T ASK FOR. ALL YOU WANTED WAS TO WATCH A MOVIE AND EAT POPCORN ON YOUR COUCH INSTEAD OF GOING TO AN OVERPRICED BAR ON A FRIDAY NIGHT. BUT HERE WE ARE. I'M GOING TO RUIN MEDIA FOR YOU.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME IS TALKING ABOUT MEDIA. THAT'S THE POINT. BUT I GET IT - NOT EVERYONE SHARES THAT SENTIMENT. BOB-WAKSBERG CAST A WHITE WOMAN AS A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN CHARACTER, AND THEN HE AVOIDED TALKING ABOUT IT FOR YEARS, SAYING THAT HE WAS WORRIED IT WOULD DEVALUE OR DISCREDIT ALISON BRIE, AND SAYING "...HOW HE THOUGHT SHE WAS THE PERFECT PERSON FOR THE PART.." ⁷

ON JANUARY 15TH, 2018, BOB-WAKSBERG MADE A TWEET ABOUT BLACK LIVES MATTER: BE WARY OF ANY PUBLIC FIGURE OR BRAND "CELEBRATING" MLK'S LEGACY WHO WON'T SAY "BLACK LIVES MATTER." BLACK LIVES MATTER. I'M NOT EXPERT ON WHAT MLK WOULD THINK IF HE WERE ALIVE TODAY, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE HE'D AGREE THAT BLACK LIVES MATTER." ⁸

A TWITTER USER RESPONDED TO THAT TWEET, USING IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIM: "I LOVE ALISON BRIE'S WORK, BUT WHY DID SHE HAVE TO VOICE DIANE IN YOUR

⁷ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>

⁸ Since accessing the tweet on October 25, 2018, Raphael Bob-Waksberg is no longer on twitter, and it is not possible to access the tweet.



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SHOW? POC REPRESENTATION WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT SEEMS...OFF. OR MAYBE YOU HAVE SOME ASIAN-AMERICAN WRITERS TO BALANCE IT OUT, I DON'T KNOW."⁹

BOB-WAKSBERG COULD HAVE IGNORED THE TWEET, BUT INSTEAD HE REPLIED: "SHORT ANSWER: I LOVE MY ENTIRE CAST, BUT IF I WERE DOING IT TODAY, I WOULD NOT CAST THE SHOW (OR ANY SHOW) WITH ALL WHITE PEOPLE. I'VE REALLY SOURED ON THE IDEA OF "COLOR-BLIND" CASTING AS AN EXCUSE TO NOT PAY ATTENTION."¹⁰

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE DID - NOT PAY ATTENTION. BOB-WAKSBERG HAS SAID THAT THEY SPACED OUT THE CASTING OVER A PERIOD OF MONTHS. NEXT THING HE KNEW HE LOOKED AROUND AT HIS CAST AND REALIZED HE'D HIRED ALL WHITE PEOPLE.¹¹

AND IT'S NOT MUCH BETTER IN THE WRITER'S ROOM. BOB-WAKSBERG ADMITS THAT ALTHOUGH HE CREATED DIANE AS AN ASIAN CHARACTER HE DIDN'T SEE HER AS ONE, AND SO HE DIDN'T FEEL THE NEED TO HIRE ASIAN WRITERS.¹² IT'S SOMETHING HE ADMITS HE REGRETS NOW, BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.

SO NOT ONLY WAS THERE A WHITE WOMAN VOICING DIANE, BUT PEOPLE WRITING FOR HER - PEOPLE WRITING TO BE HER VOICE - THEY WEREN'T VIETNAMESE OR HAD ANY CONNECTION TO VIETNAMESE CULTURE.

⁹ @mclaren_lou (2018, January 15). "I love Alison Brie's work, but why did she have to voice Diane in your show? POC representation without employment seems...off. Or maybe you have some Asian-American writers to balance it out, I don't know" [Twitter Post]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/mclaren_lou/status/952955705400741888

¹⁰ Since accessing the tweet on October 25, 2018, Raphael Bob-Waksberg is no longer on twitter, and it is not possible to access the tweet.

¹¹ Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>

¹² Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>



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BOB-WAKSBERG DOWNPLAYED DIANE'S RACE AND HER CULTURAL HERITAGE. HE TREATED HER BASICALLY LIKE A WHITE WOMAN. AND BEFORE THE EMAILS COME IN THAT I USUALLY GET, HE EVEN SAYS THAT IN AN INTERVIEW WITH SLATE. THOSE ARE HIS WORDS, NOT MINE: "...WE REALLY DOWNPLAYED HER RACE AND HER CULTURAL HERITAGE. WE'VE TREATED HER BASICALLY LIKE A WHITE WOMAN BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE A WHITE WOMAN PLAYING AN OVERLY ASIAN CHARACTER, BECAUSE THAT FELT SOMEHOW MORE WRONG TO ME."¹³

HE GOES ON TO SAY, "AND NOW I FEEL THE OPPOSITE. WE DID A COMPLETE DISSERVICE TO THE CHARACTER...I DO THINK WE HAVE AVOIDED STORIES THAT COULD HAVE BEEN MORE INTERESTING BECAUSE OF MY OWN FEAR AND GUILT ABOUT CASTING."¹⁴

AND THIS IS JUST ONE REASON WHY DIANE BEING VOICED BY A WHITE PERSON IS FRUSTRATING.

