

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FASHION DEPARTMENT

"The exploitation of the representation of Black people in the 20th c. in Historical Study"

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INTRODUCTION

While walking through Chinatown, on the lower east side of Manhattan about four years ago, a white man accosted me to enquire sympathetically if the scars on my face were the result of some maniac Black attack. As it happens I received those scars while playing as a child. I could only walk past in sheer amazement at such an accusation being made towards a whole race of people, and felt sorry rather than angry towards this person.

My visit in America brought me into contact with a multiracial society for the first time in my life. I was astonished to see how segregated American and Western society is. Blacks and other minority groups are on the bottom of the socio-economic level. There are many anti-prejudice laws, but this does not stop the prejudice blacks have to experience in their day to-day life, or simply the abuse or the negative looks directed at them as they walk down the streets. Blacks are still seen as criminals, no hopers and muggers. Being a fashion student and coming into contact with so much prejudice in both America and England made me interested in the area of exploitation of blacks in terms of fashion and media.



In my thesis I wish to trace the development of the prejudice towards blacks from their origins in Africa during the 1700's right up to contemporary times. Ever since the 16th C, when they were first enslaved by Europeans, they have been considered primitive towards the white man. Many myths and stereotypes from the past have been passed onto the portrayal of blacks in film, photography, advertisement and fashion today.

First, I wish to examine the lives of blacks in their native America, and their new lives as slaves in the New World during and before the 19thC. Many preconceived ideas and myths concerning blacks, first established then haven't really changed much; Blacks were seen as savages, animals, criminals, and most of all heathens. We read of Whites in the 18thC trying to justify slavery as a means of evolutionary assistance. Blacks were. likened to animals, who differed from the monkeys of the jungle by lacking a tail and having emotions.

"Wild man" ("Four-footed, mute and hairy")

Blacks were slaves in America for hundreds of years acting out the roles of slave, servant, and entertainer. Even today blacks are on the lowest level of the socioeconomic scale in America.



In my second chapter I trace the exploitation of black stereotyping in the early Hollywood film industry, right up to contemporary times. Hollywood helped establish many of the negative images of blacks that still exist today, starting with the Black Face performers at the beginning of the 20th C who were played by whites e.g. Later when blacks were seen to play Al Jolson. themselves, they had to blacken their faces to made themselves even darker. During the depression in the 1930's blacks in America suffered the most, and found themselves out of work. As late as the 40's blacks were portrayed as mere servants, slaves, and sharecroppers in America. Many Afro-americans went to Europe during this period to find work in a more equal, liberal society. With the introduction of the first talking films brought about many All-Black Musicals, blacks were treated as puppets on a string that were able to entertain American whites. In the 60's and 70's attitudes to black people changed, as a reflection of "Black Power" and other such political movements in America. Lastly, I wish to examine the work of some contemporary black film writers and actors to try to reinforce my argument that many attitudes towards blacks haven't changed all that much.



Are Blacks in America exploited in Fashion Media? or is it simply an exploitation in exchange for profit. Naomi Campbell, a fashion model who earns a meagre £10,000 a day, or Oscar winning movie star Whoopie Goldberg was offered a record breaking £36 million for the role in film, Sister Act (1992). Grace Jones takes the image of her sexuality and markets it.) her black shiny well toned body is presented as something extremely sexual. The black female's sexuality is not seen to be threatening to the white male. Whereas the black male's sexuality is, and that is why in the media they are shown in socially inferior roles. Very often fashion houses using black models portray them in a very erotic and sexual way. More than often they are offered body work rather than straight modelling, according to Skip Jennings a black male model I interviewed. Cosmetic companies never give contracts to black models for their advertisement campaigns, but this year Veronica Webb, a young black model accepted a contract with Revlon cosmetic company in America. I wish to examine the way the white man takes elements of black culture, assimilates it into a product for no other reason than to make a profit. This can be seen in Fashion, music, etc., where parts of black culture make these products more credible.



In my final chapter I wish to examine the use of blacks in advertisements.

Clothing companies such as <u>Benetton</u> and <u>Sisley</u>, who use black models and certain elements of their culture in their advertisement campaigns. Are blacks and other minority groups used to portray a message or simply as some sort of fashion accessory that are colourful backgrounds for clothes. Fashion photography in recent years has seen many more black bodies ever since people have become more body conscious. Ins this a good or bad thing?

In Fashion Magazines Blacks are very often photographed in the in the background acting as mere accessories for the clothes. The idea of blacks being photographed in Africa is very popular now in America and European Fashion Magazine; these images are contrasted against a white beautiful body bringing back memories of colonial days. Spike Lee, a black film maker in America, has opened many doors for black actors by introducing his own film studio and black roles for the first time in American history. Lastly I wish to look at some black fashion designers and determine where they get their influences and their attitudes as black designers in a predominantly white fashion world. For some of the information,



I contacted Les Johnson, as associate of the London Design Museum, who recently conducted a group of seminars on the depictions of blacks in the media.



CHAPTER 1

The origins of blacks as slaves, servants, and entertainers.



The image of the Madonna and her child is a very popular image for christians in Western society, many of these representations are racist. These images have changed very little from Renaissance or Byzantine Art, Translucently skinned fair haired Madonna, the other of Christ with her pale child.

However the real racial origins of the Madonna and her child tell a different story. In the early Egyptian civilization such as the "Ethiopian" dynasty in 700Bc the Madonna was known as the <u>Isis</u>; she was depicted in in iconography as a black-skinned, Ethiopian - featured woman usually seen suckling her infant.

Following the invasion of Egypt by the Greeks and the Romans, the image of Isis was adopted by Christians, Buddhists, and other religions, each investing their own cultural and religious needs with images of Isis and her child. Isis was eventually to take on the racial features common to the white inhabitants of her new domains. However the Black Madonna icons are still quite common today and worshipped in contemporary orthodox christianity in Northern Europe, (Figure 1)



Plate No. 1

Present day depiction of the Isis and her child

The 16th C European debate on savages which compared Blacks to animals helped to establish the cultural assumptions built into Europeans and western society of today. The concept of savagery belongs to Europe. It refers to distinctions between "cultivated" or simply nature itself. Until the 12th C, Europe remained uncultivated and was sparsely populated. Its main exports were wood, fur, iron, but above all white slaves, who were exported to the more developed world of Islam and of Bysantium, The middle-ages brought about Europe's transition from wilderness to cultivation. The thinning of the woods brought the separation between animal and human, myth and reality. This is when the notion of wilderness equals savagery entered into the mind of Europeans. The word savage is derived from the latin silvaticus meaning non-domesticated or not under human control. Today blacks are seen to be uncultivated, closer to nature or as mere sexual objects. This can be sen in the role of Grace Jones as a nymphomaniac in the film Boomerang (1992) set in America.

