Queer Eye portrays diverse stories, experiences

by CLAIRE PORTER
staff writer

Queer Eye is a Netflix series which documents five gay men, known as the “Fab Five,” as they transform the lives of different people. This series is an adaption of the older television show Queer Eye for the Straight Guy. In each episode, the Fab Five visit one person, or “hero,” who has been nominated by their family and friends. This person has neglected their living space, appearance, and motivation, and is struggling with some issue in their life. The Fab Five teach the hero a plethora of valuable lessons that lead to a total transformation for the hero. These lessons range from how to correctly pomade one’s beard to how to treat oneself and others with love and respect. Soon enough, the person slowly becomes themselves again.

Queer Eye is one of the most socially minded television shows: the hosts promote self care for both women and men, tackle toxic masculinity, confront homophobia, and address racism.

While body confidence, self care, and “glow ups” are a trending movement, they are still almost exclusively promoted by women. The Fab Five address this issue, and what makes the Netflix series so unique is that it is “dudes showing dudes” that they should have confidence in their appearance, and that there is not any shame in getting involved with face products and fashion. On the show, Jonathan Van Ness, the cosmetology expert, said, “I want to show straight and gay men alike that self-care and grooming isn’t mutually exclusive with femininity or masculinity.”

Queer Eye also tactfully addresses biases that gay men face. In the fourth episode of the first season, the hero AJ is talking to Tan France, the show’s fashion expert. AJ, a gay man, reveals that one of the reasons that he is partially cloistered is because he is concerned about being perceived as too feminine. Tan says, “That’s the concern in that?” Tan and AJ then discuss biases, and as a result, we see AJ begin to break away from those biases, rather than hiding further behind them. This moment is important because viewers see that what are typically thought of as characteristics of a gay man are nothing more than stereotypes.

Queer Eye challenges their audience to stop seeing people through stereotypical lenses. What makes Queer Eye so special is that the Fab Five want to maintain the original culture and value of a person while helping the hero make valuable changes to their life, but are still able to present these changes in a new and exciting way. Instead of picking out a whole new wardrobe for the hero alone, Tan takes the hero shopping and helps the hero refine, refresh, and modernize their personal style. Antoni Porowski, the show’s food and wine expert, picks out recipes to teach the hero that are unique to their culture and background.

Two social issues that are tackled are racism and the Black Lives Matter movement. One of the scarcest moments of the show for both the viewers and the Fab Five is when they get pulled over by a police officer as a prank. The driver, Karamo Brown, was terrified that he might be dragged from his car or shot as another victim of police brutality because of his race. In a personal chat with the officer, racism and the Black Lives Matter movement is discussed. Many entertainment-based television shows do not address these issues. It is important that such issues are addressed, because the people that typically watch entertainment-based shows don’t get enough exposure to these topics. Exposure to such topics leads to awareness, which begins the path to change...

Another major issue addressed is one of today’s hot topics: toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity refers to the traditional cultural masculine norms that can be harmful to women, men, and society overall. Through a multitude of tear-jerking episodes, the Fab Five emphasize that it is okay to cry, it is okay to be emotional and share experiences, and it is okay to ask for help. The strong capacity for understanding that the Fab Five have in Queer Eye is the most important message that the media should be putting out right now. Queer Eye manages to do that perfectly.

Microaggressions cause unintentional discomfort

by ROBYN REED
staff writer

“Who doesn’t deny that women are more emotional than men? It is ingrained in our society that we’s emotional.”

These are phrases that I have heard throughout my lifetime. These phrases are examples of microaggressions, which are brief comments that may be intended to be harmless but which communicate prejudice. Microaggressions are upsetting and make finding my identity and being happy with myself even harder. When people say these things to me, I know they don’t realize the racist undertones of them. Constant negative media portrayal, like the hypersexualized view of black girls is that we are loud, ghetto, angry, and aggressive. I naturally soft, quiet, and shy. My personality contradicts the false idea of how a black woman acts, and it leads people to think that I am not capable of having a career, or that I’m trying to fit in to please their views of society. They realize I am different, but it’s a difference that they like, so they say how they feel without seeing the implications that come with it. Since I am not threatening to them, they feel comfortable to say this to other black girls.

The comments on my hair are the most frequent examples of microaggressive comments I hear. My natural hair is long and thick. People expect that black girls have naturally short hair, and that we cling to weaves and wigs to hide it. Most non-black people don’t realize that black women have a wide variety of hair types. They see my hair and struggle to believe it’s mine. They even sometimes think I’m “mixed” with another race, implying that black women can’t have long hair on their own. It’s hurtful that people see black features as something undesirable, and that black people have to be mixed with someone else to balance black features out. It’s even worse to see that these thoughts stem from the fact that eurocentric beauty standards are perceived as the face of society.

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