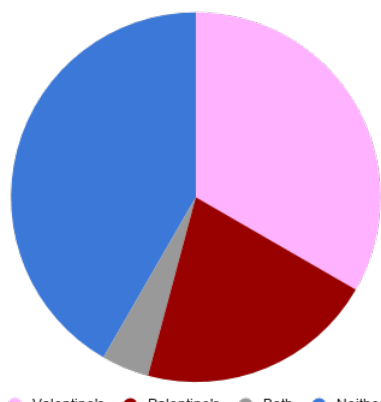


## What's Your Opinion?

This week, we asked students if they were spending Sunday celebrating Valentine's Day with their significant other, or Palentine's Day with their friends.

Out of 24 responses:  
8 - Valentine's Day  
5 - Palentine's Day  
1 - Both  
10 - Neither



## Next Week's Poll:

### Home or Away

For returning students: Will you be living on or off campus next school year?

Students can answer the poll and find previous poll results on The Herald's website, [theherald.home.blog](http://theherald.home.blog), or on The Herald's Instagram page, [@as\\_tateherald](https://www.instagram.com/as_tateherald). Website polls are posted on Wednesdays and Instagram polls are posted on Mondays.

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a junior music composition major from Hot Springs.

As we make our way through Black History Month, you may find yourself wondering what you can do to help. While it's always good to make big gestures like marching at protests, there are many smaller actions you can take to support the cause and become more conscious in the process.

Please note: I'm not saying "you should only be an activist in ways that are easy" -- rather, I'm trying to highlight steps you can take to become a better activist, particularly for people who haven't thought much about Black Lives Matter before now. These are bare minimum steps

## Three Stepping Stones to Further Activism

to take, and going above and beyond in them is a goal we should strive to achieve.

### Donate to Black Fundraisers

If you've spent a lot of time on websites like Twitter or Tumblr, you may have seen a number of GoFundMes posted by people in need. A GoFundMe is a website where anyone may donate money for whatever cause. Many of the ones I've seen are posted by people needing to pay for rent or medical expenses. If you've got the extra funds and want to do something with them, donating to a person of color is a good thing to do. You can also donate to causes like The Bail Project, which allows people to donate money for incarcerated people who cannot pay their own bail.

### Seek Out More Black-Made Works

There are tons of Black artists, authors, musicians and business owners across the country who don't receive as much attention as their white counterparts. Take time to make sure your bookshelf has at least a few books by a Black author or your favorite playlist has at least a few songs by a Black musician. If you have a product you like to buy off a big corporate site like Amazon, see if there's a Black-owned business that sells a similar

product. Surround yourself with media that comes from voices and experiences outside of your own, rather than just watching another season of "Friends."

### Challenge Your Own Biases and Prejudices

This step can be a bit trickier, but is a must. How do you see the people around you? Are those perceptions dependent on skin color? When you watch a television show, are you more likely to be drawn to a character of a particular race? Do your friends all look like you?

I'm not saying you should surround yourself with Black characters and friends solely for the purpose of becoming more race-conscious or "woke." Don't go running out to make a single token Black friend just because your friend group is all white. But if there's an unconscious bias you've been holding and you discover it, work on that. If you've been avoiding race-centric politics, work on reading

more diverse news stories, and educate yourself on all the injustice you've been ignoring. Learn to recognize injustice and microaggressions, so that you can stand up to them when you see them happen.

Again, all of these actions are bare minimum, but they're still valuable. They're certainly better than nothing. Let these be a stepping stone for further activism, rather than the only thing you ever do.



ART BY THINH VU | CONTENT CREATOR

## Stop Whitewashing Minority Roles In Minority Stories

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR

Imagine the following scenario: You've been an expert at cooking burgers your entire life. Burger-making is your whole identity, your family are all good at cooking burgers. You want to be a chef in a burger joint more than anything in the world, and you're more than qualified from years of training. It hasn't been an easy road; you've often been mocked or bullied because of your burger lineage, and it's been hard to find jobs that will accept you. You finally find a burger joint looking for a chef and apply. However, instead of giving you the job, the burger joint hires a popular football player. The football player can flip a decent burger, but he's nowhere near as good a fit for the position as you would be. Nevertheless, people still praise him, saying his burgers are the best in town. When you complain, you are told that, if they didn't hire you, clearly that means you just aren't a good cook.