During the 18th C Europeans believed that Africa head no history, and showed neither movement or development. The Missionaries saw themselves as doing these poor people a favour by turning them into slaves, while Europe saw an opportunity to capitalize on these poor blacks who had no weapons, rules, money, or religion. During the colonial era blacks were seen to be on one rung higher of the development cycle than primitives. Europeans justified slavery by claiming it was an evolutionary assistance to help blacks development, they were looked upon as the ancient ancestors of Europe. Freud a psychoanalyst believed that blacks were equated with children and the mentally disturbed.

"Civilized man is painfully divided between the desire to "correct" the "errors" of the savages and the desire to identify with them in his desire for lost paradise. (Ref. 1)





Plate No. 2

I

The Orang-Outang carrying off a negro girl before he has sexual intercourse with her.



The English saw the Africans as animals when they were introduced to the Negro during the 1900's, around the same time as the ape. Many Europeans believed that the Orang-Otang's humanized features were attributed to African women having intercourse with the wild ape (Figure 1). In 1725, James Houston, a doctor for the Royal African company, described blacks as being barbaric and said that their customs resembled the native creatures of their land, and only difference blacks lacked tails and had emotions. They believed blacks resembled the ape more than they did the whiteman.

"The projection of the lower mount parts of the face, and the thick lips, evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe; (Ref.2)

Without slavery the industrial revolutions would not have been able to come about in Europe, slaves helped to cultivate and mine for crucial raw materials. Only for slavery tropical and sub-tropical America's raw materials would never have been realised, it was also responsible for the ruin of Caribbean economy, and its lack of underdevelopment. Between 1451-1870, 15 million slaves were transported from Africa to America.

Until 1820 the amount of black slaves being exported to America was four times greater than the amount of white people who emigrated there.

During the 17th C Denmark and Spain set up West Indies companies to transport slaves to America and set up plantations growing crops such as coffee, tea and cocoa. In 1619, Denmark transported it first slaves to North America, at Jamestown and Virginia, this was to bring about the "Sugar Revolution". if it were not for slavery London Liverpool or Bordeaux could never have become so prosperous.

In the 18th C status and the colour of a person's skin coincided, in 1740 with a new law passed in South Carolina.

"All Negros, mulattoes, or Mestizos who are shall here after be in the Province, and all of their issue and offspring, born or to be born, shall be and they are hereby declared to be and remain forever hereafter absolute slaves"

(Ref. 3)

The Catholic Church for centuries permitted slavery on the grounds that it kept these heathens from popish mischief.



It maintained large numbers of slaves in American plantations for financial gain. When opinions towards slavery changed in 1839, the Catholic Church refused to change its policy on slaves until 1888, when slavery was abolished in Brazil.

The rise of abolitionism triggered off much racism in America. Illustrations of blacks being represented in a humane way contrasted with depictions of blacks being portrayed as mere animals. May people were opposed to the treatment of slaves but not slavery itself. In 1807, after many battles with the English abolition society, parliament declared slave trading to be illegal in her colonies. The growers felt that emancipation would threaten the growth of the Colonies. Where else were they going to find such cheap labour once the blacks were free. If they had to pay blacks their crops would become too expensive. Anti- abolitionists tried to influence people by showing them pictures of "happy servants" (Blacks) contrasting them to poor European peasants who could afford to be happy. The most popular book by Harriet Beecher and abolitionist was Uncle Toms Cabin (1853), which introduced a new black stereotype of a totally loyal slave to his master willing to sacrifice himself.

This made many people sympathise with blacks but enraged much of the negro community, they saw the character not as black, but really white having black skin but a white soul.

In the 19th C the segregation laws, <u>Jim Crow's Laws</u> introduced in America formed an apartheid in the south states, looked upon as being a white whip-lash against the slavery abolition laws.



CHAPTER 2

Blacks in Hollywood


Josephine Baker, still the most amazing of all black performers, was born the illegitimate daughter of Carrie McDonald in the slums of St. Louis and rose to fame in the Cate-Walk, Paris. In 1921, her starring in some southern American Nefro Theatre halls for black cotton pickers she moved to New York. In North America it was the beginning of negro in vogue, a time of more cultural opened many new platforms mix which for black performers. She started out as a chocolate-faced dandy in many vaudeville comedies. After appearing in the exclusive Mafia-owned "Connon Club" in Harlem, Josephine Baker was asked to go on tour with the La Revue Negre appearing in Lead roles in Europe. She was offered \$250 a week but tow years later when she returned would be paid a staggering \$1,500.

The French were one of the first to ever take Afro-American music seriously; the great revolutions of Jazz had begun in Paris in the 1920's. A lot of French believed that hiring the La Revue Negre would bring respectability to their music halls. The French had fallen in love with the mood for exotic fantasy, and for Baker it was the first time she was to appear in a nonracially segregated society.

She was the first star to appear totally naked in the Parisian music hall.



The La Revue Negre



She appeared dancing topless, wearing a skirt designed by Poiret; the following year she danced in little more than a skirt of bananas. She was no longer perceived as a clown in Paris, she was seen as a jungle goddess or black venus.

In Paris her manager had to stop her constantly from powdering her skin a lighter tone, because her black skin was considered more beautiful in a primitive way that satisfied latent French fantasies. This can be compared to the use of blacks in fashion photography today!

After the <u>Revue Negre</u> Josephine was engaged at the Follies Bergeres, before returning to America in the 1930's. In New York, she received equal billing with Fanny Brice at the Zeigfield Follies, she was the first and only black women to ever star at the Ziegfield Follies. She felt that Americans were merely following the fashion of what was chic in France, and still perceived her and other blacks as inferior. According the the <u>New York Times</u>, (1937).

"Miss Josephine Baker, the most prominent negress since Eliza in Uncle Toms Cabin crossed the ice, exhibits herself and her person frankly in African displays too for me to take about" (Ref. 4)



The press tried to present her as an exotic who had failed, using her body and sexuality to hide the true fact she could not sing or dance.

During the second world war Josephine was suspected of being involved in the resistance of occupied France. She travelled abroad to Morocco carrying messages of invisible ink on her music sheets, she was later decorated for her immense courage by De Gaulle. Unlike in America blacks that came back after fighting for their country were treated worse than before and felt they had fought for their country in a <u>Jim Crow's</u> **Army.** The U.S.A. government claimed

"The black race would create for the white a menace of degenaracy were it not that an impassable gulf had been made between us".