AND EVEN IF BOB-WAKSBERG ACKNOWLEDGES IT, BECAUSE HE DOES, *BOJACK HORSEMAN* IS CONTRIBUTING TO A TERRIBLE CYCLE WHERE PEOPLE CAN SAY, "WELL LET'S GO WITH A WHITE ACTRESS - IGNORE RACE, WE'RE LOOKING AT EXPERIENCE. WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE BEST PERSON FOR THE JOB." BUT HOW IS A PERSON OF COLOR - IN THIS CASE A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN - SUPPOSED TO GET MORE EXPERIENCE IF THEY CAN'T GET HIRED IN THE FIRST PLACE?¹⁵

ASIAN AMERICANS ARE ALREADY INCREDIBLY MARGINALIZED IN HOLLYWOOD. THIS IS NOTHING NEW. THEY ALREADY DON'T GET CAST IN ROLES - EVEN WHEN IT'S

¹³ Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>

¹⁴ Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>

¹⁵ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>



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SUPPOSEDLY COLORBLIND CASTING. SO WHEN THERE'S A CHARACTER THAT IS AN ASIAN AMERICAN ROLE IT'S EVEN MORE FRUSTRATING - AND IT SHOULDN'T MATTER IF IT'S AN ANIMATED ROLE OR A LIVE ACTION ROLE. DIANE IS VIETNAMESE; THE LITERAL LEAST THING THE SHOW COULD HAVE DONE IS HAVE A VIETNAMESE OR ASIAN AMERICAN WOMAN VOICE HER, CASTING PEOPLE OF COLOR TO PLAY PEOPLE OF COLOR.

AND HAVING DIANE VOICED BY A WHITE WOMAN ISN'T JUST WHITEWASHING - I'D GO AS FAR AS TO CALL IT YELLOWFACE. BOB-WAKSBERG ACKNOWLEDGES THAT "...THE SPECIFIC TROPE OF WHITE PEOPLE PLAYING ASIAN CHARACTERS...IS VERY MUCH ITS OWN SPECIFIC PROBLEM. I WAS NOT AWARE AT THE TIME OF HOW NEFARIOUS AND WIDE-REACHING THAT TROPE WAS - AND THAT I WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE OF THAT."¹⁶

I DON'T KNOW HOW HE COULDN'T REALIZE THIS. *BOJACK HORSEMAN* FIRST PREMIERED IN AUGUST OF 2014. ONLY A YEAR BEFORE THERE HAD BEEN PUSHBACK FROM HAVING BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH PLAY KHAN IN *STAR TREK*, JOHNNY DEPP AS TONTO IN *THE LONE RANGER*, AND CRITICS HAD BROUGHT UP THEIR CONCERNS OVER *THE LAST AIRBENDER* BEING WHITEWASHED AS WELL.

MONTHS AFTER *BOJACK* PRIMED THERE WAS BACKLASH FOR *EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS*, PUSHBACK IN 2015 WHEN EMMA STONE WAS CAST AS THE LEAD IN *ALOHA*, AND OUTCRY IN 2016 WHEN MATT DAMON WAS CAST AS THE LEAD FOR *THE GREAT WALL*.

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE HE DIDN'T REALIZE THAT IT WAS PART OF THE PROBLEM. *BOJACK HORSEMAN* COULDN'T LEARN FROM THE PROBLEMS OF WHITEWASHING IN HOLLYWOOD BECAUSE IT'S A PRIME EXAMPLE OF THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROBLEMS OF WHITEWASHING IN HOLLYWOOD. IT CAME OUT DURING THE TIME OF ALL OF THESE OTHER EXAMPLES.

HOW COULD YOU BE A MEDIA CREATOR IN 2014 WHEN THIS SHOW CAME OUT AND NOT REALIZE WHITEWASHING WAS A PROBLEM - EVEN IF WE DIDN'T SO BLATANTLY HAVE THINK PIECES AND NEWS ARTICLES AND DOCUMENTARIES LIKE 2017'S *THE PROBLEM WITH APU*. THE PROBLEM WITH WHITEWASHING WAS STILL THERE.

¹⁶ Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>



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AND THEN YOU PAIR THIS WITH THE FACT THAT DIANE ISN'T ONLY A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN WOMAN, BUT A COMPLEX AND WELL DONE CHARACTER. I SAY THIS BECAUSE, UNFORTUNATELY, USUALLY ONLY WHITE PEOPLE GET THE LUXURY OF BEING A CHARACTER WITH LAYERS TO THEM. WHEN PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE PUT INTO TV OR FILMS OR BOOKS THEY ARE WRITTEN IN WITH STEREOTYPES AND TROPES. OR AT LEAST THAT'S USUALLY THE CASE, AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE SITUATION SO DISHEARTENING. DIANE IS A PERSON OF COLOR WITH A POSITIVE REPRESENTATION, FREE FROM THE NORMAL STEREOTYPES. AND THEN THE ROLE ISN'T GIVEN TO A PERSON OF COLOR, BUT A WHITE WOMAN, AS IF SHE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH OR OTHER ACTING OPPORTUNITIES ALREADY IN A WORLD WHERE CHARACTERS OF COLOR ARE HARD TO COME BY.

