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GN100



(Garber, Megan, The Troubling Sexism of 1970s Ad Campaigns)

Blow in Her Face and She'll Follow you anywhere

There are most likely millions of different examples of sexism and heterosexism in various forms of media both from the past and present. I found that the most belligerent forms of these 'isms' can be seen in vintage advertisements. Thousands of ads come up with a quick google search, and most all of them had distinct themes of objectifying women, perpetuating sexism, and encouraging and celebrating only heterosexual relationships.

This advertisement in particular was for cigarettes which was first issued in 1969 by Tipalet Cigarette Company. It pictures two attractive and young models, one male and one female. The woman meets the Western beauty standard, she has glowing tan skin, long lashes, doe eyes, long black eyelashes, full lips, white teeth, and has on a small white tank top. She is shown longingly looking at the man who's blowing smoke in her face like he is irresistible. The man on the other hand also meets the Western beauty standard. He is tall, dark, and handsome. He is pictured in a black shirt, holding a cigarette, and blowing a cloud of smoke into the woman's face.

There are more than a few examples within this ad that exemplify sexism and heterosexism. Firstly, there is a definite power imbalance between the two. The man pictured in the ad is literally being encouraged to blow smoke in the woman's face so she will follow him around like a lost dog. The woman is put in a position of submission, she is the "follower" of the man, and she is taking it without a second thought. As a matter of fact, she is portrayed as though she likes it, her face seems pleased and may be aroused in a way. This ad spews toxic masculinity and glorifies disrespecting and objectifying women. Another aspect of the ad is the way smoking is portrayed as a masculine activity. The slogan on top of the ad said "blow in her face and she'll follow you anywhere." Certainly, the ad was not referencing a woman blowing in another woman's face, but what the ad pictures, a man blowing in a woman's face. This infers that smoking is a masculine activity that makes a woman more attracted to them, which also supports heterosexism and praises heterosexual relationships.

The advertisement operates on the Macro-level, as almost anyone who could read and who got newspapers and magazines could see this ad. The ad itself targets and affects us at a Meso-level of society. I would say it particularly targets heterosexual men as a group (whether

they smoke or not). The man in the ad is put in a powerful position and is attracting a potential sexual partner at the same time. Which in turn, makes this cigarette a desirable product for a man who wants to attract a partner in a heterosexual relationship. The advertisement also reveals an unsettling operation of patriarchy. Socially, men are generally seen and accepted as superior to women, and women are seen and accepted as the submissive followers of men. It also infers that women enjoy being degraded and disrespected by men, and they accept that social role with a smile on their face.

Advertisements similar to these were very popular around this time period, especially through cigarette companies. In fact, cigarette companies coined the saying “sex sells” which originates all the way back to 1870. By oversexualizing and objectifying women through media for capitalistic agendas, sexism and heterosexism have been engrained into our society through various forms of media for over well over 100 years (Ermanen). It is now no surprise that there is still so much work to be done regarding how sex is represented in media, as there have been copious amounts of much brainwashing of both men and women to accept a defined role (positive or negative) to conform to what society says is desirable.

Works Cited

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