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White girls can't step

Thu, 03/18/2010 - 12:00am

Dirk Dickens | OW Contributor

Sprite step-off controversy uncovers troubled waters

If Spike Lee were to do a sequel to "White Men Can't Jump," it might be called "White Girls Can't Step," and the premise would be about Blacks underestimating White steppers instead of a White basketball player.

The basis of the film would be the

surprise win of a troop of White steppers from the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority at the 2010 Sprite Step Off—the largest stepping contest around. Their win set off a lot of buzz, both good and bad.

While the Zeta Tau Alpha girls' win had many Black folks cheering for them, there were also quite a few jeering them. Stepping is something steeped in African American fraternity and sorority culture. The jeers resulted from the perception of some Blacks that the girls were attempting to hijack or take over something that is theirs.

My Black brothers and sisters need to swallow their pride and just admit that the better team won that day. And I mean literally for a day, because after reviewing the results, discrepancies were found resulting in the Zeta girls tying for first place with the runner-ups from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. And for those who say stepping is a Black thing and nobody else can "play," why not just say, "I'm sorry, Blacks only."

As Black folks, we should know better.

As an African American born and raised in Los Angeles, and who was never in a fraternity, I'll admit that I don't follow stepping. My introduction to it was a step-off scene in the Spike Lee film "School Daze."

After hearing about the reaction to the Zeta girls winning this stepping competition, I watched a video of their performance on YouTube.com and thought they were great. The Alpha Kappa Alpha girls weren't bad either.

The Zeta girls came out with their cool Matrix outfits, fierce attitude and gave a highly synchronized and energetic competition. Based on the non-stop cheers and applause, the audience loved them. Sure, there was a novelty factor of race. But, it's one thing to watch some White girls give stepping a shot, it's another to see them throw down the way the Zeta girls did. It's no surprise to me that they were in contention for the title.

The backlash comes down to pride and ego. Some individuals can't handle the idea of Whites winning at something they think is a Black thing. Pride makes people do and say some crazy things.

Think about how bent out of shape men get when they get beat by women, especially in sports. It doesn't matter if the woman is better, it pisses the guy off, and they don't want to play anymore. A female friend of mine has lost a few dates because of this.

I doubt you'd hear from the Blacks currently up in arms, if the Zeta girls were just runner ups.

Should Blacks worry about Whites taking over stepping and rewriting its history to blur its true origins? I don't think so. Look at rapping. Aside from Eminem, the majority of artist excelling at it are Black and no one doubts where the art form originated from.

In any sport or art, people should welcome those who help push the envelope and raise the bar. That's hard to do, when you limit who can participate. There's much to be gained, when other races or ethnic groups take an interest in Black culture. Consider jazz for example.

Jazz is an art form that has its roots in Black culture. What would it be without the contributions of White artists like Anita O'Day, Stan Gets, and Cal Tjader to name a few?

The beauty of sports, dance and art is that they can be a means of bridging racial divides by enabling people to explore common interest and passions. Stepping shouldn't be any different.

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