REMEMBER WHEN BOB-WAKSBERG POSTED "SHORT ANSWER: I LOVE MY ENTIRE CAST, BUT IF I WERE DOING IT TODAY, I WOULD NOT CAST THE SHOW (OR ANY SHOW) WITH ALL WHITE PEOPLE."¹⁷ WELL HE GOT A LOT OF REPLIES TO THAT. FROM: "THANKS FOR ANSWERING THAT QUESTION. MY BEST FRIEND AND I (BOTH ASIAN) LOVE THE SHOW BUT THAT PARTICULAR CASTING WAS THE ONE THING THAT BOTHERED US EVEN THOUGH WE LOVE ALISON BRIE. FEELS BETTER TO KNOW YOU'RE AWARE OF THE ISSUE NOW."¹⁸ OR THIS REPLY: "WHY EXACTLY DID THIS CHARACTER HAVE TO BE VIETNAMESE? I JUST FIND IT ODD AND A BUMMER THAT THE MOST NUANCED POC CHARACTER WAS GIVEN TO A WHITE ACTOR."¹⁹ AND AS ANOTHER PERSON RESPONDED, "DIANE NGUYEN IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX, NUANCED PORTRAYALS OF AN ASIAN AMERICAN WOMAN I'VE EVER SEEN. SO IT SUCKS BECAUSE EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T INTEND TO, THE CASTING

¹⁷ Since accessing the tweet on October 25, 2018, Raphael Bob-Waksberg is no longer on twitter, and it is not possible to access the tweet.

¹⁸@kenrar (2018, January 15). "Thanks for answering that question. My best friend and I (both Asian) love the show but that particular casting was the one thing that bothered us even though we love Alison Brie. Feels better to know you're aware of the issue now." [Twitter Post]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/kenrar/status/953018303638749184>

¹⁹@chinwefilms (2018, January 23). "Why exactly did this character have to be Vietnamese? I just find it odd and a bummer that the most nuanced POC character was given to a white actor." [Twitter Post]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/chinwefilms/status/1043886500700721152>



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CHOICE SUGGESTS WHITE PEOPLE ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO GET TO HAVE INNER LIVES AND THEIR OWN STORY LINES.²⁰

BECAUSE IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT REPRESENTATION - HAVING A CHARACTER THERE TO REACH SOME SORT OF DIVERSITY QUOTA OR GET SOME KIND OF TROPHY. IT'S ABOUT HAVING A CHARACTER THERE WITH AN AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION THAT IS LACKING IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA, AND DIANE WAS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR THAT.

AND IT'S NOT LIKE THE SHOW ALWAYS DOES AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATIONS AND AVOIDS STEREOTYPES. IN SEASON ONE, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE TWO LATIN CHARACTERS - ONE SIMPLY CREDITED AS "CARTEL MAN" AND THE OTHER AS "LATIN KINGS GANG LEADER."

THEY WERE YOUR STANDARD, TROPEY, STEREOTYPED REPRESENTATIONS, AND BECAUSE OF THAT, BOB-WAKSBERG DIDN'T WANT A WHITE PERSON TO VOICE EITHER OF THEM.²¹ FOR SOME REASON, I GUESS THAT CROSSED THE LINE. INSTEAD THEY CAST NICK GONZALEZ AS "CARTEL MAN..."

CLIP: A CARTEL LEADER HOLDING TODD HOSTAGE.

AND HORATIO SANZ A "LATIN KINGS GANG LEADER."

CLIP: TODD IN JAIL, CHOOSING BETWEEN JOINING THE LATIN KINGS OR NEO-NAZIS.

THAT'S WHEN PEOPLE OF COLOR GOT TO VOICE PEOPLE OF COLOR IN *BOJACK HORSEMAN*: WHEN THE CREATORS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE "SAFER."

²⁰@oneandonlyjoyce (2018, January 16). "Diane Nguyen is one of the most complex, nuanced portrayals of an Asian American woman I've ever seen. So it sucks because even if you didn't intend it to, the casting choice suggests white people are the only ones who get to have inner lives and their own story lines." [Twitter Post]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/oneandonlyjoyce/status/953313967958499328>

²¹ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>



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AND EVEN THOUGH BOB-WAKSBERG LATER UNDERSTOOD HOW AND WHY THAT WAS A PROBLEM, HAVING GONZALEZ BACK IN SEASON FOUR TO PLAY A LATINX CHARACTER WHO WASN'T A STEREOTYPE, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I CAN JUST FORGIVE HIM SO QUICKLY.

YES, IN SEASON 5 HONG CHAU VOICES PICKLES, A PUG WHO IS MR. PEANUTBUTTER'S NEW LOVE INTEREST

CLIP: PICKLES INTRODUCES HERSELF.

AND STEPHANIE BEATRIZ VOICES BOJACK'S TV COSTAR

CLIP: GINA TALKS WITH BOJACK ABOUT THEIR SHOW.

AND A BUNCH OF OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR PLAY SUPPORTING CHARACTERS LIKE NATALIE MORALES, KIMIKO GLENN, ANGELA BASSETT, KEN JEONG, APARNA NANCHERLA, WHOOP! GOLDBERG, JOHN LEGUIZAMO, EVA LONGORIA, WANDA SYKES, ISSA RAE, AND MORE.

THERE'S ALSO RANDAL PARK AND RAMI MALEK, WHO VOICE WHITE HUMAN CHARACTERS - BECAUSE I NEED TO SPECIFY. I SUPPOSE THIS RACE BENDING WAS DONE TO TRY AND SEE THE SHOW CAN DO IT BOTH WAYS - BUT I STILL HAVE A BAD TASTE IN MY MOUTH. MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE DIANE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE TO BE WHITEWASHED IN *BOJACK HORSEMAN*. IT'S JUST THAT HER CHARACTER IS THE ONE THAT GETS THE MOST ATTENTION.

OTHER WHITEWASHED CHARACTERS INCLUDE ANGELA DIAZ, A LATINX EXECUTIVE VOICED BY ANJELICA HUSTON,

CLIP: ANJELICA HUSTON AS ANGELA DIAZ.