(Ref. 5)

In 1950 Josephine was offered an engagement in a Miami night club; she was thrilled to have her first real appearance in her native land since she left 26 years before. She agreed only on the conditions that it must be multiracial. It was the first time in the U.S.A. that blacks were admitted to such a club. The press this time welcomed her with open arms.



"Her Broadway comeback is a signal click, and her personal performance a pay off satisfaction that comes to few performers" (Ref. 6)

Josephine Baker was made a life member of the (NAACP) <u>National Association for the Advancement of Colored</u> <u>People</u> for her efforts to fight for equality.

The fact that many blacks have become famous entertainers has been used as an argument that they are not discriminated against. But in relation to white entertainers there are fewer 20thC black entertainers. The black entertaining the white goes back to the plantation; singing and dancing was used a release value for the slaves, as there masters believed that cheerful slaves made happy slaves.

"Marster Iak to see his slaves happy and singin" bout the place" (Ref.7)

The most popular black figures must be the Minstrels performing since 1850 in America. A white imitation of black culture, not as black culture really was but how the Whites perceived it to be.

"A white, imitation of a black imitation of a contented slave" (Ref. 8)

Kenneth Lynn one of the first negro performers in the America <u>Niger</u> Minstell shows; blacks were shown as children, constantly making fools of themselves. Blacks were seen incapable of playing themselves, or rather white images of themselves. What could be a better tool to the racist than the white actors in black-face. The minstrels were playing in halls of North America at a time when slaves where entertaining their masters in the South. The minstrel replaced the salve in the North, the contents of these shows were very often pro-slavery and tried to keep the sentiment of slavery alive.

After the 19thC the Vanderville Theatre took its place. The main two stereotypes in these shows were Sambo, the negro plantation worker and Tambo, the City Dandy, and the latter symbolizing the new free black, in would be classy clothes, and pompous language; Sambo was the "simple nigger" who served to show up the pretentious city dandy, therefore undermining the free black as a mere joke which undermined emancipation itself.

After Emancipation many blacks travelled North, causing the greatest internal migration in the history of the United States. Many were unable to find work as trade unions disowned them completely. So the only area open to many was the area of entertainment.



Plate No. 4

"Coons Birthday (1903)

German advertisement for the Cakewalk Musical

The first form of entertainment to become popular outside of the white community was the "Car Walk". In the past the Minstrel Shows had set parodied images of blacks, but now this was reversed with blacks portraying parodied images of whites. (Fig. 4) "Mocking their rigid body language" (Ref. 9) Jazz became known to white people after the 2nd world war. After a whole century blacks took the stage and were seen as artists. The Jazz age originated from Haerlem in New York at the beginning of the century. Not only did it bring cultures but also black poets, writers, and painters; This for many black was known as the Golden Age. During the wars white people used jazz as an escape from reality, looking towards these subcultures for fun, excitement and erotism. The Mafia in Haerlam set up underground networks of clubs during Prohibition that employed black artists. Therefore it may be said that the introduction of blacks into music was a kind of emancipation, but however it was within the confines of the white man. The black man was looked upon more like a decorative figure than a emancipated figure. Blacks who sang jazz, such as Billie Holiday, sang about their social conditions but had to disguise them in slang.



It was not until the 1940's with the introduction of "Free Jazz" that blacks were able to lose their cheerful despair, and take off their masks to reveal their blackselves. During the 1920's Jazz outside of New York was still known as "Nigger Music".

Hollywood and the motion picture are probably the most effective means of communication ever developed, and also a potentially powerful medium for racism.

Even though the studios of Hollywood would argue that it was mere entertainment, one must examine it more deeply. They did reinforce attitudes that were popular, white attitudes in Hollywood the depiction of blacks very often reinforce the prejudice of the whiteman, with blacks very often playing socially inferior roles such as criminals, clowns and servants.

The typical stereotype of Hollywood contained many gender references: Whites are seen to be essentially male and blacks female. This highlights the parallels between racism and sexism in western society. The roles that blacks played in film were usually recessive, similar to the role of women compared to that of the dominant male. So, it can safely be said that the only black male entertainers welcome in western society were the emasculated; no threat to the manhood of the white male.

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Many young male black children were permitted roles as real actors in early Hollywood, as they were not seen as a threat. These were known as the "Bright Child", one such child actor being Louis Armstrong. They were allowed to keep acting until they came to an age when they were considered a threat. <u>Our Gang</u> (1918) (Fig. 5).



Plate No. 5

Farina and our Gang in the 1920's



A series about the adventures of a gang of children produced by Hal Roach, Farina.

A little black child who played a pickaninny, who became one of the most popular child stars in Hollywood. Instead of being portrayed as a slave or fool, he stood on equal terms with the rest of the gang who were white. There was no objection to white or black children playing together, as there was real threat to the white status quo. Anyway all of the kid in <u>our gang</u> were seen as clowns, a role permitted for blacks.

The "TALKIES" films introduced in the 1920's were to make film seem more realistic than theatre could ever be. Cinema was far more explicit, it began to portray how life was lived by the whole of society. During this period the NAACP tried to stop the black face roles in film, but since they were such a new association they were relatively powerless.

The first ever official talking film starred Al Jolson, a white, black-faced artist. The film "THE JAZZ SINGER" (1927) carried the stereotype the minstrel (nigger) into this new age of technology.



Even though Jolson has been given some credit for lending dignity to his role as a black, but how can one justify a person dressed up in black-face that mocks a whole race of people.

Walter Long was one white black-faced performer who starred in many films. Long after the 1st world war whites were still playing black-faced roles in Hollywood because it was profitable and helped to keep prejudice alive.

The black man was often seen as the comic. <u>Amos n Dandy</u> (1951, a series of all black comedies which contained slapstick humour mocking the black man, that got the hell beat out of him by the laughing whites. The <u>Nigger</u> (1910) another film series exploited black as sub-human creatures. Many of these films are banned on public air in America today because of their racial content.

In 1914, <u>Uncle Toms Cabin</u> was the first film on the black theme to cast black actors; Sam Lucas, a black actor was given the title role. The book written as a passionate indictment of slavery, was tuned into a typical black stereotype of the subservient by Hollywood. Lucas was seen to betray his race by playing such a pitiful stereotype in exchange for profit he was earning \$1,500 a week at a time when black extras were being paid \$5.



