

Are IFC and Netflix Promoting the Rape of Brown and Asian Boys?



Pamela Woolford · Follow

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I read about Netflix severing ties with Kevin Spacey earlier this month, after Anthony Rapp accused him of sexually assaulting him when he was 14.

After learning that, I wrote an email to Netflix through their media line. I asked them to no longer make Season 1, Episode 5 of the IFC sitcom *Todd Margaret* available through their service. About a hundred people showed support for the episode's removal through a post I made on social media, I told Netflix.

They did not respond.

In the episode, a white male character says to another white male character, "...I think I'm beginning to see what you're all about. You got it figured out. Don't worry. I'm not angry. I've been in the same situation. I think it's time that we fess up."

....

"We need to get you laid, right?" he continues. "A little boy, am I right?"

"No," the other man says.

“Two little boys?” the first man asks. “Two little brown ones? A little brown and a little yellow one? Like fucking a bag of M&M’s.”

Sexual abuse of children is normally off the table as comedy fodder for obvious reasons, I thought. But in American society people of color too often have to explain why human decency should be applied to them. And it sickens me that in the case of brown and Asian boys, at least where IFC and Netflix are concerned, I have to spell out the fact that media influences mindsets, and mindsets influence lives, vulnerable children’s lives. It matters if a sitcom in which a white man talks casually about arranging to rape little brown and Asian boys airs and continues to air.

According to *International Business Times*, the top five countries with the highest rates of child prostitution are Sri Lanka, Thailand, Brazil, the United States, and Canada, where Inuit children are being lured by sex “traffickers through various means including dating websites,” according to *National Post*’s coverage of a report funded by the Department of Justice in Canada.

According to GlobalCitizen.org, “There are 395 million children living under conditions of extreme poverty, and the youngest of children are found to be the most vulnerable. ... They are at risk for being exploited, abused, and forgotten.” The 25 poorest countries in the world, identified by *Global Finance Magazine*, are all populated predominantly by people of color.

I ask myself why those despicable lines in *Todd Margaret* exist. And why are

those filthy words targeted at “brown” and “yellow” boys?

Knowing that there is a specific history between the American entertainment industry and sexual abuse of Southeast Asian boys stemming from the fact that *Apocalypse Now* shot in Pagsanjan for sixteen long months haunts me when I ask that question. I learned of the history in 1989 through a shocking multilayered *New York Times* article, “In a Philippine Town, Child Prostitution, Despite Protests, Is a Way of Life.”



“Estafania Aldaba-Lim, a former minister of social welfare who has studied

the Pagsanjan situation, said local residents discovered the easy money in male prostitution when American filmmakers came to town to shoot scenes for ‘Apocalypse Now,’” The *Times* article states and continues:

“I suppose some gays with the crew fell in love with the young macho boatmen,’ she said, ‘and then it went to much younger boys, down to 9, 10, 11 years old....’

“Word spread, and foreign men took up residence, including Andrew Mark Harvey, an American in whose house [historian] Miss Zaide recovered more than 600 color pictures of local boys...” performing sexual acts with foreign men.

“Mr. Harvey was among those arrested last year, along with six other Americans....”

“[A] number of prominent foreigners have patronized the local prostitution industry,” the articles states, “including a Western ambassador....”

The historical connection between the shooting of *Apocalypse Now* and sexual abuse of boys in Pagsanjan is also documented in the book *Children in the International Political Economy* by G. Kent and published by Palgrave Macmillan. In *Have a Little Faith: Fixing Broken Childhoods in the Philippines* published by Monarch Books in 2014, the author Lesley Gomez writes, “At one tourist spot in Pagsanjan...there were at least 3,000 boys involved in the sex trade. A paedophile ring was uncovered there, consisting mostly of

Caucasian teachers....”

The airing of the dialogue in the episode of IFC’s *Todd Margaret*, currently available on Netflix, should be an obvious wrong, but apparently to some it is not. If you don’t agree that such dialogue should not air on entertainment sites like IFC and Netflix, consider this:

In my email I told Netflix that the dialogue is appallingly inappropriate for a media service that does not strive to promote pedophilia. I assume it’s not their purpose. But then why air it?

I’m black, and I’m angry, and I’m tired. I’m tired of being angry.

Todd Margaret is a white show. The cast is nearly all white, like many shows. Let’s suppose it weren’t. Let’s suppose it were a brown and Asian show, a brown and Asian show with a brown and Asian cast with a brown and Asian crew, brown and Asian writers, and a brown and Asian production company with a show called *Todd Margaret*, but it’s brown and Asian instead of white, and one of the brown or Asian male characters on the show says to another one of the brown or Asian male characters on this comedy show, “We need to get you laid, right? A little boy, am I right? Two little boys? Two little white ones? A white one and a paler white one? Like fucking a bag of marshmallows,” what would you do?

Would you turn the show off? Would you tell someone — a friend, a coworker, an online community — what you had seen, how wrong it was?

Would you be sickened when you saw it? Would you tell someone how you felt when you saw it? Would you express something, to someone? Would you be angry? Would you be nervous or sick or sad or angry?

Would you be shocked? Would you be shocked that those brown and Asian people did that? Would you be shocked that they were allowed to do that? Who allowed them to do that? Other brown and Asian people? And what kind of brown and Asian people were they, that they would do that, all those brown and Asian people who wrote the lines, read the lines, approved the lines, said the lines, watched the lines being said in rehearsals, directed the lines, produced the show in which the lines were said, aired the show, watched the show, continued to watch the show? Who were they, and why would they do something like that, say that about fucking little white children?

Would you wonder why it was okay — for it to happen? Why was it okay?

Would it be okay? To say lines about raping white children in the middle of a show called *Todd Margaret*, a brown and Asian show called *Todd Margaret*? Would that be okay?

Would it be funny? Would it be funny if one of those brown or Asian characters said that to the other one? Would that be funny? Or clever? Would it be clever? Or entertaining? Would it be entertaining to say that about raping those white children?

Would it ever be on the air? Season 1, Episode 5 of that show with that line — would it air? On IFC, would it air?

Would it be available? Today, would it be available on Netflix? Would it?

IFC and Netflix were invited to comment for this article. Neither company responded. According to the IFC website at the time of the publishing of this story, Season 1, Episode 5 of Todd Margaret is available for viewing on iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, Xbox, and Netflix.

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