LAURA, PRINCESS CAROLYN'S BLACK ASSISTANT LATER TURNED AGENT, VOICED BY RACHEL BLOOM,

CLIP: RACHEL BLOOM AS LAURA



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AND TODD CHAVEZ, A MAIN CHARACTER VOICED BY AARON PAUL WHO IS SOMEHOW "ACCIDENTALLY" LATINX.

CLIP: AARON PAUL AS TODD CHAVEZ.

WHEN IT COMES TO TODD, BOB-WAKSBERG NAMED HIM AFTER A MIDDLE SCHOOL FRIEND WITH THE SAME LAST NAME, ADMITTING, "I'M A DUMB WHITE GUY; IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME UNTIL AFTER THE SHOW CAME OUT THAT [MY FRIEND] MIGHT HAVE BEEN LATINO."²²

IT'S JUST ANOTHER CONVERSATION AROUND WHITEWASHING, EXCEPT INSTEAD OF ALISON BRIE, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AARON PAUL. AND NOW TODD'S IN THIS WEIRD LIMBO TOO. BOB-WAKSBERG DOESN'T WANT TO SAY THAT HE'S WHITE BECAUSE OF HIS LAST NAME, BUT HE ALSO DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE HIM ANY SORT OF BACKGROUND THAT EMBRACES THAT IDENTITY AND COULD PLACE HIM AS LATINX.²³ AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED TO DIANE.

CREATORS CAN'T JUST HAVE A CHARACTER'S RACE BE AN AFTERTHOUGHT. AS A RESULT IT FEELS LIKE THE SHOW MADE HER VIETNAMESE TO USE HER LAST NAME AS AN EASY RUNNING JOKE OR SO THEY CAN PRAISE THEMSELVES FOR HAVING A PERSON OF COLOR IN THE CAST WITHOUT HAVING TO HIRE SOMEONE TO WRITE AND DEVELOP THAT CHARACTER BASED ON REAL, LIVED EXPERIENCES - OR EVEN A PERSON OF COLOR TO VOICE THAT CHARACTER. BUT THE WORK SHOULD HAVE STARTED WITH THE CASTING AND THE STORY ITSELF. INSTEAD BOJACK IGNORES HER CULTURAL IDENTITY. THAT'S WHY WE'VE NEVER SEEN AN EPISODE TRULY EXPLAINING DIANE'S FAMILY.

YES, WE DO MEET THE NGUYEN FAMILY IN EPISODE FIVE OF SEASON ONE, WHEN DIANE'S FATHER DIES, BUT WE DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW A LOT ABOUT THEM. WE KNOW THAT THEY'RE FROM BOSTON AND HAVE STRONG ACCENTS AND THAT SHE HAS AN

²² Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>

²³ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>



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ADOPTED BROTHER WHO IS THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE FAMILY - WHICH WE LEARN LATER IS BEING USED AS THE ULTIMATE PUN, BECAUSE HE IS A LITERAL BLACK SHEEP NAMED GARY.

WE KNOW THAT DIANE HAS AN ESTRANGED RELATIONSHIP WITH HER FAMILY. THAT HE DAD WAS AN ALCOHOLIC. THAT WHEN SHE COMES HOME TO HELP HER FAMILY WITH HER FATHER'S FUNERAL, THEY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING YET. HIS BODY HAS BEEN IN THEIR LIVING ROOM FOR DAYS, THE BROTHERS TOO BUSY WATCHING BOSTON SPORTS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. INSTEAD THEY OPEN BEER BOTTLES WITH THEIR TEETH, WHICH THEY LOSE ONE BY ONE. THEY ALL SEEM ANGRY AT HER, CONVINCING HER TO STAY AND MAKE THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS, ARGUING THAT THEY CAN'T DO IT BECAUSE NONE OF THEM WENT TO COLLEGE LIKE SHE DID, AS IF THAT SHOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. WHEN DIANE'S BROTHERS DO END UP DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THE FUNERAL, THEY CHUM THEIR FATHER'S REMAINS SO THEY COULD THROW IT AT DEREK JETER, BECAUSE THE YANKEES SUCK.

AND I JUST WANT TO PUT OUT THERE THAT HER FAMILY - FATHER, MOTHER, BIOLOGICAL BROTHERS MARTY, TOMMY, AND ARTIE - ARE ALL VOICED BY WHITE PEOPLE BECAUSE WELL OF COURSE. BUT WE NEVER LEARN ABOUT DIANE'S ACTUAL CULTURAL HERITAGE. TO THE AUDIENCE, HER CULTURAL IDENTITY ISN'T THAT SHE'S VIETNAMESE, IT'S THAT SHE COMES FROM A LOUD, CURSING, THICKLY BOSTON ACCENTED FAMILY.

CLIP: BOSTON SLANG

AND YES, THOSE ACCENTS MAY EXIST IN *THE DEPARTED*, OR *THE TOWN*, OR ANY OTHER BOSTON MOVIE WITH BEN AFFLECK OR MATT DAMON, BUT IT'S - IT'S NOT REAL.

AND THE SHOW POINTS OUT THAT, YEAH, MAYBE THEY WERE PUTTING THE NGUYEN FAMILY WITH THIS THICK BOSTON ACCENT TO FLIP THE SCRIPT, AS IF TO SAY - WE CAUGHT YOU! YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING THIS, WERE YOU? YOU WERE EXPECTING A STEREOTYPICAL VIETNAMESE ACCENT, HUH? THAT'S WHY THEY INCLUDE THIS SHORT SCENE WITH BOJACK:

CLIP:

BOJACK - DOES ANYONE HERE SPEAK ENGLISH?