One black producer who made films on a very limited budget was Oscar Micheaux, a wheeler dealer who filmed the Wages of Sin, The Broken Violin in Harlem in 1934. But still films dealing with racial discrimination were not being made, the emphasis on film being more for entertainment. It would have been extremely dangerous to show films about racial injustices in the south as the film houses would have been burnt to the ground. It seemed impossible for black producers to make anything that wasn't safe as they were hardly able to utilize the black talent they had. There were few black screen writers, directors, set designers, or film editors, so many blacks became interested in acting rather than the technical side. Technical trade unions were closed to blacks and all black producers and actors of independent companies were disowned by trade union leaders.

D.W. Griffith was a very innovative film maker, he was from the southern states and was labelled a bigot, because of his views concerning white supremacy. In his film <u>The Clansman</u> 1915 based on Thomas Dixon's book, we see the formation of the Klu Klux Klan who battle against blacks to defend white honour and white womanhood.



In 1915, the film was condemned outright as a racist film by the NAACP, they were totally opposed to the glorifications of the KLAN, and believed Hollywood had not tried to prevent the powerful <u>Racist</u> propaganda. Many of D.W. Griffiths films, especially <u>The Birth of</u> <u>Nation</u> (1915) reinforced negative stereotypes that remain unbroken even today.

The Heart of Dixie (1912) was the biggest box office success in the history of the Negro screen. It was the first all-singing, all-dancing, all Negro cast ever, and tried to reinforce the idea that Blacks had natural rhythm. It did nothing for the image of blacks, as it depicted them to be happy in servitude to the white man on the plantation. The portrayal of the typical black stereotype in Hollywood was a passing trend that has stayed constant more or less. It made whites feel more secure and in turn was profitable to Hollywood, which is responsible for the racism that exists today, even though they have stopped portraying blacks in such a demeaning manner.





Plate No. (6)

Hattie McDaniels, in Gone with the wind (1939)



The idea of the light skinned female Negro being seen as a sexual object entered the screen in the 1930's, Nina Mac Kinney, a light skinned negro actress was the first screen black love goddess. The idea of the black female being a primitive sexual animal is portrayed in her film <u>Hallaljuh</u> (1929). The dark skinned negro was not considered sexual, whereas the light skinned negro resembled the "white" ideal of beauty which was desirable for the screen.

It took an independent producer to produce <u>The King</u> (1932), which tells the story of a black king in control of a negro society. The film tried to reinforce the idea that black people did not need whites to control their lives. No major studio would undertake the film as they saw no profit in such a film.

The academy awards for 1939 were almost a clean sweep for <u>Gone with the Wind</u>, Hattie MacDaniels, a black actress who played the role of a "Southern Mammy" (Fig. 6) was presented the award for the best performance by a supporting actress. It was the first time a black had been nominated let alone honoured with the award. When receiving the award Hattie MacDaniels promised to be a credit to her race.



The 1940's saw little change for blacks despite promises from the government. Blacks were refused unionization, even though segregation laws in the south were banned, segregation laws in Hollywood remained. The film industry continued to reflect on the more backward social attitudes. The roles of blacks were still black faced with blacks having to blacken their faces even more self-mocking fashion. Blacks continued to appear in white movies purely for comic relief. There were a lot of black musicals, blacks were seen to have an inbuilt sense of rhythm, but limited in acting skills. According to Hollywood:

"All Negros belonged down South singing hymns and keeping out of trouble" (Ref. 10)

Lena Horne, the black sex goddess of the 40's was made famous by her remarkable voice. Many films were made on Jazz such as The Birth of Blues, which she starred in.

During the 50's racial identity and race relations were questioned. Many old cliches remained in society and on the screen. The remaining myth that blacks had natural rhythm ensured the popularity of all-black films, this could be seen in <u>Show Boat</u> (1951).



However black and white actors were seen to team up in the film <u>Native Son</u> 1951, which attempts to show the effects of the white bigotry towards blacks. Blacks are beginning to be portrayed as individuals.

<u>Sidney Poiter</u> became the first black role model on the screen for black middle-classes, the roles be accepted blacks were able to identify with. Poiter's first leading role was in <u>No Way Out</u> (1950). He stars as the only black doctor in a hospital; it tells the story of the prejudice he has to face. This was the beginning of many films that see the "new negro" of the 50's, which present positive role models for other blacks for the first time in the history of Hollywood.

The beginning of the sixties in America saw riots, political assassins, and the level of brutality rising all the time. However race relations became the most important cause and seemed to be on the conscience of The position of black actors improved the people. significantly. In 1963, Sidney Poiter was the first black actor to be awarded the best actor Oscar Award. Films be showing now seemed to mor faithful representations of black life.

<u>Take a Giant Step</u> 1963 was one such film which attempts to tell the story of a middle-class black adolescent, who matures in a white community and tries to come to terms with the problems of being black in a white community.

"The film dealt with wounds that black men face in everyday life - wounds caused as those caused realizing that white kids, who just love having the black boy on their team, that didn't want to associate with him off the playing field" (Ref.11)

<u>Raisin in the Sun</u> (1916) Starring Poiter reflected a hopeful atmosphere for blacks. Columbia pictures backed it even though it might be a flop in the south where attitudes had not changed very much. It tells the story of a black family that try to rise socially. By the end of the sixties black films had become more daring and outspoken than ever before, which mirrored the political climate and the rise of "black power".

During the 70's more black film makers seemed to be coming on the scene in Hollywood, the most well-known being Spike-Lee. We see the beginnings of truly Black cinema which are not seen as mere vehicles for black actors but are directed and catered for black audiences,



whose confidence was seen to rise considerably in the 70's. <u>Cotton Comes to Harlem</u> (1970) was the first ever film with a black director. This was a comedy about Harlem, which received a lot of anger from black Harlem residents who thought it should have been a more militant portrayal. Dessie Davis, the director of the film replied:

"In Harlem you have to have a sense of humour the only people who could deal with rats and filth are those with a sense of humour" (Ref. 12)

Black movie makers did not want to treat their film as emancipation works, instead they simply wished to entertain. Many of these film-makers portrayed Black stereotypes in their works; such stereotypes white film makers would no longer dare, Black film makers wanted to reflect the confidence of the black person, and in doing so showed blacks could find humour in these old stereotypes.

A new set of black stereotypes emerged, probably derived from the "Black Power movement" which was a cool sophisticated black with more in common with the James Bond character that any of the political ideas of any black movements. American audiences were to see a new wave of black spies, superhip cops, secret agents that whites could identify with just as much as blacks.

