

10 Television Series that Helped Me Get Where I Am Today

Like my film list, many television series have shaped the way I look at the animation medium. But the medium has sometimes missed or blundered an overlooked element - diversity.

As a writer and animation enthusiasts, storytelling and characters have a special place in my creative heart. Being a 1990's kid, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, and Saturday morning cartoons still have a special place in my kid-like heart. But because I am a television lover, some live-action shows groomed my love of storytelling as well.

So, enjoy this trip down memory lane with me as I share the 10 TV series that helped me get where I am today.



Doug (1991 – 94, 1996 – 99)

This tween animated comedy mixes good ol' coming-of-age storylines with a blend of goofy subtle humor. Douglas Yancey Funnie is the awkward guy's hero as he tried navigating the antics of Roger Klutz and his infatuation with Patty Mayonnaise. The series speaks to the true nature of being a young creative on the cusp of adolescence. That along with the squiggle animation and diverse group of characters makes the series a must for any 1990's Nickelodeon fan. Plus, who doesn't love Quail Man?



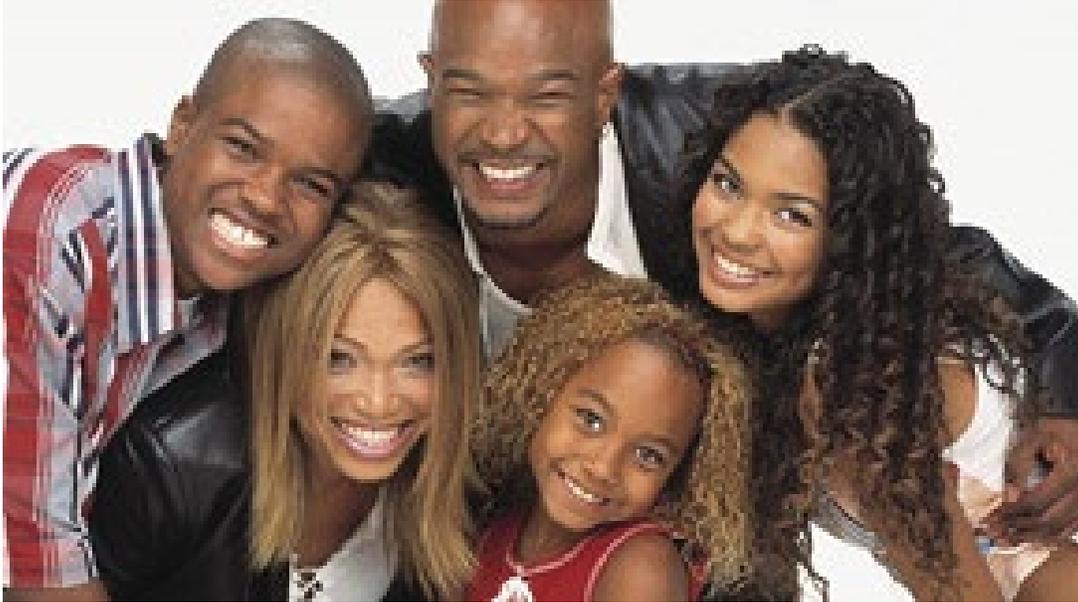
Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends (2004 – 09)

With the content Cartoon Network is churning out today, the network is a disciple for quirky and interesting animated series for all ages. This Craig McCracken quirky family comedy falls right in line with that philosophy. The child-like designs blend seamlessly with outrageous storylines and top-notch animation. It does a great job of putting the medicine in the candy when it comes to life lessons. Watching Mac and Frankie deal with a zany cast of imaginary friends is a treat for any kid at heart.



Daria (1997 – 2002)

The seminal teen animated black comedy mixes the social awkwardness of adolescence with quirky (yet lovable) characters and a twisted sense of humor. Daria Morgendorffer is the pin-up girl of the 1990s teen angst and indifference as she tries to survive the typical high school politics in the vanilla suburb of Lawndale. The series has been championed for its allusions and biting critiques of classism and pop culture. That along with its signature character designs and timeless high school tales makes the series a must for any teenager in any decade to watch who feels the way Daria does.



