

***Bridgerton* Doesn't Need to Elaborate on Its Inclusion of Black Characters,**

Historical accuracy shouldn't have to matter in a fantasy.

One of the hallmarks of a Shonda Rhimes production is a sprawling multiracial ensemble cast. As a viewer, I've watched sexy lawyers, Seattle doctors, and how to get away with murder-ers of all ethnicities command the screen. The fact that many of them were not white was just an added plus while bringing Shondaland's addicting creations over the years.

Rhimes' new Netflix hit, *Bridgerton*, is no different. Only this time, she's executive produced a Regency Era period drama based on a series of bestselling romance novels, and the cast represents the richest of the rich in 1813 London. *Bridgerton* raises the question of how diverse nobility could exist during a time when most Black and brown people in Britain were relegated to domestic work. For the record, according to romance novelist and historian Vanessa Riley, there were Black nobility. (Even a Black duke). But both the scale and level of acceptance of those people shown in *Bridgerton* is largely historically inaccurate—but purposefully so.

To translate, *Bridgerton* exists in a fictional 19th century London society where, unlike today, Queen Charlotte's race was never up for debate. In the show, she is a Black woman who ascended the throne, resulting in a more accepting world filled with equal opportunity where it wasn't radical to see Black elite and middle class people: a duke, footman, lady's maid, or even a respected boxer. Historical accuracy aside, showrunner Chris Van Dusen tells OprahMag.com they wanted *Bridgerton* to "reflect the world that we live in today."

To some, this understandably comes off as a far too simplistic way to **delve into** the very complex idea of race relations in 19th century Britain, particularly when *Bridgerton* was co-produced and written by Van Dusen—a white man. Critics not only address the implications of Black and brown people **mingling** with those who might have been their white oppressors, but also, the exclusion of darker skinned actors from leading roles.

But at the same time, Van Dusen explained to OprahMag.com that the series is in no way strictly history, but a **modern take** on a period drama that resulted in fantasy. And that fantasy happens to include that Black citizens and people of color can live their lives and succeed without question or elaboration.

"It is what it is, and it's beautiful, and it's to be celebrated," says Golda Rosheuvel, who plays Queen Charlotte. "I'm biracial. I was brought up in England. My mother was crazy about period dramas, which made me crazy about them. I never thought that I'd be able to be in one. It was something that was far away. I couldn't touch it. Now we can rewrite that story for the little girl who's sitting at home. That cycle is stopping now"

"I like to represent the world we live in, the audience we're serving, and people who have always lived," Jean-Renée Page tells me. "It's not like people of color *existing* is a modern phenomenon. We've always been there, we are here, and we're gonna be there. I think one of the best ways to do that is to have conversations with people because there are unique concerns that affect how we navigate in society."

As a viewer and romance fanatic, the concept of BIPOCs living freely without issue is difficult to grasp in 2020, particularly as those behind the Black Lives Matter movement are fighting everyday to ensure their community is heard. *Bridgerton* also raises the very real argument that instead of injecting brown people into a world that didn't actually accept them, it might be more productive for Hollywood to **peruse** and adapt from the **plethora** of acclaimed romance novels that are already inclusive. We've already spent decades saying as much. *Bridgerton* just reinforces it.

Adapted from McKenzie Jean-Philippe, *Oprahdaily.com*, Dec 29, 2020

delve into : *plonger dans*

Mingling : *mélange*

modern take : *ici, moderniser*

peruse : *explorer*

plethora: *pléthore, énormément*