However a lot of black movies were extremely violent and were criticized by both white and black critics. Many believed that these films provided an outlet for black. Frustration with white society, this is evident in <u>Big</u> <u>Rip Off</u> (1973)

In many 70's films the black man is seen as a potent stud, this can be seen in Melvins Peebe's <u>Sweet</u> <u>Sweetback's Bad Assss Song</u> (1971), in which Peebes stars as a pimp hero, The film was criticized for its gratuitous sexuality, which seemed to depict all black women as whores in a blackman's world.

Before the role of the female had always been confined to servitude. But now in the 70's black women, mostly those with light skin were seen as sexually alluring, they were depicted as mere sexual objects to satisfy the male roles in films such as <u>Cleopatra Jones</u> (1973) which stars Tamara Donson who plays a karate expert/special agent who has spectacular beauty. The barriers of white dominated ideas concerning beauty were beginning to disappear, with the introduction of African looking women on the screen reinforcing the idea that black is beautiful.



Plate (No. 7) The many faces of Malcolm X in Spile Lee's latest film (1992)

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Hollywood was allowing free expression but at least now blacks for the first time ever since the first appearance of the minstrels in the early silent movies, even though the roles of black actors such as Potier improved, they were still how whites wished to see blacks. But in the 70's a new set of black stereotypes expressed the images of black screen writers, producers and directors.

Hollywood was to see its first black screen writer <u>Spike</u> <u>Lee</u> in the 1950's. Hollywood has always disliked taking risks, they maintained the negative images by its failure to employ black screen writers. He set up his own production and film studio as well as his own movie studio, which aim was simply to talented blacks that would not employed otherwise. In the past independent black film companies were not financially independent so Hollywood could dictate its terms. Therefore black producers had to improvise greatly. Technically these films were inferior even to Hollywood B movies made on a more limited budget.

In the making of the film <u>Malcolm X</u> (1992) Spike Lees most controversial film to date, when the film went 5million over budget, <u>Warner Brothers</u> refused to grant any more.



Plate No. 8 Cartoon of Whoopie Goldberg.

Whereas if it were a film about the injustice towards whites in our community the expansion of the budget might have been granted. But because it was a depiction of Malcolm X, the leader of a black nationalist group, the organisation for the <u>Afro-American Unity</u> made it risky. Young talented artists such as Denzal Washington, who played the lead role of Malcolm X would probably not have been given the chance to play such a role if it was not for Spike Lee (Fig. 7).

If one tries to think of any contemporary black actors in a serious major role in film or television it is rather difficult. Eddie Murhpy and Whoopie Goldberg come to mind but are nearly always perceived as mere clowns (Fig 8).



Whoopie Goldberg, like Naomi Campbell, has received a lot of criticism from the black community and the NAACP. They do not like her roles, or her image as the "dreadlocked Doyene" (Ref. 13). A lot of other black actors feel bitter. Probably due to the fact that presently 85% of black screen actors are out of work. Blacks simply are not being offered roles they wish to play, and feel the roles Goldberg plays are degrading also. However Goldberg is the hottest female name in Hollywood at the moment , having been offered \$46 million to star in the sequel of her latest film <u>Sister</u> <u>Act.</u>

Goldberg took a role in the television series <u>Star Trek</u>, a smaller role with less money than she is normally accustomed to, because in the 70's, Star Trek casted black in positive roles, at a time when there were few such roles opened to blacks, In her film <u>Color Purple</u> Whoopie got much criticism from the NAACp as they felt it misrepresented black people.

However in 1991 the NAACP honoured her then Entertainer of the year. In 1992 Whoopie Goldberg received an Oscar for the best supporting actress for her role in <u>Ghost</u>, up until than she had been considered a joke. It took almost sixty years for a second black actress to be honoured with the Oscar. Hattie MacDaniels in Gone with the Wind as a Southern Mammy, this would suggest that the Academy is extremely racist.

Whoopie Goldberg is also the only American actress to star in a film in Soweto. She found S.Africa and America similar in their attitudes towards blacks. Her life was greatly endangered, she received may threats, but wasn't discouraged and believes no-one can ever silence her as her voice in on tape, records, and movies. She doesn't feel that she has forfeited her blackness in any way during the advancement of her career, she sees herself as a woman and secondly black.

"Listen honey, not many black kids form anywhere become movie stars, especially ones who are dyslexic, placed in a class for sub-normal children and only learns to read at 16"

(Ref.14)



CHAPTER 3

BLACKS IN MEDIA



Advertising has been seen as the window to white supremacy showing hegemony of some description or another. At the end of the 19thC advertising was concerned with aspects of industrialization involved in the area of promoting the colonies. Many trademarks, packaging and posters used the imagery of blacks serving western economies and served as clever political and social statements. In consuming colonial products, the westerner was also accepting colonization; posters showing blacks happy in their servitude made it all the more attractive. They brought the white male a sense of superiority, because he could lie back and enjoy the product that the blacks worked so hard to produce. In prewar advertising blacks were viewed as exotic, along the same lines as palm trees and beasts of the jungle. Many of these reflected the social and political conditions passed by "Jim Crows Law" in America. In western society, even today, black males are usually desexualized in the roles of the servant, white females are eroticized as they are perceived as no treat, but objects of desire.

From as early as the 17thC advertisement related to tobacco have contained trademarks of a figure usually being begroid, wearing "Virginian" popular in both America and England.



It is an esemblage of all things involved in tobacco production, the slaves that worked in the plantation, the Virginian owned the plantation, and also the Indian that introduced smoking to the Colonist. Black in advertisements in the past have always been depicted as the producer, but never the consumer. Exotic foreign products were popularized by means of the exotic black figure. Today such advertisements remain; Palm Cigars, a German based company uses the imagery of blacks for its brand which dates back to 1906, still capitalising on the myth of the "Old Time Plantation" (Ref. 15)

Domestic products such as rum, coffee, and cocoa were products of the colonies, and were viewed as luxury products. They went from products for the exclusive elite to products of mass consumption due to slave labour. A lot of their packaging reflected this idea of ???alization equals luxury; even today a lot of these emblems depict blacks carrying cascades, or creole beauties carrying rum.



(Plate No. 9) Car Advertisement for Ebony Magazine, 1992 In the 18th C most of the chocolate being imported to Europe was being produced in Spanish America. In advertisements chocolate was often seen offered by a little black kid, his wide eyes and opened mouth suggesting that of a lap dog. Blacks were also represented as candy itself being mocked as edible niggers. Such imagery exists today - concuitos, a Spanish sweet company feature a naked black savage as the candy on their package (Ref. 16)

The simple black/white images in prewar times made it easy to convey the black/white relations. Whereas nowadays advertising has become more complex, not so black/white but maybe just as racist are the stereotypes of the past being recycled or have these patterns been broken? One example would show a black man as an equal, but show him with a saxophone, which links him back to the days when blacks were entertainers. (Fig. 9)

Today, the reason for multiracial advertisement is to appeal to a wider audience. Companies are looking for new ways in an image - saturated environment. Ambiguity and a variety of possible interpretations are of the utmost importance to attract a more multiple audience.





