

Stormzy - Misquoting and Misrepresenting Us

“The Reaction To Stormzy's Comments On Britain's Racism Only Proves Him Right”

“On Sunday morning, I woke up after a decent lie-in and break from Twitter, signed into my account and saw that Stormzy was trending. Why? Because he had called out parts of the UK media for misquoting his comments on racism.

During an interview with an Italian newspaper, La Repubblica, the 26-year-old rapper was asked if Britain was still racist, to which he affirmatively replied: “Yes, 100%.” The comment was picked up by numerous UK media outlets.

Some platforms, including The Sun, Sky News, The Standard and ITV reported that he claimed the “UK is 100% racist”. Fuelled by the misleading headline, trolls were swift to condemn Stormzy and hurl abuse in his direction.

Vitriol included the notion that he should be “grateful” to be living in the UK as opposed to Ghana where his mother hails from. Classic racist stuff.

Meanwhile, the rapper’s critics argue that racism isn’t a problem in this country. You couldn’t make this up.

As irony would have it, that afternoon news broke that Spurs fans had been making monkey gestures to Black Chelsea players during a match. That’s the umpteenth example of racism in football that we’ve

heard this year and firmly supports the point Stormzy made in his interview: racism is a serious problem in the UK.

From the Windrush Scandal to post Brexit referendum increase in racist incidents and everything in between, we see examples of just how entrenched racism is – almost to the point of normalcy – in the UK every single day. This isn't just a figment of Black people's imaginations and many are tired of being gaslit into arguing that fact.

Inequalities against Black people in the UK are stark and far-reaching. Because of racism, Black people are more likely to get excluded from school, more likely to be arrested, more likely to bear the brunt of austerity, likely to die sooner, more likely to go to prison, less likely to get a job after university, likely to be paid less than their white counterparts if they do, more likely to be sectioned yet less likely to access mental health services, more likely to die from childbirth and pregnancy complications. The list goes on and on; how much time do you have?

So I want to make it clear that questioning the existence of racism in the UK should not form part of any legitimate debate. While denial and deflection around the matter rages on, it continues to thrive whether people come out with nasty slurs – at football matches or in columns written by our prime minister – or not.

Now, look, I do not know the specific reasons why numerous newsrooms misquoted Stormzy – but the fact that this happened puts the lack of newsroom diversity under scrutiny once again.

After all: UK journalism is 94% white, according to the Sutton Trust, with privileged men often making the decisions about what is published and how news is framed. It is fair to ask the question: what would coverage of Stormzy's quotes have looked like if those newsrooms were more ethnically diverse, with more Black people in not just junior but senior positions? Even if it was a simple mistake, would more Black staffers have taken a more nuanced and careful approach, mindful of the shitstorm that would kick off if things went wrong?

Privilege means that those who aren't directly affected by racism are afforded the luxury of either not seeing it or, worse, choosing not to. And, in this case, it gives newsrooms carte blanche to misquote Stormzy's statement, with no real consequences even after amendments have been made... or called for.

While ITV has amended its headline, removed the tweet containing the old headline and issued an apology of sorts, publications such as the Evening Standard and The Sun had yet to do so as of Sunday evening.

I don't know how this whole furore has impacted Stormzy. But I do know that there is considerable evidence for the impact of racism on mental health and Stormzy has previously been very vocal about his battle with depression.

Throughout Sunday afternoon into the evening, I kept wondering how all of this had made him really feel. Because, as much as we have a collective tendency to elevate celebrities to god-like status, Stormzy

is a human being with actual feelings. He is capable of experiencing pain and reacting to it as much as the next person.

So it angered me to see a sea of judgemental tweets and commentary, lambasting him for reacting angrily to being misquoted (telling offending media platforms to “suck my dick” and accusing platforms of “deliberately spinning his words”).

I watched one person’s vlog in which they cited Michelle Obama’s quote: “When they go low, we go high.”

But Stormzy isn’t Michelle Obama and this ain’t the White House. I am not endorsing his comments because I can’t – Jamaicans have a saying that “who feels it, knows it”, and only Stormzy knows how he feels and has a right to feel the way he does – but I do think most reasonable people can empathise with feeling frustrated.

When one feels like they’re being taken for a prick, one reacts accordingly and if one is going to give the offending party a piece of one’s mind, one does it in their chosen vernacular.

“Suck my dick” is a standard insult among young people where we’re from – south London. It’s coarse, it is real and it is not crumpets and jam language. Far worse, blatantly racist things have been said by Britain’s prime minister, but we are where we are. And we are who we are.

A few weeks ago, chancellor Michael Gove told TalkRadio that Stormzy – who had backed Jeremy Corbyn over Boris Johnson – was a better rapper than a political analyst. This was dog whistle

message – “stay in your lane, rapper” – was received, loud and clear.

“I think we again know that Stormzy, when he took to the stage at Glastonbury wearing a stab vest, he made clear what his political views were then,” Gove added with startling chutzpah. It is well established that middle class drug users bear huge responsibility for the knife crime epidemic sweeping London – Gove recently admitted to snorting coke when he was around Stormzy’s age. More than just cheeky, that’s privilege exemplified; the freedom to throw stones when you live in a glass house.

Not long after his offending statements about Stormzy, Gove tweeted the rapper’s song lyrics in what was perceived as a further dig at the rapper. Responding to this, Stormzy told The Guardian: “They do it to young people, they do it to black people, they do it to rappers, they do it to entertainers: ‘Just shut up and rap.’ Stay in your lane. They just look at me and say: ‘No.’ They reduce us to whatever they need us to be and dismiss it.”

As I said: message received. Is it any wonder Stormzy’s had enough and cussed two clart? We’re all tired.

Mindful of the failure of some media to hold Boris Johnson to account for his anti-Black racist statements and mass, Black, working-class disappointment with the Conservatives’ landslide victory in the election (bar some), morale is low and many a Black person is pissed off about racism in Britain. Stormzy was correct in pointing out the facts.

And, I tell you, the vicious onslaught against him only speaks volumes about where we are as a country and proves that he was right.”

Source: Huffington Post

Link:

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/stormzy-britain-racist_uk_5dffe9c7e4b0b2520d0cd1cc?guccounter=1