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ENG1121

Unit 1 Writing Assignment

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The mistreatment in the Western music industry

Dear Western music industry,

Throughout the years people of color have been overlooked in the Western music industry. This has been seen from past Grammy nominations and winners. There have been reports that the Grammy members are not diverse enough. According to the article *Grammys Pledge More Diversity Under New Leadership* by Anastasia Tsioulcas the Grammy members are “65% male and 65% white” who are highly influential nomination review committees, which review submissions for approximately 60 of the Grammys' 85 total award categories. Do the statistics fully represent all artists? As someone who is a part of the BTS ARMY, a discourse community, who are fans of BTS a korean pop group, it has been brought to my attention that BTS are constantly overlooked in the Western music industry regardless of outselling multiple top Western artists. BTS have experienced xenophobia that is rooted in racism in the Western music industry and their fandom is not turning a blind eye to this.

BTS are known as the biggest boy band in the world. They had been dominating music charts in all major music industries in the world and selling out stadium tour dates in multiple countries. They are the first group since the Beatles to earn three No. 1 albums on the Billboard 200 chart in less than a year and without bundles. BTS did not have a big influential company in Korea or in America from the start, while other korean groups have been trying to enter the US market, it was never successful. BTS was able to gain a steady fanbase in the beginning who began to work together to accomplish goals. Just recently BTS new single “Dynamite” debuted at No. 1 on Billboard Hot 100 with only 20 songs doing so. According to data provided by Nielsen Music BTS’s “Dynamite” ended the first week with 265,000 copies sold. “Dynamite” was the bestselling track in the U.S. that week and is the biggest seller since Taylor Swift. According to Forbes, in just one week, “Dynamite” has instantly become one of the best selling songs in America this year.

Usually, to chart high on the Billboard Hot 100, a song needs strong radio support or massive streaming figures with some sales. However, ever since BTS have charted within Billboard 100 with a korean song with no features of western artists they are not given great radio support. There have been instances where radio hosts would say they won't play BTS because the song is not in english, they would make fun of BTS and even those who request them on their local radio station. Those were accounts of people's experience with radio. However, the BTS ARMY did not give up. They still wanted to hear BTS on the radio which is why the BTS ARMY created radio request groups that are divided by locations in order to

encourage other ARMY to request the song on their local radio station. The BTS ARMY were able to come together to create goals for every song release, as they noticed BTS were not given as many plays as songs sung in English although they had sales to back them up, they decided that they could not depend on radio and streaming alone. Although BTS had high numbers and a big fan base as expressed in the media, BTS were not placed in curated streaming playlists before like the known Today's Top Hits on Spotify with over 26 million followers, although they charted high on US streaming platforms. These curated playlists have a high impact on Billboard. With lack of radio and streaming platforms support the BTS ARMY began to focus more on song sales. Since they can not control radio spins, and streaming numbers one thing they can control is the amount of sales.

On their second week, Dynamite by BTS became the first number one debut by a group this century to stay at number 1 for a second week on Billboard Hot 100. Although BTS and the BTS ARMY have worked hard in achieving their goals and marking their place in the music industry there are still barriers they face because of their race. As of today, it looks like the industry has acknowledged the group by nominating them. Although BTS had been nominated in main ward categories in the Billboard Awards, they are not nominated for the main categories or any category in other award shows. They are separating them rather than including them. We can see that in American awards shows like the Video Music Awards VMAs. The Video Music Awards introduced the award show in 2019 a new category for "Best K-Pop." In addition, BTS was nominated in three others "Best Collaboration," "Best Art Direction" and "Best Choreography", none of which were main categories. The news of the new category fans questioned why they made a new category and why they were not nominated for the other categories. On twitter the hashtags #VMAsXenophobic and #VMAsRacist were trending in response to the new categories. Fans wanted them to nominate them the year prior, but did not expect a new category to be made for them. According to New York Times article *The 'separate but equal' rules of American music awards* by Marian Lu she interviewed Mona Mohammed, who said the K-Pop category keeps BTS "snug in that box, to stop them from having a seat at the table". She also said that if BTS "were an all-white, English-singing and speaking group" it would have been different "such as One Direction, as proof of what the 'proper race' can achieve and receive from the media and the industry". There was no separate category created for Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes or Australian group 5 Seconds of Summer. A year later, the kpop category remained, and BTS were nominated on the main categories.

In regards to radio, more radio stations were willing to play their songs now, but it is not on daily rotation like other western songs. Radio stations would go on twitter and make polls asking which song they would like to hear. When BTS was placed on the poll they would win, but it would not be played. Even now with their new song "Dynamite" which debuted and stayed consistently on the Billboard Hot 100, which is said to reflect radio, they are still being placed on polls while other artists are playing in rotation everyday. In regards to playlisting, BTS after two years in the Western industry had finally been placed on multiple top playlists.

In 2019, after its new leadership, the Grammys has stated the importance and need of diversity. In the article *Grammys Pledge More Diversity Under New Leadership* by Anastasia Tsioulcas it states, they hope that the awards will help set gender and diversity standards for the entire business — in which women continue to be vastly underrepresented — and that when fans and emerging musicians see present and future Grammy nominees and winners, they might see themselves in those artists." With their Dynamite debuting on Billboard Hot 100 chart and their latest album debuting also on the Billboard 200 chart, there may be a chance that they would be

nominated for a Grammy nomination. The western music industry needs to give them the proper acknowledgement and recognition like their western white peers.