

## **Rebecca Kumar: “Wanna See My Impression of Gandhi?”: Anti-Colonial Possibilities in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

In the episode “Anne,” our eponymous hero has abandoned Sunnydale and her duty, posing as a waitress as she seeks a life without life-or-death responsibility. However, when Buffy learns that a community social worker, Ken, is actually a demon running a slave ring in an alternate dimension, she is compelled to resume her calling. She finds that homeless teenagers have been kidnapped, stripped of their names, and forced into manual labor. At the end of the episode, when she successfully frees these dispossessed slaves, she comes face-to-face with their master and asks, cheekily, “Hey Ken, wanna see my impression of Gandhi?” before killing him. Lily, one of the captured youth, queries, “Gandhi?” Buffy shrugs and says, “Well, you know, if he was really pissed off.”

Buffy’s flippant self-comparison to the famously non-violent anti-colonial leader who freed India of British rule may seem particularly irreverent given the larger racialized trend in the series, one that disregards people of color. Lynne Edwards has critiqued the representation of the Caribbean slayer Kendra as the “tragic mulatta” and Jeffrey Middents has highlighted how Mr. Trick, the compelling black vampire of season 3, is marginalized as a sidekick. The show itself seems self-aware of these oversights when Mr. Trick provides metacommentary, quipping: “it’s strictly the Caucasian persuasion in the Dale.” Moreover, portrayals of the “Other” are often dripping with colonial stereotype, as Dominic Alessio outlines in his reading of the controversial episode “Pangs.”

And yet, as other scholars have suggested, in *Buffy*, color-codes of goodness and evil, pacifism and violence, civility and savageness – as light and dark – are not in stark opposition. In this regard, I argue that Buffy’s comparison to Gandhi is telling; it engages the longstanding debate over the kinds of signified darkness deemed necessary in anti-colonial freedom struggles. Following both Kim Hall’s work on the interplay of lightness and darkness and engaging a gendered reading of Frantz Fanon’s work on blackness and violence, this paper recovers anti-colonial possibilities in Whedon’s seemingly colonial text.