

“The Quad” from a PWI Perspective



The PWI vs. HBCU debate has been a huge topic for years, especially within the Black community. When deciding where to go to college years ago, I had two choices: HBCU (historically Black college/university) Tennessee State University or a PWI (predominantly white institution) Middle Tennessee State University.

Both of my parents went to community college, so the mere thought of me going to an actual university or college was enough for them.

At the time, I wasn't aware of the difference between the two, so my decision was based specifically on education purposes, and the fact that I was further away from home (you can't buy independence.)

I chose a PWI, while a vast majority of my high school friends went to an HBCU. Oftentimes, we'd meet up during breaks and have discussions comparing our schools—campus life, professors, and overall environment. It was different, but not far off.

I always admired the relationships my friends developed with their

professors and the types of events geared towards African Americans on a regular basis. There was a sense of family on their campus that wasn't prevalent on mine. It's seemed as though their professors were genuinely invested in their education after graduation, compared to some of my professors.

The events were somewhat the same. I mean, my school had African American-focused events, but mostly during Black History Month or when a Greek organization hosted a week.



The new BET series *The Quad* doesn't show any of these aspects, as least not from a PWI perspective. Only four episodes in, we've seen – rape, infidelity, murder, sexism, blackmail – a negative portrayal of HBCUs, and that's just a few.

The show even had the president of the university go a local strip club to ask alumni for donation. I know it's Atlanta, but really though? I have yet to

get the true essence of an HBCU described by my friends. Since airing, the show has received quite the backlash from HBCU staff and graduates.

Andrades Byas went to an HBCU and she calls the show “unrealistic.” She has high hopes the show would be reflective of the classic [A Different World](#). “It doesn’t show the sisterhood, brotherhood and all the good things you learn about your culture and being around people like you striving to be excellent. It was trying to bring harm or sorrow to HBCU’s.”

The show perpetuates a society of dysfunction from the school board to the marching band to the football team and misplaced urgencies. It also insinuates that sex, alcohol, music and low self-esteem run HBCU campuses. Didn’t BET have a show like this before?

Carmil Nicole, a recent graduate of Tennessee State University, said the show is far from *College Hill*, though it was reality TV, in a [Facebook comment](#). She agreed that it should also reflect *A Different World*.



“Those students appeared to be just students trying to learn as much as they could while away from home and we saw the characters change in front of us and we grew with them through the lessons they learned and their romances and current events at the time with the riots in California then and their reaction to the election then,” Nicole said.

Shaw University graduate Pam Robinson hasn’t watched the show but from

what she was told she “made a wise choice by refraining from viewing what apparently just perpetuates the stereotypical foolishness that we are working so hard to disprove.”

TSU Graduate Brandon Bather said the series gets more and more stereotypical every week, in a Facebook [comment](#). “I feel like the people that wrote it didn’t attend an HBCU but only heard about it. I keep trying to get it to relate to TSU but it just falls short.”

Hampton University President William Harvey even wrote a letter to BET’s Deborah Lee asserting the show hurts HBCUs. Lee’s response was that the show was simply “fiction.”

When it comes to Black entertainment, BET has a way of getting it really right or really wrong. In this case, according to fellow HBCU graduates and one HBCU president, they’ve got it wrong. There’s good and bad in every institution. The bad should never outweigh the good, but what can we expect from BET?

Whether or not this can be attributed to the writers or to BET, we all know movies or shows on BET do not always accurately portray our culture.

The fact of the matter is HBCUs are more than a learning institution. HBCUs provide a supportive curriculum and atmosphere tailored towards African Americans full of empowerment and diversity, in the sense of diverse backgrounds and cultural experiences. Some students attend HBCUs because of the uniqueness they provide on campus and to also continue a legacy in their family. Brandon Bather graduated from TSU, as did his parents, and his younger brothers.

But don’t get it twisted, I’m not ashamed of my PWI – Middle Tennessee State – but I can definitely see the lack of similarities between TV and reality on *The Quad*.

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