ONE OF THE BROTHERS SAYS A BUNCH OF BAD BOSTON SLANG

BOJACK REPEATS "DOES ANYONE HERE SPEAK ENGLISH?"



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BUT WHAT I REALLY WANT TO KNOW IS WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF DIANE'S FAMILY AND VIETNAM? BECAUSE IT ISN'T UNTIL THE 5TH SEASON THAT WE EVEN LEARN IN A QUICK FLASHBACK THAT HER FATHER WAS A PROFESSOR OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY. SHE ASKS ABOUT HER FAMILY BACKGROUND AND HE BRUSHES HER OFF, SAYING, "IT'S MY DAY OFF."

CLIP: DIANE TALKING WITH HER DAD ABOUT HER FAMILY HISTORY.

AND THE SHOW IS TRYING TO SET IT UP THAT DIANE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO CONNECTION TO BEING VIETNAMESE. DON'T GET ME WRONG HERE, I DON'T EXPECT HER OR HER FAMILY TO HAVE A BROKEN ENGLISH ACCENT OR WORK AT A NAIL SALON OR ONLY BE EATING PHO OR ANOTHER VIETNAMESE STEREOTYPE THAT WE'RE FORCE FED THROUGH THE MEDIA.

BUT WITH A DETAIL LIKE THAT - THAT HER FATHER IS A PROFESSOR OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY - YOU WOULD EXPECT HER TO HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE ABOUT VIETNAMESE HISTORY AND CULTURE. WOULDN'T SHE HAVE ASKED AS A CHILD, EVEN BEFORE THIS FLASHBACK ? SURELY BECAUSE OF HER FATHER'S PROFESSOR THERE'S BOUND TO BE A BOOK OR SOMETHING LYING AROUND. BUT I GET THAT I'M GRASPING AT STRAWS HERE. DIANE IS A VIETNAMESE CHARACTER BECAUSE OF HER RACE - IT'S JUST HOW SHE WAS DRAWN - BUT SHE HAS NO REAL BACKSTORY AND NO ONE FROM THE SHOW - CREATOR, WRITER, ACTOR, OR OTHERWISE - TYING HER TO VIETNAMESE OR VIETNAMESE AMERICAN LIFE. BECAUSE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE VIETNAMESE AMERICAN IS IMPORTANT.

IT WASN'T UNTIL THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION ACT OF 1965 THAT YOU WOULD SEE LARGER VIETNAMESE OR ASIAN POPULATIONS COMING TO THE U.S. THIS WAS BECAUSE BEFORE THE ACT, IMMIGRATION WAS BASED ON A NATIONAL ORIGINS QUOTA SYSTEM. IT HAD BEEN IN PLACE SINCE THE 1920S AND MADE IT HARD FOR PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES.²⁴

²⁴ History.com Editors. (2010, March 5). U.S. Immigration Since 1965. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965>



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THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION ACT OF 1965 WASN'T PERFECT BY ANY MEANS, BUT AS A RESULT MORE PEOPLE FROM ASIAN COUNTRIES CAME TO AMERICA, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE FROM VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, WHO WERE FLEEING THE WAR TORN AREAS DURING AND AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR.²⁵

WE DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT DIANE'S FAMILY. WE DON'T KNOW WHEN THEY CAME TO THE UNITED STATES. WAS IT BEFORE THE VIETNAM WAR? WAS IT AFTER? WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT DIANE IS 34 IN SEASON 1, WHICH AIRED IN 2014. SO IF WE ASSUME *BOJACK HORSEMAN*'S TIMELINE IS A PRESENT DAY TIMELINE, THAT WOULD MEAN DIANE WAS BORN IN 1980.

THE FIRST WAVE OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES STARTED COMING TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR ENDED IN 1975. BECAUSE, REMEMBER: THE FIRST WAVE OF VIETNAMESE AMERICAN MIGRANTS WEREN'T IMMIGRANTS: THEY WERE REFUGEES, REFUGEES FLEEING A WAR TORN VIETNAM.²⁶ THE SECOND WAVE ARRIVED IN THE LATE 1970S AND THEN THERE WAS A THIRD WAVE IN THE 1980S AND 1990S.²⁷

AND THIS LEAVE ME WITH A LOT OF QUESTIONS: BECAUSE OF THE TIMELINE WAS DIANE BORN IN THE U.S. OR VIETNAM? WHAT ABOUT HER OLDER BROTHERS? WERE HER PARENTS BORN IN THE U.S. OR VIETNAM? DID THEY COME TO THE UNITED STATES BEFORE OR AFTER THE VIETNAM WAR?

BECAUSE OF HOW THICK HER FAMILY'S BOSTON ACCENT IS, IT WOULD MAKE SENSE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES FOR A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME, AND HER, HER SIBLINGS, AND HER PARENTS WERE MOST LIKELY BORN IN BOSTON.

