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**Resident Evil 5: A Travesty on All Counts
Student Writers' Corner
By Tolu Olorunda**

BlackCommentator.com Student Guest Commentator

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A couple weeks ago, a friend sent me a YouTube link. He described it as "African genocide." Not knowing what to expect, I clicked on it. What I witnessed for those next 3 minutes, was nerve-wrecking, painful, mind-numbing and heart-racing. It was a trailer for a Video Game called "Resident Evil."

This specific trailer was an eye-ful in the most horrid sense. It wasted no time in capitalizing upon the long history of blatant depictions of Africans as savages and helpless imbeciles. The trailer featured a Caucasian male mutilating African villages, along with Africans. With the not-so ancient history of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa, the issue of racial insensitivity and indifference must be brought to the centerfold. This patent-reality must be interrogated excruciatingly to expose the silliness of those who claim the 21st century marked the dawn of a post-racial world.

The Video Game industry is one which has profited immensely from the casualty of black on black hostility. Notable products of its faculty include, "50 Cent: Bulletproof," "Def Jam: Icon" and "Grand Theft Auto." This \$10 billion market owes the majority of its inspiration to the tragic decisions of young black and brown teenagers.

Psychologists Craig A. Anderson, PhD., and Karen E. Dill, PhD, did some studies on the decipherable effects of harshly-toned video games on the minds of impressionable teenagers. They concluded that, "young men who are habitually aggressive may be especially vulnerable to the aggression-enhancing effects of repeated exposure to violent games," and the fact that "Violent video games provide a forum for learning and practicing aggressive solutions to conflict situations... In the short run, playing a violent video game appears to affect aggression by priming aggressive thoughts. Longer-term effects are likely to be longer lasting as well, as the player learns and practices new aggression-related scripts that can become more and more accessible for use when real-life conflict situations arise."

A 2005 survey suggests that Blacks constitute 2% of the demographic makeup of Game Developers, with Latinos making 2.5%. How ironic is it, that this reality does very little to punctuate the disproportionate consumption of video game products by Black and Brown teenagers.

The early release of the Resident Evil 5 trailer provoked certain journalists to voice their outrage over the transparently racist façade. Newsweek's gaming journalist, N'Gai Croal, was one of a few of those who rose to occasion. In an interview, he eloquently stated, "I looked at the Resident Evil 5 trailer and I was like, 'Wow, clearly no one black worked on this game'... The point isn't that you can't have black zombies. There was a lot of imagery in that trailer that dovetailed with classic racist imagery. What was not funny, but sort of interesting, was that there were so many gamers who could not at all see it."

To say the least, Resident Evil 5 producer, Jun Takeuchi, appears to be a card-carrying member of that classic club which pride themselves in being comfortably uninformed of the racial realities that engulf the societies in which they exist. He claimed to be bitterly misinformed of the racial conundrum he had created. In an interview with Japan's "Famitsu magazine," he spoke unabashedly about the decision to use Africa as the setting for this installment of the video-game phenomena, saying, "We really wanted to show the origins of the virus, so for the setting we thought, how about using the place where humankind was born... We thought we would use Africa, which is now called the birthplace of humanity." In response to those who labeled his "art-work" as racially-charged, Takeuchi responded, stating, "In terms of the reaction, we're in the business of entertainment... We didn't set out to make a racist game or a political statement. We did feel there was a misunderstanding about the initial trailer." This act of staged-ignorance is the birth child of a "neo-liberalized" atmosphere that champions Political Correctness as a substantive means of resolving America's race problem.

Activist and, Rap group, "Public Enemy" front-man, "Chuck D", in a song titled "Can you hear me now" from their latest release, "How you sell Soul to a Soulless People who sold their Soul," rapped, "Damn if I be some slave again/ Got no fake ass friends and no timbs or rims/ Sure `nuff got no designer names/ And I never played no video games." This declaration of one's independence also works as a countervailing voice in response to society's norms. In addition, it hints at a strange relationship between the Hip-Hop Industry and the Video-Game Industry.

Upon a moment's reflection, it appears as though the record producers and video-game producers have co-authored a "3 step mode" to further the desecration of young Black/Brown imaginations. The first being the, "Play it in your mind mode (The Envisioning)." The second as the "Play it with your hand mode (The Experiment)." And finally, the "Play it with your heart mode (The Execution)." I believe these steps have

been successfully utilized, with precision and concision. It puts a new face on the old theory of Black/Brown kids being mysteriously attracted to violence and violently packaged materials, be it in the form of music, audio-visual, toys or actual weaponry.

It also raises the grim question of why there continues to be a shortage of positive Black/Brown role-models, on TV shows and News Channels. Recent studies by Independent media groups reveal a troubling truth concerning the role of the media in distorting the imagery of communities of color. A progressive research and information center, "Media Matters," did a study highlighting how grossly under-represented Blacks and Browns are in the Major media beltway. The study revealed how on an average, Blacks make up 7% of media guests, and Browns make up 1%. This not-so-startling detail also underlined the hypocrisy of media outlets in a time of racial controversies. The study documented the surge in Black/Brown guests after such unforgettable events as, "The Don Imus incident" and "Michael Richards' racial tirade."

In moments like this, with an absence of impressive leadership and progressive follower-ship, it is valuable to pause for a moment and question ourselves; what would Marcus Garvey think, say and do? It is crucial that we take his many words into consideration, especially his warning that, "So many of us find excuses to get out of the Negro Race, because we are led to believe that the race is unworthy - that it has not accomplished anything. Cowards that we are! It is we who are unworthy, because we are not contributing to the uplift and upbuilding of this noble race," and "Action, self-reliance, the vision of self and the future have been the only means by which the oppressed have seen and realized the light of their own freedom."

BlackCommentator.com Guest Student Commentator, Tolu Olorunda, is an 18-year-old local activist/writer and a Nigerian immigrant. Click [here](#) to reach Tolu Olorunda.

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