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(Plate No. 10) Benetton's United colors advertisement campaign



advertisement is said to be the most Benettons outrageous world wide responsible for this is Olivizro Toscani who is in charge of a global \$100 million advertising account. Benetton are facing ferocious competition from the gap stores worldwide, Benettons communications skills and distribution are the best worldwide, the product itself is going nowhere in relation to design. Therefore the advertisement must be selling the product. It is true to say that people buy image rather than the product itself. Is Toscani a diabolically skilled manipulator who got tired of conventional fashion photography, to is he simply exploiting blacks and other minority groups in order to sell his product.

"India Sari, African Bangles, Chinese Hats" (Ref. 17)

Whatever the image, Benetton cannot deny the fact they exploit minorities customs and lifestyles to promote their product. But they could be seen to promote the awareness of whats happening around the world. The "United Colours" Benetton campaign, is seen as a type of United Nations reflecting an embodiment of all races worldwide. Benetton believe in having multiracial models they are projecting a egalitarian multiracial society.



Benetton takes abstract images such as the USSR/USA relations, flags, cultural different in the past, but out of context remoulds them into a new more positive image. Benetton is not merely uniting colours but uniting different historical styles, formations, and cultures within the frames of its advertisement; projecting a unity of all nations. (Fig. 10)

However when Benetton takes some images totally out of context the results are not always positive. In 1891 American blacks misinterpreted a Benetton advertisement which showed a black man hand-cuffed to a white man, blacks assumed that the black man being depicted was the criminal, and reinforced white supremacy over black. Whereas Tosani meant "We are all together" (Ref. 18) in an equal society.

Another benetton advertisement taken totally out off context, showed a black woman wet nursing a which baby reminded blacks in America of this practice during slavery whereas it was meant to show a more racial harmonious society.



Benetton unveil their interest shock tactics advertisements (1992)

(Plate No. 11) Albino Zulus



(Plate No. 12) Black Soldier



Is Benetton really educating people about minority groups or instead are they reconstructing different cultures because they are desirable as a passing fashion. Many people see blacks as desirable but also as a treat.

Benetton has stopped product advertisement/ the images, themselves are selling the product; bloody new born babies, Albino Zulus, Black nipples and white infants (Fig.11) Benetton could not afford \$100 million on advertisement, if it were not to increase its sales. But Benetton does see its advertisement as a product of the company, just as vital as its clothes. Then could it be understood that blacks and other minorities are also products? Many black ideas have been adopted by whites and turned into profit. At the beginning of he century blacks in Harlem popularized Blues and Jazz, Dizzy Gillespie helped spark a musical revolution that was to change the face of Jazz, Beebop in the 40's was adopted by white artists; beat and ska along with twist in the 60's, Reggae in the 70's, and hip-hop and rap in the 80's. Today one only has to listen to many white groups such as Mick Hucknell, the lead singer "Simply Red", who wears his hair in dreadlocks, has black back singers, and sings reggae inspired songs.



One reason for whites' attraction to black music is probably due to the fact blacks have lived on the periphery of western society, therefore their lives contain a certain element of danger, the danger which is very often reflected in their music, an element lacking in white music.

Everywhere one looks one can see black people adding credibility to white products especially in America and England. The amount of black influences that are needed to add credibility to a product resemble the loves of blacks very little.

Spike Lee's film "Malcolm X" with its current trends towards all things xcentric has resulted in yet another mass exploitation of blacks for white profit. BY simply placing and "X" on front of Tshirts, baseball caps, whites have yet another profitable venture, that somehow trivializing Malcolm X and his work he carried out during his lie-time, black society always seems to be diluted into some meaningless manufactured images. (Fig. 13)



In America the population of both blacks and hispanics is increasing at twice the rate of whites; their spending power over the past ten years having risen dramatically is expected to grow to \$650 billion by the year 2000 when a non white majority will be principal consumers in American cities (Ref. 19)

Cosmetic companies such as Revlon and Estee Lauder have recognised this gap in the market and quickly responded to it.

Estee Lauder who are in direct competition with Revlon with their "All Skins" make up range, catering specifically for the Afro-American woman. The line has 115 shades in order to match the skin tone exactly.

It has been very successful, increasing it customers by 4000 a month.



X MARKS THE SPAT Spike Lee on the Malcolm industry

4

(Plate No. 13) Simply by placing an X on fashion garments, the white man has discovered another money spinning



Revlon in direct competition, introduced Veronica Webb a young black model in their advertisements, an Afro-American for the Afro-American customer to identify with Veronica has been entitled checkout girl today, one of the world's top paid models tomorrow.

Her face has appeared in <u>Voque</u>, <u>Elle</u>, and <u>Marie</u> <u>Claire</u>, and only this autumn she landed herself with a \$2 million a year contract with Revlon, making her the first black model to be signed up with a main stream cosmetic company to promote their products exclusively. For many blacks, Veronica is seen as a role model for this decade. She sees herself as a tool for black women to alter the way they view themselves.

Before she agreed to accept the contract with Revlon she had to be fully satisfied that the make-up suited the Afro-American woman, and was not a simple get-rich-quick scheme. Her role is of vital importance to Revlon as they expect their \$425 million black cosmetics to double by 1995.

"The reason for the boom is the growing power of the black spender" (Ref. 20)



CHAPTER 4

BLACKS IN FASHION



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SERIE 2

(Plate No. 14)

Grace Jones in a Citreon ad "I demand perfection? Anomaly is achieved through the crew cut, and GI outfit which is contrasted with her make-up and black gloves.





(Plate No..15)

Naomi Campbell modelling one of Ozbeks clothes, which are inspired by minority cultures.


Since black has become fashionable on the catwalks of Paris, London and New York black models have become extremely popular in the world of <u>Fashion</u> <u>Advertisement</u> but they usually consist of light skinned models dressed to white norms. But there are images of a new black woman seen in black style and elegance, she is seen as sexual and seductive, a wild and aggressive type similar to Grace Jones, or Tina Turner. In the past images of aggression was extended only to the black male, but now the younger woman is seen to be just as aggressive. "Following the schema of libido unlimited" (Ref. 21)

Are these black models being used to add a breath of intrigue and erotism to fashion or does it reflect a broadening of attitudes. Black models are perceived as sexual objects, which originates back to victorian beliefs about black being savages with few morals.