²⁵ History.com Editors. (2010, March 5). U.S. Immigration Since 1965. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/us-immigration-since-1965>

²⁶ Rkasnuam, H., & Batalova, J. (2017, March 02). Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2>

²⁷ Rkasnuam, H., & Batalova, J. (2017, March 02). Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2>



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AND YET WHEN YOU LOOK INTO IT, WHEN CREATING DIANE BOB-WAKSBERG DID ENVISION HER AS A "...SECOND OR THIRD GENERATION IMMIGRANT, IF NOT MORE."²⁸

BUT BEING A THIRD GENERATION VIETNAMESE AMERICAN ISN'T AS LIKELY.²⁹ AS I SAID WITH THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION ACT OF 1965, IT WAS VERY RARE TO HAVE A VIETNAMESE PERSON COME TO THE UNITED STATES BEFORE THAT TIME. I MEAN THEY DO EXIST, BUT THERE'S MORE LIKELY TO BE A THIRD GENERATION CHINESE AMERICAN OR A THIRD GENERATION JAPANESE AMERICAN. THE FIRST WAVE OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS CAME IN THE MID 1800S CAUSE THAT'S WHO BUILT OUR RAILROADS. THE FIRST JAPANESE IMMIGRATION WAVE TO THE U.S. HAPPENED SHORTLY AFTER THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882, WHEN WHITE AMERICANS STILL WANTED ASIAN WORKERS FOR CHEAP LABOR.³⁰ BUT A SHOCKING REMINDER HERE, NOT ALL ASIAN PEOPLE, CULTURES, IDENTITIES, AND ABUSE IN AMERICAN HISTORY IS THE SAME.

BUT I DON'T THINK THE SHOW UNDERSTANDS THAT. AT ONE POINT IN SEASON 1, DIANE GETS IN A FIGHT WITH ONE OF HER BROTHERS.

CLIP:

BROTHER: ALL THE JOBS ARE GOING TO IMMIGRANTS THESE DAYS.

DIANE: WHA...WE'RE IMMIGRANTS

BROTHER: HOW DO YOU FIGURE?

DIANE: WE'RE VIETNAMESE.

BROTHER: STP OFF! WE'RE AMERICAN AS PHO!

²⁸ Viruet, P. (2018, January 31). The Creator Of 'BoJack Horseman' Talks Animation's Diversity Problem. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://uproxx.com/tv/bojack-horseman-diversity-diane-interview-raphael-bob-waksberg-alison-brie/>

²⁹ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

³⁰ Rkasnuam, H., & Batalova, J. (2017, March 02). Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States. Retrieved October 29, 2018, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2>



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YES - IF YOU WERE ASKING IN THAT LAST CLIP, DIANE'S BROTHER DOESN'T ACTUALLY SWEAR, BUT SAYS THEY'RE AMERICAN AS PHO, AS IN THE DELICIOUS VIETNAMESE SOUP. YEAH IT'S NOT EXACTLY AS AMERICAN AS HAMBURGERS OR APPLE PIE, BUT I SUPPOSE IT DOES KEEP THEM FROM SWEARING.

ANYWAY, BACK TO THE ARGUMENT.

THE WORD IMMIGRANT. THAT'S WHERE I GET CONFUSED. AGAIN, DEPENDING ON WHEN HER FAMILY, OR POSSIBLY DIANE, CAME TO THE UNITED STATES SHE MIGHT NOT EVEN BE AN IMMIGRANT, BUT A REFUGEE. THAT'S THE SCENARIO IF IN 1980 SHE WAS BORN IN VIETNAM AND CAME OVER WITH HER FAMILY, BUT SHE COULD HAVE MEANT SOMETHING ELSE. COULD SHE BE TALKING ABOUT HER RACE, HER FAMILY HISTORY, THE FACT THAT SOMEONE AT SOME POINT HAD TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES AND ASSIMILATE AND AS SUCH, SHE WILL ALWAYS FEEL LIKE AN IMMIGRANT? BECAUSE WHITE AMERICANS CAN LOOK AT HER AND THINK SHE DOESN'T BELONG. THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE NOT BEEN BORN HERE. THAT SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE DOESN'T BELONG? OR, THE MOST COMPLICATED SCENARIO, DOES DIANE JUST NOT SEE HERSELF AS AN AMERICAN AT ALL - REGARDLESS OF WHEN HER FAMILY CAME TO AMERICA AND WHERE SHE WAS BORN? DOES SHE JUST FEEL LIKE SHE DOESN'T FIT IN?

BECAUSE I DON'T REALLY HAVE A BACKSTORY FOR TO ANALYZE, DIANE SAYING "WE'RE IMMIGRANTS" IS A LOADED STATEMENT. THE SCENE ITSELF IS PROBABLY UNIMPORTANT, BUT I THINK IT HELPS WITH SOME OF MY QUESTIONS. AND THE SIMPLE ANSWER IS THIS: THERE WAS NEVER ENOUGH THOUGHT INTO DIANE'S BACKSTORY.

IT'S NOT UNTIL SEASON 5 AND THE EPISODE "THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER" THAT ALL OF MY ANALYZING AND THEORIZING BECOMES A MOOT POINT; IN THE EPISODE DIANE SAYS SHE'S A BORN AND RAISED AMERICAN.

CLIP: DIANE IN VIETNAM

I'D SAY SORRY FOR PUTTING YOU THROUGH THAT HISTORY LESSON, BUT THAT WOULD BE A LIE. BUT THEN MY ONLY RESPONSE CAN BE WHY MAKE DIANE A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN CHARACTER IF NOTHING ABOUT HER HAS TO DO WITH BEING VIETNAMESE? NOT HER BACKSTORY, NOT HER CONNECTION TO HER FAMILY HISTORY, AND NOT EVEN THE PEOPLE WHO WRITE ABOUT OR VOICE HER.



