

COVID-19's Impact on Geeks and Goblins

COVID-19 led to the cancellations of comic conventions all over the US. But San Diego Comic-Con treated fans to an online Comic-Con@Home event July 22-26, 2020.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, USA, July 26, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Being CEO of a virtual community, I have always been an advocate of online video technology and use of virtual conferences. As a reporter, having written about the annual comic convention in Phoenix, Arizona since its infancy many years ago, and being depressed but understanding, about its cancellation in 2020, I was excited to learn that the San Diego Comic-Con--the granddaddy of all comic conventions--was going to be accessible to everyone online via [Comic-Con@Home](#). But the stress afflicting the nation was still reflected in other ways during the event.

COVID-19 environment has shown that digital techniques do not work for every industry or reflect every interest. Sometimes, It became boring or sad to see the speakers, panelists and exhibitors try to generate excitement without the adoring crowds, the craziness of people who spend a year designing their Wookiee costumes, or the eagerness of kids anxious to spend their young life savings to buy a plastic light saber. The color, the noise, the zaniness did not translate to the small screen.

What was most striking to me was the stark and unintentional contrast of white male privilege to what is going on in Americans' lives today. Unlike, until recently, there was more than the one, historic "Black Panel" to attend at this year's Con. Women and people of color were represented in quite a few sessions throughout the weekend. Yes, all these speakers could be labelled "geeks," too. But their backgrounds, experiences, tone, priorities and their expressed emotions about comic conventions and the industry were often very different.

For example, several white male enthusiasts talked about their explicit memories of buying their first Comic-Con action hero. Toy executives expressed "empathy" for those fans who, in their lives, were so disappointed that the Con collectible for which they had waited in line for hours was sold out. They hoped this year, since there was no live Con, to provide "equity" for more fans to have access to buy special edition toys throughout the year.

Meanwhile, there were women discussing how the Harry Potter character Hermione became a role model for little Jewish girls, who had been teased about their long, kinky hair as anti-Semitism has ballooned in the US, or how the X-Men are great characters used to console children with special needs who are bullied in school, or if icons like JJ Rollins, who have vocalized prejudice and bias, should be still be revered.

Black artists, writers and animators expressed angst over being deluged with offers the past month from white firms offering them internships when they have been professionals in the business for years, or wondering if they are finally being valued for their talents or are just being considered temporary, token fads by corporations to the Black Lives Matter movement.

The past decade, San Diego Comic-Con seemed to have become captive of the rich, famous and connected, and only those, who "won" an opportunity in the lottery to spend lots of money on tickets and hotels, had a remote chance of attending. July 22-26, 2020 was a wonderful and appreciated opportunity given to all folks, particularly kids, to see workshops, exhibits and films for free. San Diego Comic-Con should be commended for its valiant effort.

There are many (equivalent to the "shut-up-and-dribble" NBA fans) who may not welcome change. I will be as happy as anyone when, hopefully, the wild and wonderful Wonder Women, Captain America- and Black Panther-costumed fans, geek dating, and zombie comedians return to live conventions throughout the US in 2021. But the pandemic and the campaign to dispel systematic racism and other "isms" impact all aspects of American life, even geeks and goblins. It will be interesting to see what impact, if any, serious revelations and lessons learned during the challenges of 2020, will have on the comic convention universe of the future.

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