



Rewriting our story or how Disney's Little Mermaid became black...

When Disney unveiled the first images from "The Little Mermaid" motion pictures and I realized that Ariel, instead of being a redhead Caucasian girl, was afro-american, I thought to myself that Disney had lost its marbles. Then, a few days later, when I saw in a TV report a young black girl clapping her hands while watching the movie trailer and repeating cheerfully, "Mom, she's black! She's black!" delighted to see, after "The Princess and the Frog", a princess she could relate to, I thought that, in fact, I was the nutty one because all that made sense if it brought so much joy to children.

It was when Tinker Bell also became black and Puffin Books started rewriting, in the name of inclusion, Roald Dalh's books including "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", "Matilda" or even "The Witches", modifying certain passages of the writer's most famous stories for children and removing words such as "fat" or "dwarf", "cleaning lady" or even "mother and father" which were replaced by "parents", that I told myself that I was not just a white cranky old lady who had always been able to identify with fairy tales princesses but that something was indeed very wrong in the human kingdom.

I am totally convinced that it is important for each and every child to have heroes to identify with and that each of them, whether Black, Asian, Indian, Caucasian or Arab, must have heroes who look like them. I would find it just as natural that all ethnic types be respected with the mermaids who live on Peter Pan's island but why artificially "colorize" already existing strong archetypes rather than creating new, contemporary, inclusive ones, such as Tiana in "The Princess and the Frog",



Jasmine in "Aladdin", Mirabel in "Encanto" or even the Black Panther superhero from "Wakanda Forever", with which nowadays girls and boys can identify.

For reasons that escape me, crushed by a guilt that does not always belong to us, our whole society, carried away by some of its representatives, overcompensates for its "sins" of the past - without worrying too much about those of the present! - and tries to make amends with communities that were offended by their ancestors, mainly black when it comes to American people because, apart from Mulan and Pocahontas, Disney does not seem to be willing to reshape its heroines' faces with slanting eyes, Native Americans' high cheekbones or even to offer the homosexual community a gay Iron Man or Wonder Woman.

But, if we rewrite our history, how can we share our experience with future generations? How can we explain to them our collective mistakes, what they have taught us and how they allowed us to evolve towards a fairer and more egalitarian society - well, this is still very much a work in progress -? If we erase imperfections from our past, if we erase the works of art that are the witnesses of the path we took - and what right do we have to alter a representative of his own time artist's work by distorting what he sought to express? - on the pretext that our vision of the world has evolved? What then will remain as a trace of our existence? Are we so ashamed of who we are? And, if so, aren't we able to evolve and become better human beings rather than lying about who we once were?

I have bad news for us as a civilization: just because we erase the word "nigger" from the books written a century ago doesn't mean that police officers will stop killing men because of the color of their skin. And just because we replace the terms "father" and "mother" by "parents" in our books does not imply that there will be no more homophobic attacks in our schools and streets.

Rather than wanting to erase the past, let's build a future we can be proud of. Let's give our children a society in which they can evolve safely and become incredible human beings thanks to the heroes and values we provide to them. Let's assume who we are without forgetting who we were. Let's be a better version of ourselves and learn from a past that we cannot change even if the yesterday's princesses become black and offensive words are erased from our literature. Let's become a people proud of itself again rather than a shameful and mediocre one who is forced to appeal to collective amnesia to continue to exist. Let's become fair, benevolent and respectful when we look proudly at the path we took and the progress we made so far.

Each passing day desperately shows that we are a decadent civilization who has let go of the reins of its destiny and is gradually abandoning the human values on which it was built. Throughout History, many other civilizations, especially those of Antiquity, have endured the same fate and if, like headless chickens, we continue this mad race towards our destruction, we will simply be doomed to disappear, just like the others, only leaving redesigned works of art as traces of us. Isn't it sad? Now should perhaps be the time when we raise our heads and fight, each at our own scale, to show that we can be more than that, better than that, be the living examples of the values we believe in without ever giving them up. Let us have faith in who we are as human beings because we still have so many wonderful things to offer this



world and let us keep our gaze fixed on a horizon where everything is still and always will be to be created.