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IF THE SHOW HAD WANTED HER TO BE A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN CHARACTER THEN THEY SHOULD HAVE COMMITTED TO THAT. IT DOESN'T MEAN ANY OF HER SITUATIONS ON THE SHOW WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE NECESSARILY. IT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT HER TO START ACTING DIFFERENTLY, AND SOUNDING DIFFERENTLY, AND EATING DIFFERENTLY AND DRESSING DIFFERENTLY. IT MEANS SOMEONE FROM THAT EXPERIENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN WRITING FOR HER. IT MEANS SOMEONE FROM THAT EXPERIENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN VOICING HER. INSTEAD IT WAS AN AFTERTHOUGHT. A WAY TO SAY WE HAVE DIVERSITY IN THE SHOW WITHOUT ACTUALLY COMMITTING TO IT.

AS A RESULT, VIEWER'S HAD TO WAIT FIVE SEASONS FOR ANY SORT OF "OH RIGHT, DIANE IS VIETNAMESE KIND OF MOMENT" SAVE FOR WHEN OTHER CHARACTERS MISPRONOUNCE HER NAME OR SHE SAYS "WHAT THE PHO" INSTEAD OF SWEARING.

AS I ALREADY SAID, IN SEASON 5 WE LEARN THAT DIANE'S FATHER IS A PROFESSOR OF VIETNAMESE HISTORY AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY. AND IT IS ALSO IN THAT EPISODE, "THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER," THAT DIANE GOES TO VIETNAM.

THE WRITERS CAN FRAME IT AS DIANE IS GOING TO FIND HERSELF AND HER CULTURE ALL THEY WANT, BUT THAT'S NOT HOW SHE ENDS UP IN HANOI. YES, IT SEEMS LIKE DIANE HAS A CURIOSITY ABOUT BEING VIETNAMESE, AND I'M SURE SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT VISITING, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT MOTIVATES HER IN THIS EPISODE. SHE WENT TO VIETNAM BECAUSE SHE SAW HER EX-HUSBAND KISSING SOMEONE ELSE - AND SHE KNEW HE WOULD NEVER KISS HER LIKE THAT AGAIN. AND SO SAD, ANGRY, AND HURT, SHE RUNS. WHEN SHE GETS TO THE AIRPORT SHE DOESN'T CARE WHERE SHE GOES - SHE JUST NEEDS TO GET AWAY. BUT ALL OF THE FLIGHTS ARE EITHER CANCELLED OR DELAYED - EXCEPT FOR THE FLIGHT TO ISTANBUL, TURKEY - WHICH WAS STUFFED.

CLIP: DIANE TALKING WITH THE TICKETING AGENT.

NO MATTER HOW THEY FRAME IT, DIANE GOING TO VIETNAM WASN'T BECAUSE SHE WANTED OR NEEDED TO FIND HER ROOTS. DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT MAY HAVE BEEN AN OUTCOME, BUT IT WASN'T THE INTENTION. IT WAS JUST THE FIRST FLIGHT.

THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER EPISODE WAS WRITTEN BY JOANNE CALO, A LATINX WRITER FOR THE SHOW. VYVY NGUYEN, WHO IS VIETNAMESE AMERICAN, WAS ALSO BROUGHT



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IN AS A CONSULTANT.³¹ AND HAVING THIS CONSULTANT WORK IS GREAT AND IMPORTANT DON'T GET ME WRONG. IT'S A SMALL STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. BUT YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER? FROM DAY ONE, WHEN BOB-WAKSBERG KNEW HE WAS GOING TO HAVE A VIETNAMESE CHARACTER ON THE SHOW, HE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT IN VIETNAMESE AMERICAN WRITERS AND HAD A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN PERSON TO VOICE HER.

VYVY NGUYEN'S SPECIFIC SKILL SET IS TRANSLATING, CULTURAL ADVISING, AND VOICEWORK.³² WHILE YOU COULD SAY, "WELL DOESN'T THIS MAKE HER THE MOST PERFECT CONSULTANT FOR *BOJACK HORSEMAN* AND DIANE," SHOULDN'T THE REAL STATEMENT BE "THIS SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE WHO COULD HAVE VOICED DIANE."

VYVY WAS FOUND WHEN THE CASTING DIRECTOR WAS LOOKING FOR "...SOMEONE [WHO WAS] BOTH PROFICIENT IN SPEAKING VIETNAMESE...WHO ALSO UNDERSTOOD CULTURE FROM A VIET[NAMESE]-AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW."³³ IF THEY HAD SPENT THAT MUCH TIME LOOKING FOR THAT VERY DESCRIPTION ORIGINALLY, YOU WOULDN'T NEED TO BE LISTENING TO THIS EPISODE RIGHT NOW. THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE FOUND VYVY, BUT THEY WOULD HAVE FOUND A VIETNAMESE AMERICAN PERSON, AND THEY WOULD HAVE CAST THEM AS DIANE. THE PROBLEM THERE, THEN, IS THE ONLY SPENT TIME LOOKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE VYVY AFTER THEY HAD ALREADY REALIZED THEIR MISTAKE - AFTER THEY HAD ALREADY GOTTEN BACKLASH FOR IT.

³¹ Kang, I. (2018, September 12). BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg Says the Show Has Been "Hurt" by Its All-White Cast. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://slate.com/culture/2018/09/bojack-horseman-raphael-bob-waksberg-diane-nguyen-representation.html>

³² Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

³³ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>



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HONESTLY, HAVING VYVY NGUYEN AS A CONSULTANT FOR BOJACK HORSEMAN MAKES ME THINK OF HOW DIANE WAS A CONSULTANT FOR *PHILBERT* IN HER WORLD, HIRED SO THAT *PHILBERT* SEEMED LESS WOMANIZING AND MALE GAZE-Y. AND YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT DIANE WAS CONSTANTLY TOLD HER JOB WAS? TO SIT THERE, GET HER PAYCHECK, AND HAVE YOUR NAME IN THE CREDITS SO WE LOOK LIKE WE CARE.

