

Privilege Includes Unearned Advantages That Are Highly Valued but Restricted to Certain Groups. Unearned advantages are those that someone receives by identifying or being born into a specific group. It is important to note that the groups who have received these advantages have not earned them due to their own hard work but rather their affiliation (e.g., being born into a wealthy family provides privileges that others do not have, such as accessing education as well as mental health and medical services).

Equally important to note is the reality that while some benefit from unearned advantages, others are victims of unearned disadvantage. Unearned entitlements are things of value that all people should have; however, they are often restricted to certain groups because of the values of the majority culture that influence political and social decisions. The example below illustrates this concept. Example: John (a boy) is perceived to understand science better than Jane (a girl). Although John and Jane are both in the same science class and have the same grades on their assignments and exams, because he's a boy, John's perceived superior understanding of science can become advantageous if he (rather than Jane) is encouraged to join science clubs. Over time, John's participation in various science clubs may lead to receiving better grades in science and improve his chances of being accepted into more rigorous and competitive classes and programs in the future. Privilege oppresses certain groups. As explained by Wildman and Davis (1995), Members of the privileged group gain many benefits by their affiliation with the dominant side of the power system. Privileged advantage in societal relationships benefits the holder of privilege, who may receive deference, special knowledge, or a higher comfort level to guide societal interaction. Privilege is not visible to its holder; it is merely there, a part of the world, a way of life, simply the way things are. Others have a lack, an absence, a deficiency.

1. In this article, do you feel anyone had privilege based on the description above? If so, who and why.
2. In this article, do you feel anyone was a victim of unearned disadvantage? If so, who and why.
3. Do you feel you have any privileges? If so, what are the

Please read the article "Old Town road, by Lil Nas X, is forcing Billboard-and country music-to reckon with its roots". Feel free to highlight, circle, or underline anything that you feel is meaningful or important.

1. How does this article make you feel?

2. Is there anything in the article that upset you? If so, what was it?

3. Billboard decided to remove Lil Nas X's song from its Top Country 100 list. What was their reasoning? Give specific examples or concrete evidence as supported by the article

4. Why did removing his song become such a controversy?

5. Lil Nas X made a remix of the song with Billy Ray Cyrus. What is the article's reaction to Lil Nas X making this song with Billy Ray Cyrus? What is your reaction?

HOT TAKE

'Old Town Road,' by Lil Nas X, is forcing Billboard — and country music — to reckon with its roots

The breakout artist — with a little help from Billy Ray Cyrus and others — has prompted an entire industry to take a long look at its racist past.



Locked, loaded — and at the top of the charts. Genius

April 9, 2019, 12:38 PM CDT / Updated April 9, 2019, 1:01 PM CDT

By Christopher Mosley

Late in March, Billboard decided to remove a song called "Old Town Road" from its Top Country 100 list. The publication claimed it had removed the song, sung by Lil Nas X, because it lacked "elements of today's country music in its current version" — however it provided no real examples of said elements in the context of the song other than some vague references to "cowboy imagery."

Presumably, Billboard thought this would be the end of Lil Nas X's country career. But it miscalculated. Spurred on by social media and such stars as Justin Bieber and Will Smith, the squabble became a full-blown controversy. Because while the "country elements" of "Old Town Road" are subjective, this fight is really part of a broader battle for the soul of country radio — and a much-needed reckoning with its racist roots.

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The strong arm of country radio — combined with Billboard's influence — has been slowly losing its vice grip over a genre that is becoming diffused across an endless array of platforms. And both institutions are no match for social media's ability to push artists past the forcefield of traditional methods of distribution. Indeed, everyone from the convention-bucking Kacey Musgraves to Walmart crooner Mason Ramsey has also been able to subvert country music norms over the past year.

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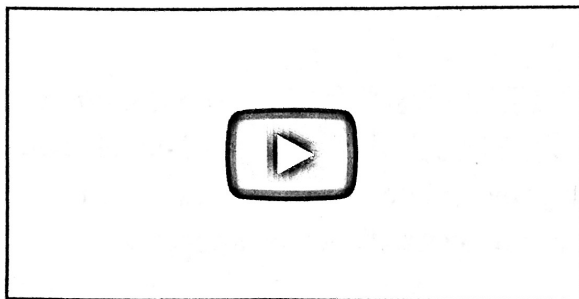
Musgraves, Ramsey and now Lil Nas X are living, breathing memes — able to rob the spotlight from other manufactured and vetted pop acts. In the process, they are pushing the limits of this very traditional genre — in good ways. Such stretching and exploring will both grow the audience and help to resolve some of the issues from country's dark past.

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This plucking and pruning of the charts is not new for the monopolistic Billboard. It has weighed in on what should and should not be considered country music for approximately 80 years, beginning back when it referred to the genre as "hillbilly music." The publication removed songs from its charts for what it deemed inappropriate lyrical content, which it called "double-meaning records." According to journalist Nick Tosches, author of "Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock 'n' Roll" Billboard on March 25, 1939 published its first list of hillbilly records, it did so with a note that "double-meaning records are purposely omitted from this column."

