

KING KONG AND THE WHITE WOMAN

Hustler Magazine and the Demonization of Black Masculinity

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From the box office success of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 to the national obsession with O. J. Simpson, the image of the Black man as the spoiler of White womanhood has been a staple of media representation in this country. The demonization by the media of Black men as rapists and murderers has been well documented by scholars interested in film (Carby, 1993; Guerrero, 1993; Mercer, 1994; Snead, 1994; Wiegman, 1993; Winston, 1982), news (Entman, 1990; Gray, 1989), and rap music (Dyson, 1993; Rose, 1994). Although this image stands in sharp contrast to the feminized Uncle Tom that was popular in early Hollywood films, both images serve to define Black men as outside the normal realm of (White) masculinity by constructing them as "other" (Wiegman, 1993). Although both the Uncle Tom and the sexual monster continue to define the limits of Black male representation in mainstream media, the latter image dominates and, according to Mercer (1994), serves to legitimize

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racist practices, such as mass incarceration of Black men, police brutality, and right-wing government policy.

Recently, scholars have turned their attention to pornography (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Forna, 1992; Mayall & Russell, 1993; Mercer, 1994) and specifically how the codes and conventions of this genre (re)construct the Black male body, especially the penis, as dangerous and as a threat to White male power. The focus of this research tends to be poorly produced, hard-core pornography movies that are relegated to the shelves of adult-only stores because of their close-up shots of erect penises, ejaculation, and vaginal, anal, and oral penetration. What tends to be ignored in these studies is the content of the mass-produced, mass-circulated pornography magazines that, because they can be purchased in bookstores, newsstands, and airport terminals, have a much larger audience.

Of the hundreds of mass-produced, mass-distributed pornography magazines, the three best sellers are *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* (Osanka, 1989).¹ Although these three magazines are often lumped together, they differ markedly in the type of world that they construct. *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, in their pictorials, cartoons, advertisements, and editorials, depict a Whites-only world, a world so affluent and privileged that Blacks are excluded by invisible market forces. Indeed, even the White working class is invisible in the *Playboy* world of expensive clothes, gourmet restaurants, and well-appointed homes. *Hustler*, however, in its pictorials, "beaver hunts" (explicit snapshots of readers' wives and girlfriends), advertisements, and editorials, constructs a world populated by working-class Whites who live in trailer homes, eat in fast-food restaurants, and wear ill-fitting clothes. Although Blacks are absent from most sections of the magazine, they appear regularly in caricatured form in the cartoons, where they are depicted as competing with White men for the few sexually available White women. *Hustler* cartoons depict a world filled with seething

racial tensions brought about by the Black man's alleged insatiable appetite for White women. The competition between Black and White men and the ultimate victory of the Black man is the source of much humor in *Hustler* cartoons and serves to visually illustrate to the mainly White, working-class male readership what happens if Black masculinity is allowed to go uncontained. *Hustler* is by no means the first mass-distributed medium to visually depict the ultimate White fear; indeed, *The Birth of a Nation* and *King Kong* (1933) played similar roles. Only in *Hustler*, it is the White man who loses, as evidenced in his failure to win back the girl. This [chapter] will examine how *Hustler* draws from past regimes of racial representation and articulates a more contemporary myth of Black masculinity that, having been allowed to run amok because of liberal policies, has finally rendered White men impotent, both sexually and economically.

From The Birth of a Nation to Black Studs ♦

Theorists such as Wiegman (1993) and Snead (1994) have traced back to the late 19th century the beginnings of the image of the Black man as a sexual monster, as the product of a White supremacist ideology that saw the end of slavery as bringing about an unleashing of animalistic, brute violence inherent in African American men. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was, without question, the first major mass circulation of this image in film and was to become the blueprint for how contemporary mass media depict Black men.

