

Is 'Mary Poppins' racist and using blackface? Twitter is not having it

Cydney Henderson, USA TODAY Published 9:52 p.m. ET Feb. 4, 2019 | Updated 1:52 p.m. ET Feb. 5, 2019

A U.S. professor is deeming the classic 1964 film "Mary Poppins" racist, accusing [Julie Andrews](#) ([/story/life/entertainthis/2018/11/30/mary-poppins-julie-andrews-emily-blunt-were-new-moms/2159841002/](#)) of "blackening up" her face with soot while dancing with chimney sweeps.

In a New York Times op-ed called ["'Mary Poppins,' and a Nanny's Shameful Flirting With Blackface,"](#) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/movies/mary-poppins-returns-blackface.html>). Professor Daniel Pollack-Pelzner slammed the iconic dance scene where Poppins joins Dick Van Dyke's Bert on a rooftop for the song "Step In Time."

"When the magical nanny ... accompanies her young charges, Michael and Jane Banks, up their chimney, her face gets covered in soot, but instead of wiping it off, she gamely powders her nose and cheeks even blacker," Pollack-Pelzner wrote.

Related: [Julie Andrews and Emily Blunt were both new moms making 'Mary Poppins'](#) ([/story/life/entertainthis/2018/11/30/mary-poppins-julie-andrews-emily-blunt-were-new-moms/2159841002/](#))



Dick Van Dyke (Bert), Julie (Mary Poppins), Karen Dotrice (Jane Banks) and Matthew Garber (Michael Banks). (Photo: WALT DISNEY ENTERPRISES)

The Linfield College literature professor linked the scene to racism in [P.L. Travers' novels](#) ([/story/life/movies/2018/11/13/mary-poppins-returns-everything-we-know-musical-sequel/1985651002/](#)), which he claims "associate chimney sweeps' blackened faces with racial caricatures."

Pollack-Pelzner also took aim at naval officer Admiral Boom, who ordered his cannons fired at the "cheeky devils" on the roof after mistaking the dark figures of the chimney sweeps for "Hottentots," a racial slur.

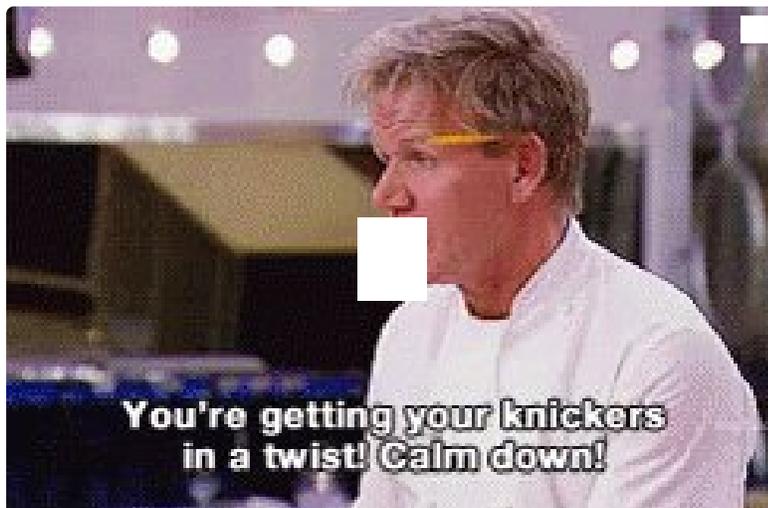
"These aren't really black Africans; they're grinning white dancers in blackface," he wrote. "It's a parody of black menace; it's even posted on a white nationalist website as evidence of the film's racial hierarchy."

'Mary Poppins Returns': [Everything we know about the musical sequel](#) ([/story/life/movies/2018/11/13/mary-poppins-returns-everything-we-know-musical-sequel/1985651002/](#))



Pollack-Pelzner's observations didn't sit well with many fans of the classic family film.

@Sherri_Garver questioned: "Ummm Seriously? #MaryPoppins is now in the Cross hair? THEY WERE CHIMNEY SWEEPERS!!! NOT "BLACK FACE IMPERSONATORS."



Garvera
@Sherri_Garver

Ummm Seriously? #MaryPoppins is now in the Cross hair?
THEY WERE CHIMNEY SWEEPERS!!! NOT "BLACK FACE
IMPERSONATORS"

18 7:44 PM - Feb 4, 2019

[See Garvera's other Tweets](#)

"Mary Poppins wasn't flirting with black face! It was soot in their faces from being a chimney!" user @Jencon1978 added. "Stopped spreading racism claims on non racist things like this!"

**Jennifer Conway**
@jencon1978

Replying to @soledadobrien

Mary Poppins wasn't flirting with black face! It was soot in their faces from being a chimney!!! Stopped spreading racism claims on non racist things like this!!!

165 12:49 PM - Jan 31, 2019

[27 people are talking about this](#)

@AmandaEliasch said it's the, "end of the world when Hollywood thinks Mary Poppins is racist."

**Amanda Eliasch nickname The Countess Ratbag**
@amandaeliasch

End of the world when Hollywood thinks Mary Poppins is racist

60 12:08 AM - Feb 4, 2019

[16 people are talking about this](#)

And user @coldxman said, "People are searching for racism like it's oil. ... If it were a literal commodity, however, it's value would be through the roof at this moment in history."

**Coleman Hughes**
@coldxman

People are searching for racism like it's oil. Racism has become a commodity, figuratively speaking. If it were a literal commodity, however, it's value would be through the roof at this moment in history. standard.co.uk/news/world/us-...

3,942 12:53 AM - Feb 4, 2019

US academic sparks Mary Poppins 'blackface' row

The classic family film Mary Poppins has been branded racist by a US academic who accuses her of 'blacking up' with soot while standard.co.uk

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The Emily Blunt-led 2018 sequel "[Mary Poppins Returns](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2018/11/13/mary-poppins-returns-everything-we-know-musical-sequel/1985651002/)" ([/story/life/movies/2018/11/13/mary-poppins-returns-everything-we-know-musical-sequel/1985651002/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2018/11/13/mary-poppins-returns-everything-we-know-musical-sequel/1985651002/)) is currently nominated for several [Academy Awards](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/academy-awards/2019/01/22/oscar-2019-meet-top-nominees/2603509002/). ([/picture-gallery/life/movies/academy-awards/2019/01/22/oscar-2019-meet-top-nominees/2603509002/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/academy-awards/2019/01/22/oscar-2019-meet-top-nominees/2603509002/)) including best costume design, production design and original score, as well as best original song for "The Place Where Lost Things Go."

Review: [Emily Blunt is spit-spot-on as the iconic nanny of 'Mary Poppins Returns' \(/story/life/movies/2018/12/12/mary-poppins-returns-review-emily-blunt-endlessly-charming-iconic-nanny/2278478002/\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2018/12/12/mary-poppins-returns-review-emily-blunt-endlessly-charming-iconic-nanny/2278478002/)

[Fullscreen](#)

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