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December 12, 2007 @ 12:23 pm

The Perfect Holiday: Gabrielle Union

by: Natalie Guevara

The lovely star of the Perfect Holiday discusses her role, plus issues a plea to black gossip blogs: let's raise up!

Incredibly poised and articulate, Gabrielle Union is as brassy as they come. Though she began her career starring in teen hits (*10 Things I Hate About You*, *Bring It On*), the last few years have seen her take on increasingly adult roles, including *The Perfect Holiday's* Nancy, a hardworking single mother of three in need of some holiday R&R and, yep, a special someone to kiss under the mistletoe. Up next, the actress shares her views on women in entertainment and those pesky blogs.

There's a lot of talk in the industry about the shortage of good parts for women. Throughout your career, however, you've continually played opinionated women who are smart and sexy.

Most of them have been written pretty strong, and for the most part I don't really respond to, like, victim scripts where women can't solve their own problems and somebody's gotta save them. I don't really go out for those and I tend to only respond to characters who have some sense. They don't need to be perfect. Imperfectly perfect with some flaws is kind of ideal, and a character I can respect. I respect the journey or the part that she plays in a larger morality tale. But yeah, everyone always asks that and it's like, "No, I just kinda don't like playing dumb people." I think we have enough of those! (Laughs)

When you were younger, who were some of the actors you looked up to?

Oh my gosh, I remember the episode that Vivica Fox starred in *90210*. I loved that show, but they didn't have anyone black on the show, and when Vivica played Brandon's neighbor and they got in a car accident, I was so excited to see not just an African American on primetime television, but a younger girl and a brown girl who looked like me. I thought, "Wow, if people think she's cute and attractive, maybe I have a chance." And growing up, seeing Nia Long and Regina King and, God, Salli Richardson, there are so many - Lela Rochon - that I was just like, "Wow, they're really doing it." They give you something to shoot for.

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Celeb of the Day



Jennifer Lopez

Rating: 3.1

Government Name:
Jennifer Lynn Lopez

Hometown: Bronx, New York

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You mention accomplished actresses like Regina King and Nia Long, but this industry is still very tough on women of color. How do you deal with that as you come across projects that you could have done?

I know a lot of people like to say, "They offered that to me" and "I should've done this" or "I could've done that," but whatever role I actually do in film are the only projects I speak of. Anything else I might've passed on or didn't get, I don't even talk about - because if it was mine, I would've shot it and it would've been done and I would be talking to you about it.

It's really hard. I can't lie and say, "Oh my God, everything changed when Halle won the Oscar!" or "Everything changed when Latifah got nominated!" It's a tough business, and you kinda sign up for that. You're hopeful, you know, for what we can start to create as an African American community of filmmakers and writers and actors and, you know, try to take more control over the funding of our films and the production of our films, but it's hard. Luckily, I'm fortunate to have a group of women like Nia Long and Regina King and Regina Hall who are my close, close friends who go through what I go through. We lean on each other, and we also lean on each other for jobs. It's not that crap-in-a-barrel mentality with us. We all try to push each other to work in projects that are coming up. There's enough for everybody, provided you stay positive and try to take as positive of an outlook as possible. It's hard though, I can't lie.

In your recent *Essence* interview, you touched on the media, mainly black-run blogs that spread rumors without checking facts. What can these outlets do differently if they don't have you or any entertainer per se to reach out to correctly?

It's like if you wrote for a major newspaper or a major magazine. If you can't substantiate your claims, you don't write them. We don't have enough black voices, [and] we certainly don't have enough people in entertainment who are trying to do good things for our community, so anytime you try to attack someone's character, you negate their voice for all the things that they're trying to do.

I come out and speak about African American sexual assault survivors and what we can do to provide support and help to those survivors. I talk about African Americans and breast cancer. But people aren't going to listen to those things if you are spreading lies and rumors, you know what I mean? It kinda negates all the good things that you do. It makes me want to just work harder and do more good, but it's frustrating and it makes a lot of people in my industry say, "Screw it! If I can't even get my own people to listen and not talk ill of me, what hope do I have for mainstream media?"

If you look at what Perez [Hilton] does - and I don't advocate for Perez, you know, he can write hurtful things about a lot of people - but what he does as a man of color, as a Latino, is he never dogs Latinos, ever. He actually breaks artists on his website. They can go from "Who the hell is that?" to Number One on iTunes in a day, just from what he says. So he's trying to uplift his own people. I mean, he dogs everybody else, but as a man of color, I applaud you. I can't dog you for not dogging your own people. He never says anything negative about Latinos, ever, and I just wish that we had more of that kind of "raise up" mentality and pulled each other up instead of dragging each other down. Especially like... If I got arrested, say whatever you want to say. If I had kids and left them in the car while I partied, or I got out of cabs showing all my private parts, you have every right to dog me. If I came out and dogged my own people, kill me in your blogs. But don't make things up! I do enough, and if you really got spies everywhere you'd know what I was doing, you wouldn't have to make things up. And if you don't know your facts, then just don't print them.

What got you excited about starring in *The Perfect Holiday*? What makes it stand out from other Christmas movies?

It's in the same vein as every other Christmas movie in the fact that we celebrate Christmas [and] we celebrate family. It's about people trying to find balance in their lives. The character Charlie Murphy plays is this hip-hop entrepreneur who needs to have a little more family time and a little less business, and I play this character named Nancy who has basically given up all [her] hopes and dreams and everything [she's] ever thought about wanting and put that all into [her] family, but a part of [her] life is sort of lacking. It's just about finding balance. You can find outside interests and not be a bad mom and not be a bad person. I always say, "A happy mom makes for happy kids." So, you know, it's just a great movie about balance, a great Christmas movie, and it just so happens to have people of color in it. But it's still about Christmas! (Laughs)

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