The notion of the Black man as a sexual monster has been linked to the economic vulnerability that White working-class men feel in the face of a capitalist economy over which they have little power. Guerrero (1993), in his discussion of the emergence

of this new stereotype in the novels of Thomas Dixon, suggests that the economic turmoil of the postbellum South served to

undermine the white southern man's role as provider for his family; thus he sought to inflate his depreciated sense of manhood by taking up the honorific task of protecting White Womanhood against the newly constructed specter of the "brute Negro." (p. 12)

This encoding of the economic threat in a sexual context is, according to Snead (1994), the principal mechanism of cinematic racism and is one of the subplots of the enormously successful *King Kong* movie (renamed *King Kong and the White Woman* in Germany). Arguing that "in all Hollywood film portrayals of blacks . . . the political is never far from the sexual" (p. 8), Snead links the image of King Kong rampaging through the streets of Manhattan with a defenseless White woman clutched to his body to the increasing economic emasculation of White men in the Depression years and the growing fear that Black migration from the South had reduced the number of jobs available to working-class Whites. King Kong's death at the end of the movie remasculinizes the White man, not only through his conquest of the Black menace but also through regaining the woman. In this way, representations of Black men and White men are not isolated images working independently, but rather "correlate . . . in a larger scheme of semiotic valuation" (Snead, 1994, p. 4). Thus, the image of the Black man as a sexual savage serves to construct White male sexuality as the protector of White womanhood, as contained, and, importantly, as capable of intimacy and humanity.

In her analysis of Black and White masculinity in Hollywood movies, Jones (1993) argues that although Black and White actors are increasingly portrayed in terms of a violent masculinity, for White actors this violence is tempered by his sexually intimate scenes with a White woman. These

scenes assure the audience that for all his violence, the White man is still capable of bonding with another human being and of forming relationships. For Black actors, however, this humanizing quality is absent, and thus he can be defined only in terms of his violence. The problem with these types of representations is that, according to Jones, "they suggest that there are fundamental differences in the sexual behavior of Black men and White men and are ultimately indicative of the psychic inferiority of the Black man" (p. 250) and the superiority of White masculinity.

Hard-core pornography similarly depicts Black men as more sexually dehumanized than White men. This seems surprising because in pornography, all participants, men and women, are reduced to a series of body parts and orifices. However, studies that compare the representation of White men and Black men in pornography (Cowan & Campbell, 1994; Mayall & Russell, 1993) have found that it is Black male characters who are granted the least humanity and are most lacking in the ability to be intimate. Moreover, in movies and magazines that feature Black men, the focus of the camera and plot is often on the size of his penis and his alleged insatiable sexual appetite for White women. Movies with titles such as *Big Bad Black Dicks*, *Black Stallions on Top*, *Black Pricks/White Pussy*, and *Black Studs* draw attention to the Black male body and in particular the penis, a rare occurrence in pornography targeted at heterosexual men. Movies such as *The Adventures of Mr. Tootsie Pole* (Bo Entertainment Groups) feature a Black man and a White woman on the cover. The text beneath the picture says, "He's puttin his prodigious pole to the test in tight white pussy." In *Black Studs* (Glitz Entertainment), three White women are shown having sex with three Black men. Above the pictures, the text reads, "These girls can't get enough of that long Black dick." The penis becomes the defining feature of the Black man, and his wholeness as a human being is thus rendered invisible.

The image of the Black man as sexually aggressive is a regular cartoon feature in *Hustler*, one of the best-selling hard-core porn magazines in the world (Osanka, 1989). Cartoons that have as their theme the sexual abuse of White women by Black men began appearing in the late 1970s, and by the mid-1980s, *Hustler* was running an average of two to three such cartoons an issue. *Hustler* was by no means the first to produce such an image, but it is probably the first mass-distributed cultural product (albeit in caricatured form) to visually depict an enormous Black penis actually doing severe physical damage to the vagina of a small White woman.

That these types of images have been marginalized in the debate on pornography is problematic, especially in light of the international success of *Hustler* magazine. Much of the analysis of pornography has focused on the ways the text works as a regime of representation to construct femininity and masculinity as binary opposites. This type of theorizing assumes a gender system that is race-neutral, an assumption that cannot be sustained in a country where "gender has proven to be a powerful means through which racial difference has historically been defined and coded" (Wiegman, 1993, p. 170). From the image of the Black woman as Jezebel to the Black man as savage, mainstream White representations of Blacks have coded Black sexuality as deviant, excessive, and a threat to the White social order. In *Hustler* sex cartoons, this threat is articulated par excellence in caricatured form and serves to reaffirm the racist myth that failure to contain Black masculinity results in a breakdown of the economic and social fabric of White society.

