

Black Mirror: Men Against Fire

The Men Against Fire episode of the *Black Mirror* focused on military technology and the destruction technology could lead to if the military gets their hands on a large amount of it. I perceived this episode as a warning that this could be the future of our nation if we continue to pour exorbitant amounts of our economy into the military (Bledsoe, 2022). As mentioned in the show, the military implanted a new technology called Mass (a computer system) in soldiers' heads due to the lack of shots fired by the soldiers in World War I and World War II (Doyle, 2016). In this episode, the military using Mass, conditions young Army soldiers into killing these so-called roaches, which under the influence of Mass technology appear as animal-like creatures. Naturally, most human beings have zero desire to kill one another, however, we have also found ways to dehumanize and kill those deemed inferior (Boyle, 2016).

In this episode, Mass technology controls these young soldiers' senses, so that the soldiers can kill these roaches without any regret or guilt because they don't appear human to them. Leon Mugesera, senior politician & a convicted genocidaire from Rwanda used the term Cockroaches to describe a minority population in Rwanda before the mass murder of over 70% of them (O'Grady, 2016). In *Black Mirror*, the soldiers are rewarded with their desired sexual fantasy for killing these roaches. Ultimately, the roaches are just other human beings that were isolated and dehumanized after the screening process that was done by the government. These so called roaches are people that were categorized as genetically inferior because they have higher rates of cancer, muscular dystrophy, MS, SLS, substandard IQ, criminal tendencies, and sexual deviances. The difference between fantasy and reality is severely impacted because of this Mass implant inside the soldiers heads, but what happens when the vision is no longer blurred? I

believe that this episode of the *Black Mirror* is attempting to tell the viewers the following things: one, know what you are agreeing to and technology can alter our perception and freedom.

To begin, I think the episode clearly indicates the importance of understanding what one willingly agrees to. Otherwise, the consequences can be detrimental to one's identity, perception, and freedom. Stripe, the main character, agreed willingly to implant the Mass technology using his fingerprint, but what he didn't know was that this Mass would put him in a hypnosis, which ultimately means he has forfeited his individuality over to the Army. He agreed, thinking it would be cool, without reading a word, as if it was a joke. Unfortunately, I am guilty of signing documents that I didn't necessarily read, especially when looking for an occupation.

I believe *Black Mirror* is warning civilians, especially young adults to be cautious and aware of their prenuptial agreement because young adults are a possible target as soon as they are at the age of eighteen, the legal age to join the military (Smith, 2019). The school system could certainly emphasize the importance of reading and understanding documents before agreeing to it. Unless, the lack of education is intentional because the education system is controlled by the government. For lack of a better word, watch your back, otherwise someone else could be in control of your perception and freedom.

Furthermore, this *Black Mirror* episode is a futuristic idea of what technology could be down the line and how it could possibly lead to our demise if handled inappropriately. In the episode we witnessed Stripe lose his perception and freedom all in one motion once he agreed to implant the Mass. The Mass allows the Army to control Stripe's vision, smell, and emotion. Due to the Mass, Stripe and the rest of the soldiers see the humans with compromised immune systems as animals, monsters, zombies, subhumans, etc. The soldiers were rewarded with a desired sexual fantasy when they killed roaches, the more roaches killed the more fantasized

desire they will receive. This idea reminded me of Call of Duty games because players are rewarded based on the amount of kills they have as well.

The humans are portrayed as zombie-like creatures, which zombies are in many popular entertainment games in which humans do whatever it takes to kill them all. I thought the connection they made to the fantasy world was interesting in that sense. Another interesting thing was that, the people labeled roaches came up with their own technology to combat the military, their technology reverses, or lifts the Mass implanted in the soldiers. This is evidence of humans using technology to solve a technological problem because technology took the soldiers' perception and freedom, but it can also be used to reverse engineer the implant.

Overall, the Men Against Fire episode of the *Black Mirror* is attempting to tell us all that we should be cautious, we should read to understand, otherwise we could lose ourselves. I have never watched, or even heard of *Black Mirror* prior to this episode, but I am so glad I did. The reason I picked this particular episode is because going into the military after graduation is something I am considering. I loved this particular episode because it really made me think and I was interested. I do believe that the show is warning viewers to be cautious with technology because as much good as it does, it can do great evil as well. The episode is a nice reminder to be weary of technology before we are left with two options like Stripe had at the end of the episode, which is to reset his Mass implant, or face incarceration.

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