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11-30-2022

2022-11-30 World Cup Controversy: Should Qatar Have Been Given the Big Stage?

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Recommended Citation

Hagar, Ashley and Kidane, Simon, "2022-11-30 World Cup Controversy: Should Qatar Have Been Given the Big Stage?" (2022). *The Spectator Online*. 829.
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/spectator-online/829>

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“Avatar 2: The Way of The Water” Report [Spoilers Ahead]

Hisham Bensaadat, Staff Reporter

Amidst the stacked 2022 film releases, *Avatar 2: The Way of Water*, the sequel to 2009 box-office breaking *Avatar*, was one of the most anticipated. *Avatar* takes place in an alien world called Pandora, inhabited by an alien race known as the Na’vi and follows a paralyzed human who falls in love with a Na’vi and fights to secure Pandora’s future. Human/Na’vi hybrids, known as Avatars, link to human minds in order to gain mobility on the land.

After its release, “The Way of Water” was hit with a wave of backlash concerning some of its characters and the cultural appropriation within their characterizations. Towards the middle of the movie, when a new race of Na’vi were shown, reviews found uncanny similarities between these Water Na’vis and African-American and Pacific Islander cultures.



Madison Oswalt

Arianna Gonzales, a first year communications major at Seattle University does not think that the cultural appropriation within the film can be justified simply because it takes place on a different planet.

“I understand that this [cultural appropriation controversy] has been a big issue within the movie,” Gonzales said. “As a Hawaiian, I can see how it can be perceived as cultural appropriation, and I believe it’s an issue more people should be talking about.”

Additionally, many Indigenous and Native American people spoke out against the movie, with Native Americans calling to boycott the movie and its director James Cameron for the “anti-indigenous rhetoric” that both *Avatar: The Way of Water* and its prequel contain.

The dialogue surrounding the controversial nature of the film intensified when Cameron’s old comments about Native Americans began to resurface. When talking about the colonization and displacement many Native American tribes experienced, Cameron commented that they should have “fought a lot harder.” This angered many Native American and Indigenous peoples and was one of the main reasons for the call to boycott the movie.

Initially, *Avatar* was well received and gradually solidified itself as an important chapter in the history of modern media, becoming the highest grossing movie of all time. Over time, its reception has become divisive.

Talks about creating a sequel came almost immediately after the release of *Avatar*, but another 13 years passed before *Avatar: The Way of The Water* hit theaters. The long period between *Avatar* and its sequel’s release had fans skeptical about the quality of the movie.

When *Avatar: The Way of Water* eventually came out, it boasted the longest run-time of any movie in 2022, clocking in at three hours and 11 minutes. The initial reception was mixed. Some fans said the movie had no plot and dragged on, while others enjoyed the film. *Avatar: The Way of Water* earned over \$1.19 billion internationally, surpassing *Spiderman: No Way Home* as the highest grossing film. Emma Weaver, a second-year environmental science major at Seattle U, wasn't impressed by director Cameron's sequel.

"I thought '*Avatar: The Way of Water*' was very similar to its prequel," Weaver said. "There were exact phrases taken from the first one, and it didn't bring anything new to the table. Followed by its plot or lack thereof, the only thing I can really say was good about *Avatar: The Way of Water* was the CGI."

Alexis Calonge, a first-year communications major at Seattle University, differing from Weaver, enjoyed the movie but thought it fell victim to its long run time.

"After watching the first *Avatar*, I definitely thought it was a good sequel, but it was very lengthy, and since many of the movie theater showtimes were late at night, I started falling asleep towards the end of the movie," Calonge said.

Avatar: The Way of Water has garnered a lot of controversy since its release, both for its nonexistent plot and absurdly long run-time as well as its disservice and insensitive portrayals of Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples. *Avatar: The Way of Water* and its prequel remain major chapters in modern day cinema thanks to innovative CGI and the major box office earnings that cemented both movies as some of the highest grossing movies of all time.