♦ "F*** You If You Can't Take a Joke": Marketing the *Hustler* Cartoon

In the history of American mass media, cartoons have been a major forum for the

production and reproduction of racist myths. From the prestigious *Harper's Weekly* of the late 1900s to contemporary Disney cartoons, Blacks have been caricatured as savages, animals, and lazy servants. Cartoons, with their claim to humor, have been especially useful vehicles for the expression of racist sentiments that might otherwise be considered unacceptable in a more serious form. Indeed, in his award-winning documentary *Ethnic Notions* (1987), Marlon Riggs shows how the cartoon image of Blacks has changed little from the beginning of the century to the more contemporary versions, whereas other media forms were forced, in the post-civil rights era, to encode the racist myths in a more subtle manner.

The *Hustler* cartoons that have as their theme the Black man as the spoiler of White womanhood are an outgrowth of the portrait caricatures that originated in Italy at the end of the 16th century. These portrait caricatures, with their distinctive technique of "the deliberate distortion of the features of a person for the purpose of mockery" (Gombrich, 1963, p. 189), became very popular across Europe and were adapted in the middle of the 19th century by cartoonists who used similar methods of distortion against anonymous members of recognizable social groups, rather than well-known individuals. Gombrich, in his celebrated essay on caricatures, argues that the power of this visual technique is that the distorted features come to stand as symbols of the group and are thought to say something about the essential nature of the group as a whole. The Black male cartoon character in *Hustler* is caricatured to the point that his penis becomes the symbol of Black masculinity and his body the carrier of the essential nature of Black inferiority.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the only place where Blacks appear with any regularity in *Hustler* is the cartoon. To depict Black men as reducible to their penis in the more serious sections of the magazine might open *Hustler* up to charges of racism as well as the regular criticisms it receives

from women's groups regarding the openly misogynist content. Indeed, the cartoon has become the only place where *Hustler's* claim to being the most outrageous and provocative sex and satire magazine on the shelves is realized. Although Larry Flynt (publisher and editor of *Hustler*) regularly criticizes *Playboy* and *Penthouse* for being too soft and for "masquerading the pornography as art" (Flynt, 1983, p. 5), *Hustler's* own pictorials tend to adopt the more soft-core codes and conventions (young, big-breasted women bending over to give the presumed male spectator a clear view of her genitals and breasts), rather than the hard-core ones that specialize in rape, torture, bondage, bestiality, defecation, and incest. However, these hard-core themes regularly appear in the cartoons, together with cartoons that focus on leaking and bad-smelling vaginas, exploding penises, impotent penises, disembodied corpses, bloody body parts being used as masturbation tools, and depictions of Black men raping, mutilating, and pimping White women.

One of the main reasons for the hard-core content of the cartoons is that *Hustler* has to be careful not to alienate its mainstream distributors with pictorials or articles that might be classed as too hard-core, thus relegating the magazine to the porn shops, a move that would severely limit its sales. (*Hustler's* success is mainly due to its ability to gain access to mass distribution outlets in the United States and Europe.) On the other hand, *Hustler* also has to keep its promise to its readers to be more hard-core or else it would lose its readership to the more glossy, expensively produced soft-core *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Toward this end, *Hustler* relies on its cartoons to make good on its promise to its readers to be "bolder in every direction than other publications" (Flynt, 1988, p. 7) while keeping the pictorials within the limits of the soft-core genre.

Flynt regularly stresses that the cartoons' boldness is not limited to sexual themes, but extends to their political content. Indeed, in his editorials, Flynt (1983) regularly

stresses that "we are a political journal as well as a sex publication" (p. 5). In an editorial responding to critics of *Hustler* cartoons titled "Fuck You If You Can't Take a Joke," Flynt (1988) tells his readers that his critics are not upset with the sexual content of the magazine, but rather, with his satire that carries "the sting of truth itself" (p. 7). Flynt continues by arguing that he will not allow his critics to censor what is, in effect, the political content of his magazine, because "satire, both written and visual, has . . . been the only alternative to express political dissent" (p. 7).

