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Meet Dr. Misse Harris: Model And Social Activist Who Is Taking Her Quest For Diversity To Television

EXCLUSIVE**POPWRAPPED***June 4, 2014 - No comments*★★★★★ *5 (2 votes)*[MisseHarris.com](#)**Gloria Ayee****Staff Writer**[@GloriaYAyee](#)

In early 2014, ABC's *The Bachelor* appeared to have addressed its "diversity problem" when Juan Pablo Galavis was cast as the first non-White bachelor. Critiques of the show were unimpressed, however, because Galavis, a Venezuelan born in New York, "fits the mold" of every bachelor that was cast before him. The issue of diversity on *The Bachelor* continues to remain a relevant topic.

Misee Harris, a native of Tennessee, gained national attention in 2013 when she launched a social media campaign to become the first Black “Bachelorette” on the popular American reality dating show. By all accounts, Harris, a pediatric dentist, model, philanthropist and entrepreneur, appears to be a suitable candidate for the lead role of the bachelorette. I recently spoke with Misee Harris, in an exclusive interview for *PopWrapped*, to learn more about her aspirations to become the “Bachelorette,” her work as a dentist, and her new mouthguard line.

ABC’s *The Bachelor/Bachelorette* franchise has been on air for a combined total of 28 seasons. *The Bachelor* first aired in 2002, but up until Season 18 when Galavis was cast as the bachelor, no non-Caucasian person had been cast in the leading role of “bachelor” or “bachelorette.” This obvious lack of diversity on the show has resulted in accusations of racism (including a class-action lawsuit alleging discriminatory practices) being leveled against the shows producers. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* back in March 2011, producer Mike Fleiss addressed these allegations [here](#), stating that people of color did not readily come to the show’s casting calls. According to Fleiss, the producers have had “to wedge African-American chicks in there!” He explained, “We always want to cast for ethnic diversity, it’s just that for whatever reason, they don’t come forward. I wish they would.”

Enter Dr. Misee Harris who is on a mission to improve the way that Black women are portrayed on television specifically, and in the media in general. Harris has been a fan of *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* for many years. In a recent article [published](#) in *The Huffington Post*, Harris explains how she was cast as a contestant on *The Bachelor* in 2013, but decided not to participate in the show. Harris quickly realized it would not be in her best interest to leave her job to be on a show in which she was being cast simply to fill a quota. She did not want to be “the token Black girl who gets voted off in the first round,” and was more interested in using her platform to represent Black women in the best possible light.


Harris started a petition to be the first Black bachelorette and was surprised when the campaign went viral. She describes her campaign as “a call-to-action” for Hollywood executives and television and film producers in order to address negative stereotypes of Black women in the media.

Harris has stated in multiple interviews that she does not want her skin color to define her or the perceptions that people have of her. I asked Dr. Harris to comment on the fact that since her campaign to be the first Black bachelorette is based on the premise that the franchise has not been open to minorities, viewers have no choice but to see the racial dynamics at play. Harris agrees, and says that even though she understands that everyone sees color first, she hopes that people will first recognize that she is an educated and successful woman. Harris notes that her campaign has received a lot of support from people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Although Harris is on a mission to change the face of *The Bachelor/Bachelorette* and bring diversity to the show, she remains a huge fan of the show and has many good things to say about her experiences during the casting process for *The Bachelor*.

Harris can already count herself as a role model for young people. From an early age, Harris knew that she wanted to be involved in the healthcare field in some way. With support from her family, she was able to achieve her dreams. Harris graduated with honors from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 2006. She earned a Doctorate of Dental Medicine degree from the University of Kentucky on 2011, and completed her residency in pediatric and sports dentistry with the University of Kentucky Pediatric Dentistry Residency Program. Harris then found a way to meld her professional career with her love for sports. She is now a successful, nationally recognized pediatric dentist who recently launched an athletic mouthguard line, ProFit Athletic Mouthguards.

In 2013, Misse Harris founded Project Smile, an organization that focuses on promoting self-esteem in children. Harris has also organized fundraisers to provide prom dresses to underprivileged high school students throughout the country. She continues to use her platform to further the conversation on diversity and representation of people of color in the media.

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