

The ChimpanZine



Attention: The following excerpt is brought to you by the ChimpanZine's cutting edge Department of Potentiology. It was recovered from an online post in an alternative universe where the ChimpanZine is a popular topical blog.

In that universe we wrote:

"Setting aside the slippery concept of justice, we feel compelled to point out the rhetorical similarities in the coverage of Bin Laden's killing and the many injured and killed every year by domestic police forces. These are predominantly people of color, supposedly innocent until proven guilty, shot in their homes and neighborhoods "resisting arrest" with their bare hands. It seems these days the United States fights Big Wars against the spectres of "Terror" and "Drugs" because if we were well-armed highly trained soldiers and police, fighting kids with knives and recruits with soviet-era rifles and home-made explosives we'd just be bullies and ineffective bullies at that."

The following excerpts were also recovered, from the Comments section.

The Republican Party

"How dare you slander our brave soldiers and upstanding officers. With our budget priorities the only government left in ten years will be the military and the police. Then you'll be sorry."

The Democratic Party

"Give us a break, for once we can out-hawk the Republicans. Death to Osama! Death to Osama! Re-

May 2011

elect Obama!

The NRA

"We agree with this post. There is an attack being made on our God-given, second ammendment-confirmed, right to bear arms. If everyone was armed we would never have to worry about an unarmed individual being shot by the police."

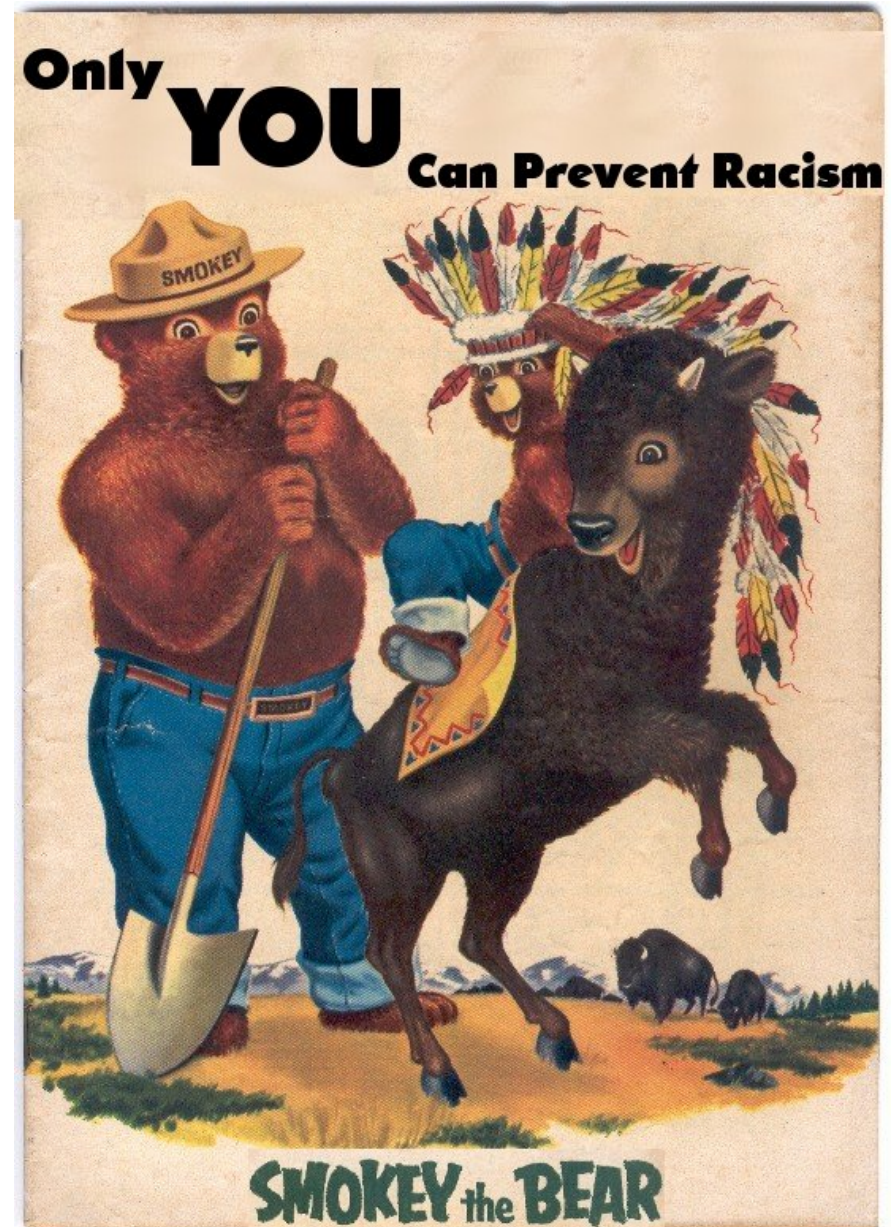
The Tea Party

"We the people would like to thank the NRA for past and future endorsements before offering a slightly different interpretation of the Law. As our Founding Father's laid out in the constitution, African-American men constitute 3/5 of a person and we believe they should be armed accordingly with 3/5 of a weapon each. Though impractical, we feel it best to defer to the eternal unchanging wisdom of our ancestors."

The Prison Industrial Complex

"We support the sentiments of your blog post. It is is critical that we continue to arrest people of color alive. Let justice be served by long expensive prison sentences not summary executions. Please also support our bill increasing minimum sentencing guidelines for possessing 3/5 of a weapon."

