

## Imitation: The Sincerest Flattery

A number of classic films have been remade using primarily black actors or even an exclusively black cast. Among these are *The Wizard of Oz*, *Carmen*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Annie*, *12 Angry Men*, and *Cinderella*. After viewing some of them, one black female blogger had the honesty to concede that *"This is nowhere as good as the original."* She was absolutely correct, but may not realize why.

One of the films she viewed was a remake of *Steel Magnolias* with a black cast. After seeing the film she asked herself, *"Why did we need the same damn movie, but with black women?"* The lesser quality of black re-makes left her with the distinct impression that *"white filmmakers set the standard for story-telling."* That last impression is stunningly accurate. (Toya Sharee. *"Why I Am Over Black Remakes."* *MADAMENOIRE*, March 30, 2014.)



Original Version

Dubious Imitation

No matter how many Giga-watts of copy blacks may devote to the futile task of heralding their equal ability relative to whites, even they, themselves, must know that claim is fraudulent. Any race that never developed a written language is hardly competition for Shakespeare, Dickens or Dumas. It's no match for John Ford, Orson Welles, or David Lean, either. Black efforts at mimicry are unfailingly amateurish, contrived and inauthentic compared to the originals.

She may have hit the bullseye when she stated the following:

***"... I can't help but feel like every now and then Hollywood feels like they owe the African-American community a favor via lights, camera, and affirmative action. It's almost as if movie studios wake up and realize they forgot to incorporate African-American culture into classic film, so they take one of their own, blow off the dust and cast a black cast hoping we'll be appeased."***

Perhaps if blacks studied serious subjects in school rather than "*Black Grievances*," they'd have a broader perspective and be better prepared to pursue that separate "*black culture*" about which they fantasize. Then they wouldn't need to devote so much time to telling us how equally talented they are, or attempt to mimic white cultural achievements they envy at some "*gut*" level.

After all, ***"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness."***

Oscar Wilde