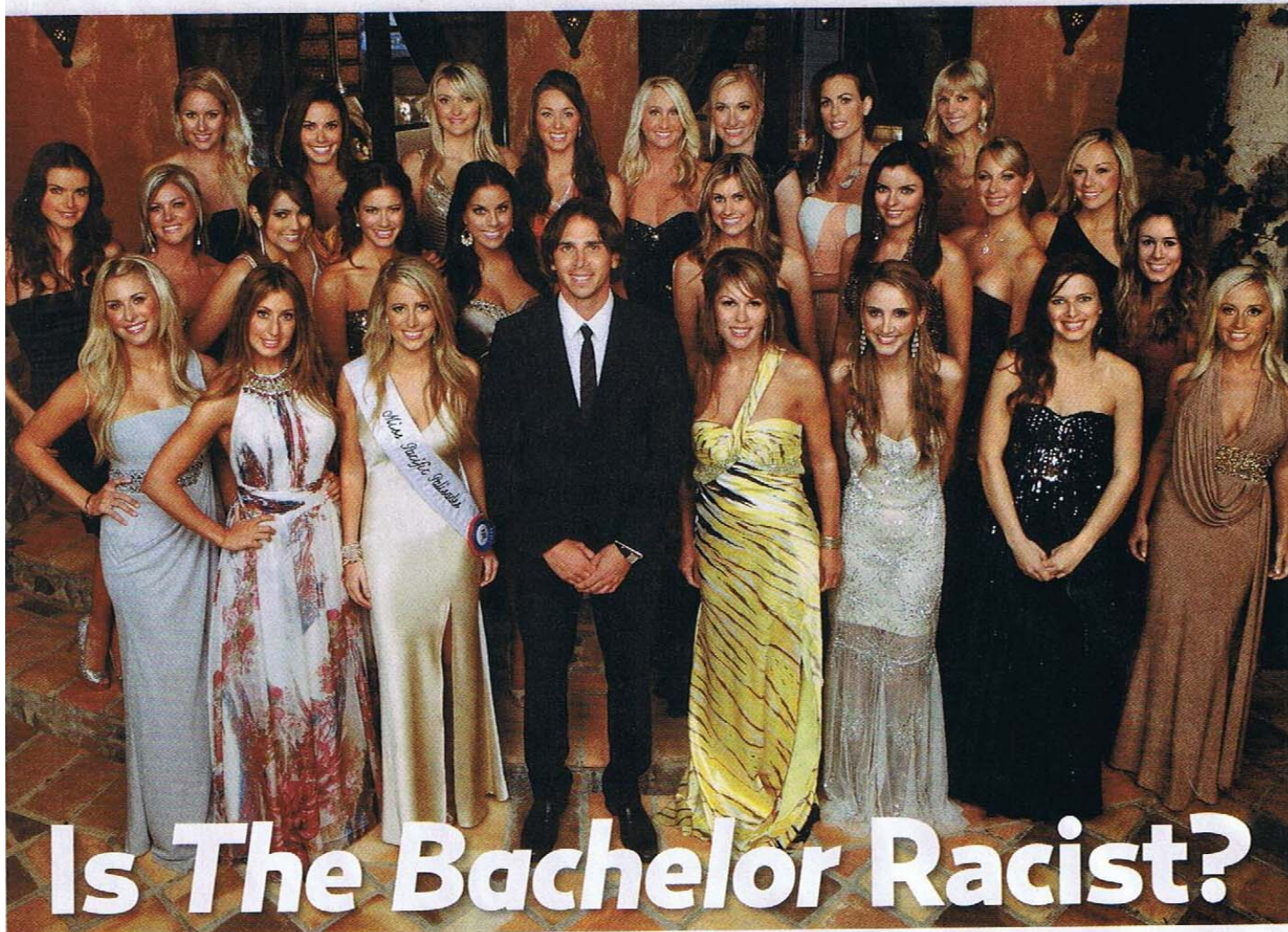


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HOT HOLLYWOOD



Is The Bachelor Racist?

THE *BACHELOR* FRANCHISE HAS a much bigger problem on its hands than a failed courtship. On April 18, two African American men who had hoped to hand out roses on the dating show — Nashville residents **Nathaniel Claybrooks**, 39, and **Christopher Johnson**, 26 — sued producers and ABC for racial discrimination. “I never even had a chance,” Claybrooks, a semiprofessional football player, asserted at a press conference, noting that he was booted from an August 2011 casting call after 15 minutes (half the time given to nonminority candidates, per the suit). Johnson, a

teacher, says he experienced the same kind of brush-off.

Burden of proof A rep for Warner Horizon Television, which produces the franchise, calls the legal action

“baseless.” In fact, even though *all* 23 Bachelors and Bachelorettes have been Caucasian during the series’ 10 years on the air, creator Mike Fleiss insists the show makes an effort to

be diverse. “It’s just that for whatever reason, [minorities] don’t come forward,” he said in 2011. Ultimately, proving bias will be tough. “It will be difficult to find a smoking gun to show producers made casting decisions based on race, and producers will claim there were other factors involved,” California attorney Jason K. Feldman explains to *Us*. Yet Claybrooks is determined to fight: “I was very upset. I wanted an equal opportunity, just like everyone else.”



Johnson (left) and Claybrooks (center) seek unspecified damages and an order to prevent future discrimination.