

Brainwashed - CocoRacist: You're So Worldly, How's Mom's Audi?

Written by Jonathan Dean

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After being alerted by a Brainwashed reader to [this fascinating article](#) from the *Washington Post* about

ultra-trendy

"Kill Whitey"

parties in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (where else?), I was not only perturbed by what I learned about the racist underside of indie trendoids, but I also discovered a little tidbit that might potentially be very embarrassing to indie freak-folk darlings

CocoRosie

For those who can't be bothered to click the above link and read the article, I'll sum it up here. "Kill Whitey" is the name given to a series of monthly hip-hop themed parties staged in Williamsburg for large groups of wealthy, white hipsters too frightened to darken the door of real hip-hop clubs at which they might actually run into a real, live black person. At the parties, a white DJ known as Tha Pumpsta spins a mix of hardcore hip-hop, with a special emphasis on Miami booty-bass and other such unrepresentative special-interest genres within hip-hop, and encourages the partygoers to mock the dance moves, speaking style and attitudes of black people immersed in hip-hop culture, the raunchier and more caricatured the better.

While reading the article, I came across this particularly heinous quote from a typical, post-ironic urban hipster trust-fund baby:

'[Bianca] Casady was raised in Santa Barbara, Calif., but quickly notes her worldliness by listing the cities where she has lived along the trail to Brooklyn. A regular Kill Whitey partygoer, she tried the conventional (that is, non-hipster) hip-hop clubs but found the men "really hard-core." In this vastly whiter scene, Casady said that "it's a safe environment to be freaky."'

Who do you think that could be making such horrifyingly non-worldly, ignorant and racist generalizations about black men? Surprise! It's none other than **Bianca Casady**, one-half of sister duo **Co**

coRosie

, whose debut album won them high praise from Pitchforkmedia and *The Wire*, and whose recent album,

Noah's Ark

, was called "hypnotic" and "angelic-sounding" by Allmusic.com.

[My recent review](#)

for Brainwashed noted that the album sounded like "a collection of willful, calculated eccentricities clumsily juxtaposed with each other."

CocoRosie may indeed be an excruciatingly awful band, but making shitty music, much as it pains me to admit it, is not a crime. What really concerns me is what is suggested by Bianca's statement in the *Post*, and what the content of the article says about this culture.

The priveleged young men and women populating these Williamsburg parties are no doubt

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destined for leadership roles in government and industry, and while they imagine that they are intelligent and worldly, they are actually quite clearly playing into generations-old patterns of exploitation and bigotry against minorities. They are so caught up in our corporate consumer culture's epic detachment from anything and everything remotely denoting sincerity, they miss the fact that what they are engaged in is **GENUINELY RACIST**. You've no doubt heard their arguments: If you are offended by our racist characterizing and quasi-blackface mockery of black culture, you're just missing the irony. When we do these seemingly racist things, we're really making fun of those people over there, the ones that are really racist. Go watch Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* for a quick primer in this form of defensive racism.

The notion that black culture is merely here for our amusement, and can readily be co-opted, distorted and parodied without fear of impropriety is an offensive one. In fact, the argument that some would make - that these kinds of borderless, cross-cultural hybrids actually represent the joining together of worlds - is even more offensive. When Ms. Casady says that she can't go to black clubs because the men are "really hardcore," she is simply reinforcing centuries of "Mandingo"-esque stereotypes about swarthy, oversexed black males with voracious sexual appetites and superhuman potency. It is this particular, insidious form of racism that led Petrine Archer-Straw to write her landmark culture study [Negrophilia](#), that exposed the fetishization and commandeering of African art and culture among the avant-garde of 1920s Paris.

But much more disturbing even than the racist ramifications of Ms. Casady's statement is the general trend towards hip detachment, nihilism, and the ironic embrace of consumer culture among her generation, and the racist stereotyping to which this inevitably leads. Many of today's suburban white youth are already too plugged into the mainstream to even conceive of the message I'm trying to get across here, so successful have media and corporations become at convincing us that nothing really matters, and everything is permissible within its appropriate market-tested demographic. Cultural critic and neo-Marxist Fredric Jameson argues that the "postmodern" does not represent some new and innovative movement in culture, but rather, it is the final dying gasp of true culture, and the final surrender to the corporate-controlled media and rampant consumerism that surrounds us. I'm afraid that he is exactly correct.

What do you do if you're inundated with advertising messages urging you to consume? Just consume, but do so with a winking sense of "irony" and "detachment," so that you don't have to feel like you just sold your soul. What do you do when it seems like an election has been stolen, and an illegitimate leader installed in the White House? Just realize that it's all pointless anyway, just a big joke, and head out to the mall. What do you do if you are inundated on all sides with signs that there is systematized, government-sponsored subjugation of poor people and minorities? When all media outlets give you is stereotyped, compartmentalized images of black people? Just go to a "Kill Whitey" party, thrust your hips and shake your ass just like you saw those black girls do on MTV. Wouldn't that be so cool and funny? Mom, can I borrow the Audi?