

If there's anything I've gathered from five years of studying film—and I've learned a lot—more than cinematography, mise-en-scène, or the 180 degree rule, I've learned that representation matters.

This is very obvious when looking at pretty much *any* Asian character in film. Mainstream media is incredibly whitewashed and therefore, other racial or ethnic minorities tend to struggle to find any characters on-screen to relate to—it's a subtle form of racism and xenophobia that has become socially acceptable.

The film industry is one of the largest in the world, so it make sense that the content we enjoy affects us significantly. One of the biggest issues surrounding TV and film is that the stories being told are overwhelmingly white.

On the flip side, Asian characters are not often depicted in film or TV as protagonists; instead, they are typically side characters without names or important narratives.

Elizabeth Gottshall, a former studio art and computer science student, was born in China, but was adopted and brought to Georgia in 1998.

Gottshall is incredibly passionate and outspoken about the representation of Asian people in film and media, often writing and sharing social media posts that bring attention to the misrepresentation of Asians in the media.

She notes that the Asian and Asian-American communities are most often the victims of whitewashing (meaning that white actors accept roles that are meant to be played by an Asian actor). Even when Asian characters are presented in films, they are incredibly stereotyped and misrepresented.

“The stereotypes aren't just about being good at math and technology,” Gottshall explains. “For Asian women, a lot of stereotypes are based on Asian women's

appearance. [They] are frequently portrayed as very thin and most importantly, pale. This is a huge problem.”

One of the most interestingly bizarre stereotypes and film tropes surrounding the Asian community involves putting stripes of colour into Asian women’s hair.

It is a common trope that is used to make Asian women “stand out” and to Westernize them, often portraying them as fun and carefree. This trope is meant to combat the incredibly harmful and untrue stereotype that Asian women are “boring and submissive”, which is common stigma in media.

While it may seem niche, this hair colour is actually a frustratingly common trope used in films and TV. Twitter user [@nerdyasians](#) tweeted this image that further emphasizes this idea:



But the stereotypes can be much more serious than hair colour.

“The most harmful stereotypes are about Asian woman being hypersexualised and only being there for white men to have sex with and dominate,” Gottshall said.

One of Gottshall’s most recent social media posts sheds light on a movement called #AsianAugust, a phenomenon that highlights films starring Asians and Asian-Americans. Some of the featured work this past August included *The Darkest Minds*, *Dog Days*, *The Meg*, *Crazy Rich Asians*, *To All The Boys I’ve Loved Before*, and *Searching*.

[Variety Magazine](#) explains that movements such as #AsianAugust show that “there can be more than one movie out at a time featuring diverse protagonists without hindering each other’s opportunity to succeed. They can even spark a ripple effect.”

Not only is it powerful that these films even exist, but they’re also films that ignore the stereotypes and stigmas that are so often put upon Asians and Asian Americans in media. They allow audiences to be exposed to characters which Gottshall calls “realistic and three-dimensional” that “Asians and Asian-Americans can relate to.”

While there is still lots of work to be done, the existence of films such as the ones presented in #AsianAugust—and their impressive amount of success—demonstrates that the film industry might actually be going in the right direction when it comes to fair representation of races.