

# Why Is It Offensive?

History of Blackface, Modern-Day Cultural Appropriation

## Handout One: Blackface and The Abolitionist Movement



- There is no question that blackface is associated with racism and oppression.
- Ironically, blackface performances gained popularity with abolitionists (people who wanted to get rid of slavery).
- In 1832, Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice performed the character, Jim Crow, in London. After this, abolitionists in both the U.S. and the U.K. used blackface as a way to promote the end of slavery.
- In one blackface show, the master of a slave went to Hell after he died. There, he was forced to perform the same tasks he assigned to his slaves.
- One reason White urban audiences enjoyed blackface was because it allowed them to catch a glimpse of what they thought was authentic African American life, behavior, singing, and dancing.
- Blackface performances associated with the abolitionist movement emphasized the suffering of slaves.
- According to historians, abolitionists’ displays of pity for slaves in these performances was highly condescending.

Source: [University of South Florida](#)

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