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Anna-lyizing the Bachelor: Is It Time to Say Goodbye to the Bachelor Franchise?

Anna Popp, News Editor

While this column started with me divulging the weekly tea from each episode from this season of the Bachelor, this historic season has taken a truly unfortunate turn. Last week, I discussed the issues surrounding blatant acts of racism within Bachelor Nation, and, as the rest of Matt James' season unfolds in just a few more episodes, it is impossible to ignore the recent events surrounding Rachael Kirkconnell and the entire Bachelor franchise.

James came out with his first statement since the evidence of racist behaviors erupted online.

"The reality is that I'm learning about these situations in real time, and it has been devastating and heartbreaking to put it bluntly," James said in an Instagram post. "Chris' failure to receive and understand the emotional labor that my friend Rachel Lindsay was taking on by graciously and patiently explaining the racist history of the Antebellum South, a painful history that every American should understand intimately, was troubling, and painful to watch."

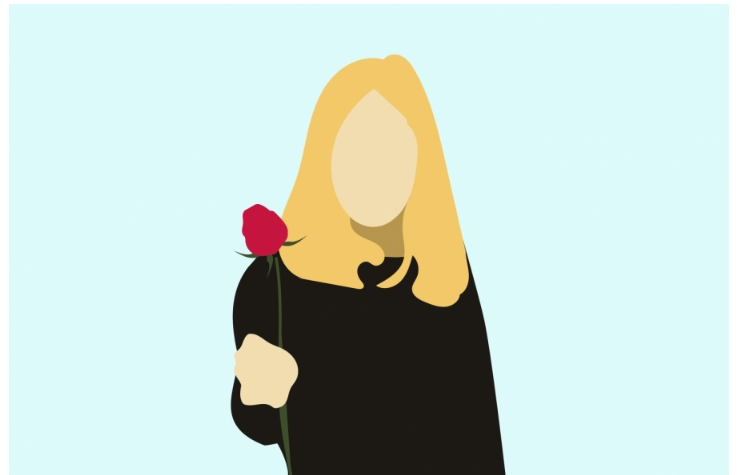
James continued his statement, adding how clear it is that there are much bigger issues of institutional racism within the Bachelor franchise and the lack of accountability within the show, as they have continuously done a terrible job in addressing the racism that has occurred throughout the years.

Although many couples inevitably break up after a season, I do believe that James had every intention of leaving the show with his forever partner. James' statement was vague—I am guessing he can't spoil how the season ends—but I wouldn't be surprised if Kirkconnell did in fact receive his final rose last fall.

James noted in his statement that the events that have recently occurred surrounding Kirkconnell are "heartbreaking." He concluded his statement with an ending that could also shed light on how his season ends.

"I will continue to process this experience, and you will hear more from me in the end. My greatest prayer is that this is an inflection point that results in real and institutional change for the better," James concluded.

Based on James' statement, I am certain that Kirkconnell—a frontrunner since the beginning—stole James' heart and received his last rose. While I am unsure if there was a proposal at the end of the final episode, I think he left the show with Kirkconnell by his side. However, there is absolutely more to the story since James added in his statement that he is not done speaking out about the matter.



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Although James and Kirkconnell may have ended up together, I do not think they are together anymore as of recently. I can't imagine James staying with her after the accusations and acts of racism surrounding Kirkconnell. At the very beginning, James expressed the pressure he felt as the first Black Bachelor in the franchise history, and there are no words to encapsulate the ways in which the franchise has failed James and other BIPOC members of Bachelor Nation.

The amount of errors the franchise had made over the years in terms of casting shows the system currently in place is terrible. If the producers had done a bit more research into Kirkconnell—not even that much—she wouldn't have been cast. At least, I would hope she would not have been cast. The franchise needs to seriously reevaluate and work on their vetting process for contestants.

If Kirkconnell and James aren't in fact together anymore, I would be deeply saddened for James and his other leading ladies. The other two women left in James' top three going into Fantasy Suites next week are Michelle Young and Bri Springs--both have been my personal favorites since the beginning of the season.

Michelle Young and Bri Springs are the other two contestants in James' top three, and I am really hoping Young would be James' final rose.

All hopeful wishes and romance aside, this controversy surrounding the Bachelor franchise sheds light onto issues much bigger than what we, as viewers, see at the surface level. As Chris Harrison reflects and steps away from his role in the franchise, perhaps it's time for ABC and the entire franchise to think deeply about the harm they have caused the BIPOC community. Let's face it, no one even finds love on this show and it's causing much more harm than good at this point. Representation does not guarantee equity, and the franchise has gone so many steps back in the wrong direction, it might be time for them to quit while they are most certainly not ahead.