My Wife and Kids (2001 – 05)

The Black family sitcom has gone through ebbs and flows over the years. Between the sophisticated Blackness of *The Cosby Show* and the sociopolitical rhetoric of *Black-ish*, there are the working middle-class Kyles of *My Wife and Kids*. This quirky family comedy takes the *Cosby* appeal and adds hilarious gags and Millennial children into the mix. It manages to tackle everyday issues like teen pregnancy and family strife with hilarity and heart. Jay and Michael's approach to child-rearing fall more in line with what a Black American family is like.



Living Single (1993 – 98)

This celebrated 1990's sitcom gives a peek into Black sisterhood and comradery while focusing on a group of successful, talented, and young Black urbanites. As proven in the final season, all six leads in the series are essential to the story with their distinct personalities giving a diverse range of the black experience with hilarity, hip-hop appeal, and social commentary. Despite being off the air for over 20 years, Khadijah, Max, Regine, Synclaire, Overton, and Kyle remain a part of Black culture as seen by series such as *Girlfriends* and *Insecure*.



Degrassi: The Next Generation (2001 – 15)

As a continuation of the much-beloved 1980's series, this Canadian teen soap manages to be relatable as it faces the growing pains and issues facing teens today. Many times, the series courts controversy as it gives an unfiltered and realistic portrayal of mental illness, school shootings, teen pregnancy, and more. It brings diversity to the teen drama genre with characters of different socioeconomic, political, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (even if there are issues in that department). Plus, the show has given this generation's biggest rap star, Drake (aka Aubrey Graham aka Wheelchair Jimmy).



Martin (1992 – 97)

This celebrated 1990's sitcom blends the Def Comedy Jam humor star Martin Lawrence with the diverse hip-hop culture of its day. Each character in the series is different in every way (skin tone, personality, quirks) giving a diverse range of the black experience with hilarity (despite some hints of colorism). Martin and his crew's hijinks, gags, and social commentary are still potent in Black culture with references scattered throughout today's hip-hop culture.



The Simpsons (1989 – present)

This cultural phenomenon enters its thirty-second season as the blueprint of today's adult-oriented animation (*South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Bob's Burgers*). Despite some decline in quality since its 1980's and 1990's heyday, the animated sitcom continues to skewer American pop culture and society weekly from the town of Springfield. Its mix of satire, top-notch voice talent, and quality animation has the series consistently rated amongst the best-animated series. Bart, Homer, Marge, Lisa, and the citizens of Springfield are ingrained in pop culture. I mean it's not the longest-running sitcom, animated series, and primetime series for no reason.



Samurai Jack (2001 – 04, 2017)

Another off-beat series from Cartoon Network's early canon is this Genndy Tartakovsky action dramedy. Mixing old Japanese samurai films, spaghetti westerns and over-the-top action is a hallmark of the series as Jack takes revenge on his nemesis Aku and his many underlings. The series balances light comedic moments with dark, intense action and drama with an effortless appeal. The series is a must for any action head with an animation infatuation.



Justice League/Justice League Unlimited (2001 – 06)

Within the superhero genre, this mature and layered animated series is still much-talked and celebrated amongst many animation enthusiasts and fans. The series gives the animated medium a much-needed dose of diversity with strong, multi-dimensional characters of color in major roles. The series mixes serialized storytelling, mature themes and issues and dark subject matter to create a complicated and dynamic entry in the overall animation canon. Watching John Stewart and Martian Manhunter fight with Justice League is amazing to watch. This series is a great way to get teens and young adults into the genre.

--

My mix of live-action and animated television shows have shaped my approach to screenwriting and love of television. Hopefully, my work one day will be on the same level as these television series.