Our Legal Team has expressed reservations about publishing material from alternate universes and asked that we clarify the important differences which might possibly exist between our universe and their's. We on the Editorial Board suspect such differences to be minute.



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Why?

So that you can write your own article or draw your own picture and have it featured in the ChimpanZine #4. Maybe it'll get you going and you'll send us something for the ChimpanZine #5 at TheChimpanZine@gmail.com!

Big Chief Cameron

Capuchin

Forgive me Father for I have sinned, it's been over a year and a half since Avatar was released in the U.S and I just saw it recently for the first time. I know that waiting this long risked spoiling the ending, but let's be honest, the ending was never really in doubt. 20th Century Fox didn't shell out \$237 million on a risky screenplay, they went with a tried and true Hollywood epic storyline straight-out-of-the-box, just add blue people. Not surprisingly, there was some press and general muttering about the way those blue people and their culture were portrayed. It didn't take a conference full of anti-racist scholars to recognize the Na'vi as another exotified racial fantasy of a white director in supposed solidarity with people of color across history who resisted imperialism. By the time my local theater showed it to volunteers for free, I was pretty well versed in the racial cliches I could expect, but no one in the media had prepared me for the patriarchal violence that pervaded the movie.

Hollywood producing a patriarchal film? Not front page news I admit, but Avatar's massive display of profit-potential makes it a worthwhile case study for the invisibility sexism has achieved by virtue of its constant presence. When Googling "Avatar, patriarchy" produces blogs celebrating a Goddess worshipping culture being portrayed positively in a mainstream movie, something is rotten in the cinematic state. In fact, the presence of a mother Goddess Ey-wah, (a not-so-subtle anagram of the less feminine

Yahweh) is just another superficial contribution to Cameron's half baked notion of what it means to be "native" which resorts to a patriarchal tribal structure rather than imagining, or borrowing, from any genuinely revolutionary social organization. In fact, where gender equality is concerned our white marine hero is Cameron's progressive hero. When the tribe welcomes him after his rites of manhood, his love interest, Neyteri, explains that he's earned the right to choose a mate. She runs down a short list of desirable females that are apparently his simply by virtue of having attained Na'vi masculinity and he generously suggests that the woman he chooses should love him back.

Ah yes, the sensitive white male educating the doting native woman on her equality, a touching moment during which the viewer should keep firmly in mind the way feminist rhetoric has been appropriated in the "War on Terror" to justify pre-emptive attacks on primarily Muslim countries. What exactly is the liberated state that Jake Sully is bringing to Neyteri and her people? True, Sigourney Weaver and Michelle Rodriguez play strong and competent women, and in a movie where so few characters are developed it's not really fair to call them tokens, but they aren't there to lead the Na'vi to liberation. They are strictly the feminine conscience of the military-industrial complex who must be martyred to show that the genocidal corporation really is beyond saving. It is Jake Sully's nod to the superficial egalitarianism of Western society combined with the exotic "traditional" Na'vi lifestyle that is being put

on the pedestal, and that's where Avatar really started to scare me.

The central feature of the Na'vi way of life is supposed to be their spiritual communion with nature, and the resulting harmonious interaction with their surroundings. What disturbed me was the way in which this relationship reproduced in a more subtle fashion, the logic of rape and violence that was supposed to be the domain of the human invaders. Take as the primary example, the scene in which Jake Sully's Avatar achieves Na'vi masculinity by subduing a Mountain Banshee, one of the flying creatures the Na'vi ride. This animal is supposed to be his devoted companion for life, but the means by which this bond is accomplished is nothing more than a literal rape. Jake, in his avatar body, gags the banshee and then, as Neyteri urges him on, he wrestles it into submission and sticks the phallic extension of his braid into the receptive end of the banshee's antennae. Only after it has been forcibly penetrated does the banshee stop resisting and submit to its new master's will.

This is the model for a respectful spiritual partnership with nature? Spare me the token prayer for fallen prey, Cameron's environmental gospel doesn't challenge Man's dominance over nature, it merely confirms His position of power and asks nicely that He be a little more responsible with it. This man vs. nature relationship translates fluidly and completely to the more explicit social patriarchal structures depicted. No matter that Neyteri has been a competent practitioner her whole life of all the skills Jake Sully has only recently acquired. No

matter that his prolonged deceit facilitates the genocide of her people and the death of her father. She'll be allowed her moment of hysteria, but when Jake rapes into submission the biggest Alpha male he can find, she'll come to her senses and leap behind him astride his newly passive mount in the strong, sexy and, most importantly, supportive position she was always intended to take. Like the penetrated banshee, she'll get over the violence of their courtship and learn to like her new place in the world as the big chief's consort and cultural authenticator.

Many will question whether this analysis is worth the effort. Flipping through a TV Guide or looking at the current top grossing movies provides easier fodder for a patriarchal witch-hunt, why pick on Avatar with its handful of active female characters and Fern Gully eco-friendly message?

Other than its unprecedented profits Avatar is worth singling out precisely because of how few feathers it ruffled, and yet for 162 minutes I watched a work of fiction intent on naturalizing male dominance. A made-up world in which strong Goddess-worshipping female characters found their place supporting a home grown patriarchy against an invading patriarchy and were grateful for the lesser evil. A universe which could imagine interstellar travel, identity transference between bodies and living forests, but not genuine gender equality, much less a breakdown of gender roles' stranglehold on identity. It was a small world, a small vision and a small dream for such a big screen, but then I only saw it in 2D.

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Campfire?



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at the **Black Drop Coffeehouse** at the
corner of Magnolia, Grand and Champion
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