Does that sound ridiculous? Good. Now replace "burger expert" with "minority actor" and "football player" with "non-minority A-list actor." That's the reality for many actors of color, disabled actors, or LGBTQ actors.

Examples of this include white actor Scarlet Johanssen as Japanese character Motoko Kusanagi in "Ghost in the Shell," straight actor James Corden as gay character Barry Glickman in "The Prom" and neurotypical actor Maddie

Ziegler as autistic character Music in "Music".

Any of these roles could have been filled by actors that actually represented the characters. In the case of "The Prom" and "Music," the portrayal of gay and autistic characters was stereotypical at best and harmful at worst. Critics of each said that Corden's flamboyant flourishes reflected offensive and shallow gay stereotypes, while Zeigler's overexaggerated tics and meltdowns were presented as problems to be solved rather than behaviors of a real human being.

It's also worth noting that the meltdowns in "Music" are dealt with by using what is known as prone or supine restraint -- physically holding an autistic person down until they stop having a meltdown. This method is not only dehumanizing, but has led to the traumatization and death of countless autistic people. It was only after "Music" had been nominated for two Golden Globe awards that Sia finally apologized for the inclusion of the restraint scenes, claiming they would be removed in future editions of the movie.

"Music" also carried controversy due to musician and director Sia's response to criticism. On Twitter, when real autistic people raised concerns over the casting, Sia claimed that casting an autistic actor at the level of functioning she wanted Music to portray would be "cruel." In response to one autistic actor who criticized the casting, Sia said "maybe

you're just a bad actor." One tweet even featured her swearing and literally growling at critics of the film.

Meanwhile, after "Ghost in the Shell" had its share of controversy for whitewashing, Johanssen was cast in another role she did not fit -- transgender man Dante Gill in "Rub & Tug." In a later interview she dropped a quote that has since become a meme: "As an actor I should be able to play any person, or any tree, or any animal, because that's my job and the requirements of my job."

**"So... we couldn't get a gay man to play James Corden's role in #TheProm? They were all too busy? Do we still think it's kosher to have non-LGBTQIA people playing aggressively flamboyant, stereotypical gay characters?"**  
-- @jamesfishon

Johanssen has since elaborated on that statement: "In an ideal world, any actor should be able to play anybody and Art, in all forms, should be immune to political correctness...I recognize that in reality, there is a wide spread discrepancy amongst my industry that favors Caucasian, cisgendered actors and that not every actor has been given the same opportunities that I have been privileged to."

I agree with Johanssen's last statement, but not as much with the ones before it. Sure, as an actor, she has

the capacity to play any role, but giving proper representation and opportunities to minority actors isn't "political correctness," it's the absolute bare minimum. Choosing to be "color-blind" for the sake of Art is ignorant, harmful, and disappointing.

Am I saying that minority characters should only be played by minority actors? Yes and no. I agree that sometimes, straight actors manage to play LGBTQ characters respectfully. I realize that limiting actors to "play what you are" limits everyone, not just the white cis straight A-listers.

However, I think if you are casting a character who is a minority, particularly if the story focuses on their minority-ness, you should prioritize minority actors. For example, if someone were to make a movie about my life, I would want them to audition at least 50 Jewish women before turning to other choices, because religion is a major part of my life story. I want the same for characters of color or characters with disabilities.

Casting minority actors in minority roles allows for nuance and sensitivity that "color-blind" casting completely misses. It can prevent harmful stereotypes and give visibility, something still sorely needed in today's mainstream media. And, most importantly, it can give jobs to actors still struggling to find roles. At the very least, take the time to properly research and sensitivity test a subject matter before casting.

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