

# Why Is It Offensive?

History of Blackface, Modern-Day Cultural Appropriation

## Handout Four: African American Blackface Performers



- Most African American blackface performers were born in Southern cities after the Civil War.
- Black artists sought out these performance opportunities because it was often their only chance to get ahead socially and financially.
- Many of them left the South and traveled to the West and New York City. There, their “authentic Blackness” was advertised as a selling point to Northern theater-goers.
- Despite the fact that they were Black, they also wore additional make-up to darken the skin.
- These blackface performers, however, found subtle ways to insert political commentary into their shows.
- They were also keenly aware of how they presented themselves off-stage and intentionally conducted themselves in ways that counteracted their onstage characters.

Source: [University of South Florida](#)

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