

**Brayton, Sean. 2021. "Hallmark Whiteness and the Paradox of Racial Tokenism." *Studies in Popular Culture* 43:24-47**

**PRIMARY ARGUMENT:** The article argues that Hallmark movies reinforce white cultural dominance by using racial tokenism to create an appearance of diversity without challenging white-centric norms.

**IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:**

- Racial Tokenism: the practice of superficially including people of underrepresented racial groups to appear diverse, without addressing systemic racism or discrimination. This often leads to isolation and pressure for the token individuals.
- White Normativity: the idea that white people are the standard for what is normal or acceptable, and that people of other races are a deviation from that norm.
- Neo-Liberal Multiculturalism: the use of successful people of color (e.g., Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama) as examples of the availability/opportunity for upward mobility for that group
- "Hallmark Whiteness": This term refers to how whiteness is the dominant race and culture within hallmark films.

**PRIMARY FINDINGS:**

1. In each of these films, the narrative focuses on the courtship of white women and men but employs Black, Asian-American, and Latinx characters to fill in the supporting cast. The work of such characters, however, is oftentimes indispensable to the career development and livelihoods of white protagonists as well as the plots.
2. White love is often facilitated by the caring work of non-White racial tokens who assume the role of "multicultural matchmakers."
3. People of color in Hallmark films are consigned to roles in which they are the ones doing the affective labor which promotes the relationships of the white characters.
4. The inclusion of minority characters serves to create the appearance of inclusiveness without actually altering the fundamentally White-centered narrative.

**KEY QUOTE:** "Although Hallmark's Christmas films may indeed be "unbearably white," it is not only a matter of casting, as critics and viewers contend; instead, racial inequities appear in the storylines, particularly with the use of racial tokens who perform types of work and affective labor in the service of white characters and plot." (43)

**QUESTION:** The author outlines that Hallmark Christmas films are particularly guilty of this whitewashed presentation. Why could it be Christmas films specifically? Is it the fact that the US and particularly Hallmark's target audience is influenced by Christian Nationalism which would be especially sensitive to non-white Christmas movies?