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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Race-Baiting "Survivor" Begins Tonight; Here's Why It's Good

Tonight, "Survivor" begins with the stunt of dividing up the tribes based on race. Here's a news flash for you: EVERY season of "Survivor," the tribes have been divided up based on race. So has EVERY OTHER REALITY SHOW from "The Real World" to "The Amazing Race" to "American Idol." So has EVERY DRAMA AND SITCOM OF THE PAST TEN YEARS. The only time every TV show WASN'T broken down by race was back in the day when almost every show was simply white.

Did you think it was an accident that past tribes on Survivor have so often included one or two black people, one or two Latinos and an Asian here and there? Did you think it was an accident when "Idol" finalists going to Hollywood included such a diverse cross-section of America? Did you think it was happen-stance that "The Real World" cast members included a similarly Benneton-like mix of blacks, Asians, Latinos, whites (why not) and of course the obligatory gay/lesbian /bisexual?

How about dramas and comedies? Haven't you noticed how in the past ten years black actors have so often gone from playing neutered sidekicks to playing neutered authority figures -- such as the police chief or the President? How about sitcoms where the best friend/next door neighbor is of a funny/cute/unexpected ethnicity?

The simple and not so surprising truth is that EVERY SHOW ON TV IS CAST BY RACE, whether they admit it or not. (Unless of course the show is entirely white or appearing on a weblet like the former UPN.) Sure there are lots of exceptions to this rule, great shows that have mixed casts that seem natural and unforced. But the vast majority do follow this pattern.

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