CLIP: FLIP TELLING DIANE TO JUST SHOW UP AND GET HER PAYCHECK.

NOW, I GET THAT IT'S NOT THE SAME, BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT MAKE A CONNECTION IN MY MIND - ESPECIALLY SINCE THE SHOW SO OFTEN CALLS HOLLYWOOD OUT FOR ITS VERY REAL PROBLEMS. LUCKILY, VYVY NGUYEN HAS TALKED ABOUT THE ROLE SHE PLAYED AND HOW THIS WASN'T THE CASE.

BUT VYVY ALSO NOTES HOW DIANE'S BACKSTORY DIDN'T MAKE SENSE. LIKE HOW "THERE WAS ORIGINALLY A LINE SAYING DIANE WAS THIRD GENERATION, [BUT] THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY, MOST OF THE PEOPLE HERE, CAME DURING THE VIETNAM WAR."³⁴

OR HOW VYVY VOICED THREE CHARACTERS IN THE EPISODE: A VIETNAMESE MOTHER WHO HAD LOST HER SON, A CASHIER AT CHICKEN 4 DAYZ IN VIETNAM, AND A CRANE AT AMERICRANE AIRLINES IN AMERICA. YES, YOU HEARD THAT PUN RIGHT. AMERICRANE. SHE'S A CRANE. THEY HAVE GOOD PUNS!

VYVY ALSO MADE SURE LOCATIONS AND DETAILS WERE ACCURATE.³⁵ LIKE HOW AT ONE POINT IN THE EPISODE THERE'S A MONKEY WHO WORKS AT THE HOTEL. HE'S NAME IS LITERALLY THE VIETNAMESE WORD FOR MONKEY, *CON KHI*, BUT A NAME TAG THAT SAYS

³⁴ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

³⁵ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>



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THIS WAS MISSING AN ACCENT MARK OVER THE I.³⁶ IT'S UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT THEY CHANGED THE I AS PER HER SUGGESTION. ORIGINALLY VYVY WAS TOLD IT WOULD BE TOO SMALL FOR ANYONE TO NOTICE, AND TO BE HONEST I WATCHED THE EPISODE AND THE FONT IS TOO SMALL. I HONESTLY CAN'T TELL IF IT'S THERE OR NOT, BUT HERE'S HOPING IT IS. VYVY ALSO TRANSLATED SOME LINES FROM ENGLISH TO VIETNAMESE, AND HELPED ALISON BRIE WITH VIETNAMESE PRONUNCIATION.³⁷

AS I'VE SAID, DIANE'S LAST NAME IS A CONSTANT JOKE ON THE SHOW, BUT IT IS IN SEASON 5 WHERE WE FINALLY HEAR HER SAY IT.

CLIP: DIANE SAYS HER LAST NAME.

BUT THAT'S IT - DIANE'S LAST NAME IS HER ONLY CONNECTION TO VIETNAMESE LIFE AND CULTURE, WHICH I SUPPOSE IS VERY FITTING FOR A SHOW THAT NEVER GAVE HER ANY CONNECTION TO VIETNAM OR BEING VIETNAMESE AMERICAN TO BEGIN WITH.

THE MAIN REALIZATION DIANE COMES TO DURING AND AFTER HER TRIP IS THAT SHE WILL NEVER BELONG IN VIETNAM, NOTING THAT WHEN SHE RETURNS HOME SHE FEELS MORE ALONE THAN WHEN SHE LEFT. AND SO WHAT DOES SHE DO? I THINK SHE DOES WHAT ANYONE WHO'S BEEN HURT WOULD DO. YOU PRETEND LIKE IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU PRETEND LIKE IT DOESN'T HURT.

BY THE END OF THE EPISODE, DIANE ACTS AS IF BEING VIETNAMESE WAS NEVER AN IMPORTANT PART OF HER IN THE FIRST PLACE - WHICH MAKES SENSE BECAUSE TO THE CREATORS AND WRITERS OF *BOJACK HORSEMAN* IT NEVER WAS.

CLIP: WELL, THAT WENT SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN THE WORST IT COULD HAVE POSSIBLY GONE SO...HOORAY?

³⁶ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>

³⁷ Nguyen, H. (2018, September 23). 'BoJack Horseman' Insiders Break Down the Vietnam Episode and How No One Can Pronounce 'Nguyen' Correctly. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/09/bojack-horseman-vietnam-episode-raphael-bob-waksberg-vyvy-nguyen-1202005807/>



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I'M MORGAN JAFFE AND THAT WAS BURST YOUR BUBBLE

THANKS SO MUCH TO JEREMY FERRIS, WHO DOES THE AMAZING ART FOR EACH EPISODE OF THE SHOW. YOU CAN SEE EVERYTHING HE'S CREATED OVER AT BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE, CHECK OUT THE SCRIPT AND ALL OF THE FOOTNOTES AND SOURCES FOR TODAY'S EPISODE. AGAIN, THE WEBSITE IS BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM.

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, PLEASE SUBSCRIBE TO THE SHOW OR LEAVE A REVIEW, FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OR VISIT US AT BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST DOT COM.

BURST YOUR BUBBLE IS RELEASED THE 2ND AND 4TH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH. THE NEXT EPISODE WILL BE RELEASED NOVEMBER 22ND.

THANKS SO MUCH FOR LISTENING, I'LL SEE YOU NEXT TIME, AND HAVE A GOOD ONE!