

“Rise Up”: #Hamilkids, Children’s Rights, and the Politics of Empathy

Since its debut in 2015, Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton: An American Musical* has attracted fans of all ages, including young audiences ranging in age from a few years to teen. Tagged in social media with the hashtag #Hamilkids and featured in news reports about the 2017 Women’s March and 2018 March for Our Lives, these young fans align themselves through cosplay, musical performance, quotation, and political protest with the musical’s characters and its themes. Drawing upon the work of Robin Bernstein (2011), Marah Gubar (2013), and Lara Saguisag and Matthew Prickett (2016), I will analyze the appeal of *Hamilton* for children of minority and majority identity groups as well as the cultural implications of their appropriation of the adult world of *Hamilton*. The musical’s attention to the rights of under-represented people, through its themes and its casting, provides a way for young fans, as a political minority, to empathize with the culturally disempowered adults of U.S. history and, in turn, to advocate for children’s participation rights in contemporary U.S. culture. However, in practice, this politics of empathy may depend on the erasure of race and ethnicity for its success, as white children cosplay and use the words of Miranda’s Hamilton and Schuyler sisters. I will conclude by considering how the performances captured under the #EduHam hashtag, the Gilder Lehrman Education Program, and “Rise Up! An American Curriculum” may offer ways to maintain diverse child identities in this *Hamilton*-inspired fight for children’s rights.