<u>Naomi Campbell</u>, originally from london now living in Greenwich Village, New York. The daughter of a Jamaican born Varlerie Morris, who had to bring her up on her own. In Convent Gardens when she was 15, she was approached by a talent scout to do modelling.

Now 22, she constantly commutes from New York, London and Paris modelling. She is one of the worlds top paid models and is quoted as saying: "Inever get out of bed for less than \$15,000 a day" (Ref. 22)

At the age of 15, she appeared in <u>Elle</u>, she is the first and only black ever had her face on the cover of French <u>Voque</u>; she is now known as the black Bardot. Many photographers describe her as a resume of all our rock and movie stars, she has appeared in many commercials, musicals, videos, and T.V. commercials. She claims she got her inspiration from her mother and the black legend Josephine Baker. She has been the constant front-woman and muse for the designer Rifat Ozbek. (Fig. 15)

She like many other black celebrities, has been critized for betraying her root and white wigs, but sees it all as fun, as she remains the same inside.





11

(Plate No. 16) Naomi Campbell doing a bodywork shot for Vogue, notice how shiny her skin is.



(Plate No. 17)

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Voque Fashion advertisement, where the blackman is used as an accessory.

Naomi Campbell known as the black sheep of the catwalk, she has been criticized by the press quite frequently for violent outbursts, poor time keeping, her affair with Robert De Niro, 26 years, which she feels have been unfairly exaggerated. The press have helped reinforce old ideas that blacks are violent, irresponsible with few morals. There is probably a certain amount of bitterness towards the first black girl to make it big: anything that is different people have to criticize it. One reason for success is that at that moment fashion is black, but fashions change so does this mean that these black models will find themselves out of work. "The era of the golden-tanned, all-American blondes

such as, Cheryl Tiegs and Christie Brinkley was coming a close" (Ref. 23)

In quite a lot of fashion magazines blacks are still used as mere <u>accessories</u>, or act as colourful backgrounds for nearly always white models. The white model is dressed beautifully, in stark contrast to the blacks who are seen in socially inferior status serving the white who is the centre of attention. They are usually shot in Post -Colonial location such as the West Indies, bringing blacks back to their origins as slaves. (Fig. 17)



In some of these advertisements blacks are usually semi-naked, if not completely naked. The shininess of the black skin is emphasized which signifies the racial difference and a fantasy of power over the object, this maybe viewed as a racial fetish (Fig. 16). In no other advertisement could you see this clearer that in Rifat Ozbek's advertisement in English Voque, which shows a group of naked blacks encircled around a sphere, which they seem to be worshipping. In this, blacks are portrayed as primitive people. If its and advertisement for a fashion designer, where are the clothes? Features in <u>Voque</u>, a predominantly white woman's magazine viewed by few blacks, makes it seem more racist. The true style of living in Africa is not portrayed, but rather how white perceive it to be (Fig. 18)

There are very few <u>Black Male Models</u> on the catwalk in Britain or America. In many advertisements of black males, he is usually shown in a socially inferior position often with the emphasis on physical strength and his sub-servient pose.





An fashion advertisement for the designer Ozbek but where are the clothes? Vogue March 1991

Wilbur Jennings (Skip), is an American black male model originally from New Jersey, a predominantly black city, but for a few years has modelled in New York and lately in Dublin where I interviewed him. (Ref. 24). He believes that most of the work he received is due to the fact he is black, he regrets this for one reason only, that there is very little work available for blacks and the type of work is rather limited. The work he is usually offered is "bodywork" and feels he is chosen for sexual reasons rather than for his looks. He feels that a lot of black models like himself are used as exotic sexual figures in fashion shows. This does not offend him because for him it is an advantage being black, even though he does feel that displaying his body is sometimes like a body shop. But he feels that for many it still is a disadvantage being black, as the majority of models on the catwalk are white.

When asked about racism in Ireland, he felt racism is more of latent for many Irish have not come into contact with blacks. He felt that a lot of people were drawn to him in curiosity, and the only way to overcome racism is to have a greater awareness of different races.

Recently, a black model from Chicago, now modelling in Ireland, with the Profilo Agency, received a contract with "Palmolive Soap". One might question is she simply being used as a novelty, that shall add a new dimension to the product. One could also argue that this advertisement is similar to the soap adverts at the beginning of the century, with underlying contradictions that you can't wash black/white, or change something evil/good. This is where the idea concerning "cleanliness and godliness" originates so is it a wonder that soap became a yardstick for civilization. As recently as (1988) The news of the World featured an article about jazz, a popular black singer; it was headed "from yazz to dazz"; a rumour that she was trying to lighten her skin was unnaturally associated with washing powder.

(Fig. 19)



Plate No. 19

when translated the poster reads "If only you too had washed with Dubbelmann's Buttermilk soap" (Netherland) 1910



A relaxer for all occasions. RAVEEN No-Lye Relaxer allows you to go with your mood. RAVEEN gives you the flexibility to wear any style.

Supreme Beauty Products 820 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605 Another fine product by the publishers of EBONY, JET and EM Magazines, and the dist. of Fashion Fair Cosmetics

> (Plate No. 20) Advertisement for Ebony Magazine, 1992

Relax with

tule

Black Magazines for black people were needed very much in the past and even today the majority of blacks are not reading Queen Harper Voque, or Elle. The only blacks featured in such magazines are usually models, actors, or musicians, they don't feature articles on Malcolm X nor Spike Lee. Blacks in the USA and UK are reading Jet, Essence, and Ebony, many of these around since the 1950's, they helped in the fight for equality. They feature articles on black doctors, solicitors, government officials, NCAAP, historical advents, as well as fashion and beauty advice. (Fig. 20). They give positive black images and triumphs for black readers to identify with. It is sad to say that there is a definite need for such sepratist magazines today because of racist environment we live in. Blacks are not going to get beauty hints from Voque, nor are they going to get hair advice in Elle. These sepratist magazines could be described as a sort of networking of blacks in their community. Sadly there is not racial harmony, nor is there racial equality on the catwalk despite the efforts of Naomi Campbell and others.

During the 50's, a lot of blacks felt they had to conform to a white society, to become more acceptable.



