

A TOURIST IN SHONDALAND: HOW I GREW TO LOVE SCANDAL

JANUARY 30, 2015 BY [ARIEL LECONTE](#) (EDIT)



If a week ago you asked me where Fitz and Olivia met, why Abbie left her her husband, or who Quinn had slept with, I would have given you a blank stare. You see up until a week ago, I had NEVER watched an episode of Scandal. Actually I had essentially refused, because I just couldn't get past the Black mistress of a white president thing. Well, when I got the chance to go to a Scandal watch party with the some high level bloggers hosted by one of my favorites, [Luvvie Ajayi](#), queen of all that is Scandal, I decided this was my opportunity to sit down and watch it from the very beginnning in exactly one week. I began as a tourist in Shondaland, but after binge watching 3 and a half seasons worth of Olivia Pope, red wine, and popcorn, I finally have enough to decide if Scandal was worth my watch after all.

MY THOUGHTS BEFORE WATCHING SCANDAL

Why Are We Even Re-Visiting Sally and Thomas

Like...Linda, honey, listen. I felt very strongly about the fact that this show centered around a Black woman who was sleeping with the white president. For all intents and purposes it was the thing that automatically turned me off from the show. Sometimes, I know that I can be more sensitive than most when it comes to seeing racial patterns repeat themselves, but I mean seriously, it's like it was ripped from the pages.

You're Rooting For The Other Woman

The idea that media was tripping over themselves to congratulate Black women for making it to prime time representation meant absolutely nothing, because primetime's golden Black girl was... well a whore. Everyone is rooting for a whore, the other woman, the cheater, the philanderer. Again I can't be excited that media finally "let us in" when we're given a role that is still so stereotypical.

It HAD To Be A White Guy

I also have this issue with pairing a strong Black role with a white man. Not because I have qualms with interracial dating, but because it's so rare that we see two strong Black counterparts in primetime television. There always seems to be half of us, typically paired with a white partner. Not to mention the primary power still remains white, which I suppose is realistic, but hardly a cause to celebrate.

I was happy that Shonda Rhimes was busting down doors and owning the Thursday night lineup, but I was still deeply frustrated at the thought that she was in fact doing so by consistently having strong Black female leads, whose storylines revolved around white Men.

MY THOUGHTS AFTER WATCHING SCANDAL

Olivia Pope is Brilliant, "Livi" However Is An Idiot

I get it now, I do. Watching Olivia Pope in action is like a shot of adrenaline, she's so masterful, and brilliant, and commanding. I wanted to be Olivia Pope. In those first few moments of watching I wanted to be Olivia Pope, she was so effortless in every way. I wanted all of her clothes, I wanted to change my diet to popcorn and red wine, and I wanted to run my own Pope and Associates. Olivia Pope was perfection, until of course Fitz came into the picture. As soon as this man entered it was like wonderland melted away into the gutter, he made my stomach churn. More than anything, because this brilliant and independent woman, who can fix anything, is completely controlled by her "love" for this man, and makes all the stupid decisions of a teenage girl whose pituitary gland has taken over. It's disheartening to see that Olivia's tragic flaw is a man, and frankly not an amazing one at that.

Fitz And Olivia Are Not The Stuff Dreams Are Made Of

This couple is anything but a romantic epic, or tragic love story; they're just tragic. Their tragedy doesn't come from the fact that they can't be together but instead comes from what I think is a lack of love and a sense of ownership. I don't think that Fitz loves Olivia, I think Fitz wants to own Olivia. He's selfish and possessive and turns into a child with his favorite toy when it comes to Olivia. I don't think that he is so often overcome with such strong emotion for Olivia as much as I believe he is a selfish and prideful child who throws epic and nearly violent tantrums when he doesn't get his way. While I believe that Olivia "makes him better" in the sense that she's so good at what she does she can't help but improve him, I don't feel their relationship moves past passion. There is this deep innate sexual tension that blooms between the two of them, it's very...carnal. Fitz doesn't seem capable of expressing himself with Olivia sans sex, his hands are always on her, he always steps forward to use his lips and hands to disarm and overpower her. Their sex scenes are almost painful to watch, because they seem like this deep sad release, I half expect Olivia to cry every time. When I hear that twinkly music they reserve for the moments where Fitz gazes into Olivia's eyes, I feel the contents of my stomach bubble. I do not root for this relationship, sometimes I want to reach out and hand Olivia the number to a shrink.

Olivia Can't Make It Work With A Black Guy

This fact saddens me, because as I've said before I want to see a Black primetime power couple in this capacity so badly, but for some reason Shonda just will not let Olivia have a true Black love interest. Her relationship with the senator who asked her to marry him, twice, was a fluke and it is almost insulting to call it a relationship. Olivia needs...dysfunction, and danger, and apparently pain, since that is what she keeps getting from both Jake and Fitz. Which is sad, but realistic in the sense that a hero has to have a flaw. Olivia can't be absolutely perfect, and her flaw isn't white men, it's bad men.

The Screwed Up Characters Are The Best Ones

I know that Papa Pope is the devil incarnate, but I love that man. He is so brilliant and he drops so much knowledge on Olivia that she was too wrapped up in Jake and Fitz to really appreciate. Huck's puppy act is so entirely believable and lovable and affable even when he turns into a psycho teeth pulling, leg drilling killer, I still have a soft spot for him. Mellie is a victim, I really don't care what anyone has to say. Mellie gets no love, literally, like no one loves Mellie, and I feel for her, because we all want love.

All in all, I think that I can enjoy *Scandal* because it is no longer the singular mainstream primetime representation of Black women. Black television is winning right now, and I'll probably be writing about that in the coming weeks, because I have the leisure of picking which leading lady of color I want to talk about