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But that statement only addresses Billboard's censorship of country records at the time. There is also the issue of country music's origins as they relate to race and Billboard's role in that history. Tosches mentions elsewhere in his book that some of the earliest (white) country stars "such as Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills, and Roy Acuff, worked as blackface performers early in their careers." That created a shaky foundation on which to build race relations. It didn't help that Billboard was still publishing a minstrel show column the year it published its first "hillbilly music" list.

While the sun was setting on America's minstrel era, the music industry became more covert about exploiting artists of color. The way that Lil Nas X is being treated — as an unwelcome guest — brings these historically closed doors into much sharper focus.

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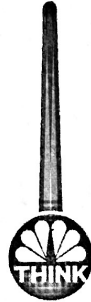
With no real breakdown of why the song was yanked from the Top Country 100, the public's natural inclination was to theorize it had something to do with Lil Nas X being a black artist. Hip-hop beats, pop rap cadence and a treated vocal style associated with contemporary R&B are often used by artists at the forefront of country music's recent evolution — albeit white artists. Lil Nas X being singled out makes little sense in the context of artists like Florida Georgia Line and Brantley Gilbert.

Then there's the historic context. In many ways, Lil Nas X finding it hard to gain acceptance in the world of mainstream country mirrors a time when influential black artists found it difficult to get airplay on country radio. Artists like Arthur Alexander and O.B. McClinton made important contributions to the genre, but never charted particularly high. Meanwhile, white artists were able to play on soul records with fairly little resistance.

The integrated studios of the soul music era have been portrayed as evidence of a mythical utopian musical past. But upon further inspection, a more complicated picture of integrated recording studios emerges. Beyond the self-imposed humiliation of America's minstrel show history is the fact that the erasure of black contributions to country music is baked into the foundation of the genre.

QUICK VOTE  6 217 VOTES

Do you think "Old Town Road" is a country song?



Yes, it's country.

No, this doesn't sound like country to me.



OPINARY 

Historian Patrick Huber attempts to shed light on this gross and willfully neglectful in his essay, "Black Hillbillies": "Examining these prewar records on which African Americans performed can tell us much about the commercial hillbilly music of the 1920s and 1930s. Far from being historical anomalies, these records not only document the remarkable, though too-often unacknowledged participation of African Americans in this genre of American music, but they also reflect the significant amount of interracial musical cooperation that produced these recordings. Far more than being merely interesting and important examples of interracial musical collaborations, these prewar records also expand and deepen our understanding of the hillbilly recording industry during its formative period."

Lil Nas X "Old Town Road" ...



The nearly century-long cover-up of country's black roots did not stop in the pre-war era. He it was much easier to keep someone's background a secret before the rise of social media. "C

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"Old Town Road" being kicked off of the neo-hillbilly charts in 2019 draws a direct link to the genre's embarrassing past.

After the initial fallout, Lil Nas X made another subversive move by preparing a remix of "Old Town Road" with country veteran Billy Ray Cyrus. Within hours of its release, Twitter in particular was flooded with responses to the trending song. It was Cyrus who ultimately provided the clearest breakdown of the aforementioned elements that Billboard could not provide (via Twitter). "It was so obvious to me after hearing the song just one time," Cyrus wrote. "It's honest, humble, and has an infectious hook, and a banjo. What the hell more do ya need?"



Billy Ray Cyrus

@billyraycyrus

It was so obvious to me after hearing the song just one time. I was thinking, what's not country about it? What's the rudimentary element of a country and western song? Then I thought, it's honest, humble, and has an infectious hook, and a banjo. What the hell more do ya need?

257K 4:52 PM - Apr 5, 2019

41.5K people are talking about this

The mention of the banjo in particular is a shrewd reference to country music's diasporic origins. Who better than a storied, denim-clad hitmaker like Cyrus to give his stamp of approval? While Cyrus is now being hailed as a hero — and certainly his wholesome dad presence has confused Billboard's country machinery into tempering its initial judgement — what does it say that Lil Nas X is still expected to show up with a white man in order to be invited to play?

Judging by the current ubiquitous presence of "Old Town Road" — especially in relation to the NCAA Final Four over the weekend — the song isn't going away. It may not be a Billboard-approved country hit, but it is a hit nonetheless as it currently climbs the Billboard Hot 100 (across all genres).

Much like music, sports is supposed to be one of the great unifiers across, race, ethnicity, class and background in our ever-fractured society. Billy Ray Cyrus and Lil Nas X have not "ended racism," as Twitter pundits lightheartedly posited. But they have forced an entire industry to take a look at its crooked past and work on a more equitable future. Whatever Lil Nas X does next with his career, he's landed quite a direct hit on a music industry Goliath. "Old Town Road" is now the number one song in the country.

Christopher Mosley

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'Old Town Road,' by Lil Nas X, is forcing Billboard — and country music — to reckon with its roots

Christopher Mosley has been a writer and editor since 2006. His writing can be found online and in print at outlets such as NBC Latino, The Tulsa Voice, and The Dallas Morning News.



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