Therefore hair straighteners and skin bleaches became popular; these advertisements appeared in <u>Ebony</u> because there was a certain amount of prestige attached to these products, which were later known as Monkey Bleaches. (Fig. 20)

"If blacks have to wear a mask in any case, the mask of servant, or entertainer, then it just as well be a white mask". (Ref. 25)

Joe Casely - Hayford a leading black British fashion designer, admits he finds most of his influences from black culture, and for that reason uses black models. He believes that not only do black designers look towards their roots for inspiration, but white designers use black culture for a theme in their collections, many of which he believes exploit black ideas for white profit: Rifat Ozbek, being one such white Turkish designer who very often has a black theme running through his collection, but doesn't insist on black fashion models. This could be looked upon as turning black culture into a diluted manufactured image. Patrick Kelly, a young black designer known worldwide for his designs, and who sadly died of aids last January, he's been described as a cotton picking boy from Mississippi, ending up in Paris designing for the famous. His mother brought home a magazine, as a child Kelly was totally unable to apprehend why they contained no black models. This was the beginning of his burning ambition to design and use models exclusively for black women. He never received any formal education, but was given an airline to Paris on day by a friend. In just 3 years he had outlets in sores such as Harvey Nichols and Browns of London, Sacks and Bloomingdales in New York, and in a couple of French couture houses. His dream always was for Bloomingdales to feature just one of his outfits in their window display, but soon they were to devote their entire window display to his collections.

He had such a talent for relating different fabrics, clothes, and patterns not normally associated with each other. This great sense of colour and over-all design, so fresh in its approach, was inherited from his Afro-American roots. This in itself was him relating his sense of pride in being black to the world, without having to say a single word.



"Sure I's love to chance the world but im not a saint" (Ref. 26)

He was extraordinarily proud of his roots, but he didn't feel he had to justify himself for being black. The sooner white people accept blacks as ordinary people just like themselves, blacks will no longer feel obliged to be a living credit to their race.



CONCLUSION

The only majority in western society is the straight male, the remainder of society are all minorities; women, blacks, Asians, gays, lesbians, etc. If the minorities in society start to network together for a more equilateral society, because the "Black Power" movements of the 70's, and the NCAAP can achieve only so much which they stand on their own, for too many centuries blacks have been perceived inferior in western society. Today blacks are manipulated into being slaves of an idea in fashion photography.

If white people were exposed to minority cultures in a more informative, less abstract manner, people might be more appreciative towards them, and treat them as an exotic fashion idea. Minorities might boycott stores or any product with racist undertones, sooner or later these companies would have to change their attitudes, because now blacks and other minority groups hold a large percentage of the spending power in both America and the U.K. But above all, if all the minority groups were to join together into one main body, their new network would have a greater say in the society of today.



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December 1992

With Wilbur Jennings a black male model.

Q	How did you get started? How, Why - Was it purely because you are black			
Α.	A friend asked him to model for a fashion show in Parson's School of Fashion Design in New York			
Q	Who approached you?			
Α	A friend			
Q	What type of work were you offered?			
А	<u>Bodywork</u> blacks are looked upon as being exotic figures in the fashion industry where their sexuality is more important than their looks.			
Q	Did it differ from the work white models do?			
A	No, he does quite a lot of shows in New York, rather than photographic work alone.			
Q	Do you, or have you, ever felt discriminated against in teh fashion world?			
A 	No, he looks upon it as a compliment that somebody finds his body physically attractive.			
Q	Do you ever feel being black is an advantage?			
Α	No, because the majority of the models on the catwalk are white.			



Q	Did you ever feel any difference while growing up?
A 	Yes, everyday
Q	Are you from an all black area in New York? If so, do you think that thsi has affected your attitudes
Α	Yes, New Jersey. No, because wherever you go people are people.
Q	Have you modelled in America? Or in Europe maybe?
Α	Having modelled in America he worked for a private agent, an American Indian in New York City but apart from that has only modelled in Ireland.
Q	How does it compare to Ireland?
Α	He worked 70% less than he did in New York.
Q	Who do you see as your role models?
A	Loads of black women and men who have opened the doors for others i.e. Spike Lee.
Q	How do you feel about Naomi Campbell? Do you feel she has achieved anythingfor black models:
А	Yes, she was the first black woman on the Catwalk in both Europe and America. She made it possible for other blacks to appear on the Catwalks internationally.



Q What do you feel about the cosmetic companies treatment towards black models? А They are not willing to pay the prices. A couple of years ago Naoimi Campbell was approached by Revion but they were not willing to pay her price. Q How do your parents feel about you modelling? Do they feel you are being exploited? (ie. generation gap) Δ His parents are openminded people who are proud that he is doing something he has always wanted to do. Q What do you think about Rap bringing cultures together? Do you feel it comes deeply from own roots, ot that it is simply manufactured. Α He feels that rap is bringing cultures together by crossing over to white artists. That in itself is bridging the gap between black and white people. Rested development is definitely one of the hottest rap groups ever which definitely comes from the roots whereas other groups such as Iced Tea are into a more processed. electronic manufactured sound with little meaning. Q Do you think that now, compared to when you were growing up, that things are easier for black people? Α Yes, when his parents were young, life was hell, but things are changing now for the better Q When do you feel that the revival of black culture first began to take place? i.e. Rastafarians being able to dress the way they want? Α Afro-eccentricism is more than African dress alone, its about understanding your roots. A lot of people wear the African gear but have no insight to what Africa is really about. It really began during the 60's in Jamaca, which then spread to America which is now become a fashion statement in both America and Europe.



Q	How do you feel about the protrayl of black people in magazines?				
A	Blacks are very often used as an accessory, and that it is up to the consumer to le beyond what the photographer has in mind. There should be more of a balance magazines of blacks being shown as glamorous, self conscious people.				
Q	White people are now adopting certain elements of black culture- i.e. Braided hair, jewellery, music Is it an insult?				
	Does it make people more broadminded?				
A	Yes, whites are beginning to realise that black is good. For centuries blacks had to take on European attitudes concerning dress but now whites are being exposed to black culture and are adopting black attitudes in their dress.				
Q	What do you think about the myth that black people are born with fantastic bodies and rythmn?				
Α	The majority of blacks can dance! He thinks it comes from ones roots as black people come from a very rich, rythmatic heritage but the statement really is a generalization.				
Q	How do you feel about the ideal beauty = white?				
A	No, beauty is within, a person's skin colour does not make them any more beautiful.				
Q	Is black now becoming fashionable? (White Negro syndrome)				
A	Black in all ethnic backgrounds has always been fashionable. It has taken a long time for people to catch on. The reason now is people are becoming more aware because white now more than ever before are having more exposure to different ethnic backgrounds.				

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