A strategy that Flynt has used to promote the cartoons to the readers is to elevate the long-standing cartoon editor of *Hustler*, Dwaine Tinsley, to a present-day major satirist. The creator of the "Chester the Molester" cartoon (a White, middle-aged pedophile who appeared monthly until Tinsley was arrested on child sexual abuse charges in 1989) and some of the most racist cartoons, Tinsley is described by *Hustler* editors as producing "some of the most controversial and thought-provoking humor to appear in any magazine" ("Show and Tell," 1983, p. 7) and, in some cases, cartoons that are "so tasteless that even Larry Flynt has had to think twice before running them" ("Tinsley in Review," 1983, p. 65). We are, however, reassured by *Hustler* that the tastelessness will continue, as "Larry is determined not to sell out and censor his creative artists" (p. 65) because satire "is a necessary tool in an uptight world where people are afraid to discuss their prejudices" ("Show and Tell," 1984, p. 9).

Thus, *Hustler* does not position itself simply as a sex magazine, but also as a magazine that is not afraid to tell the truth about politics. This linking of the sexual with the political makes *Hustler* cartoons a particularly powerful cultural means for the production and reproduction of racist ideology, for, as Snead (1994) argues, "It is both as a political and as a sexual threat that Black skin appears on screen" (p. 8). On the surface, these cartoons seem to be one more example of *Hustler's* outrageous

sexual humor, the Black man with the huge penis being equivalent to the other sexually deviant (White) cartoon characters. However, *Hustler's* depictions of Black men are actually part of a much larger regime of racial representation, beginning with *The Birth of a Nation* and continuing with Willie Horton, which makes the Black man's supposed sexual misconduct a metaphor for the inferior nature of the Black "race" as a whole.

♦ *Black Men and White Women: The White Man Under Siege*

During the 1980s, *Hustler* featured the work of four cartoonists: Collins, Decetin, Tinsley, and Trosley. Surprisingly, although these cartoonists had very distinct styles, they all used a similar caricatured image of a Black man with an enormous muscular body, an undersized head (signifying retardation), very dark skin, and caricatured lips. The striking feature of this caricature is that the man is drawn to resemble an ape, an image that, according to Snead (1994), has historical and literary currency in this country. Pointing to *King Kong* as a prime example of this representation, Snead argued that "a willed misreading of Linnaean classification and Darwinian evolution helped buttress an older European conception . . . that blacks and apes, kindred denizens of the 'jungle,' are phylogenetically closer and sexually more compatible than blacks and whites" (p. 20). Black film critics have long argued that the *King Kong* movie and its sequels played a major role in the sexual demonization of Black masculinity because the ape—the carrier of blackness—was depicted as out of White control, resulting in the stalking and capturing of a White woman.

Whereas the original Kong lacked a penis, the *Hustler* version has, as his main characteristic, a huge black penis that is

often wrapped around the "man's" neck or sticking out of his trouser leg. The penis, whether erect or limp, visually dominates the cartoon and is the focus of humor. This huge penis is depicted as a source of great pride and as a feature that distinguishes Black men from White men. For example, in one cartoon, a Black man and a White man are walking next to a fence. The White man makes a noise by dragging a stick along the fence, while the Black man does the same using his large penis, which is much bigger than the stick. The Black man, who is walking behind the White man, is snickering at the White man's stick (*Hustler*, February 1989, p. 95).

Black men are depicted as being obsessed by the size of their penises, one more example of how the dominant regime of racist representation constructs Blacks as "having bodies but not minds" (Mercer, 1994, p. 138). In one cartoon, a large Black man with an undersized head is looking at his newborn son and screaming at the White nurse, "Never mind how much he weighs, bitch! How long's my boy's dick?" (*Hustler*, December 1988, p. 32). Not only is the Black man depicted as verbally abusive, but also as lacking care and interest in his son's health and well-being. This image fits in with the dominant representation of Black men as either abusive or absent fathers who take advantage of the welfare system developed by misguided liberals (see below).

Whereas the *King Kong* movies left to the imagination what would happen to the White woman if Kong had his way, *Hustler* provides the mainly White readership with detailed images of the violence Black men are seen as capable of doing to White women's bodies. In many of the cartoons, the theme of the joke is the severely traumatized vagina of the White sexual partner. In one cartoon, a naked White woman is sitting on a bed, legs open, and her vagina has red stars around it, suggesting pain. Sitting on the end of the bed is a naked, very dark, apelike man, his huge, erect penis dominating the image. He is on the phone asking room service to send in a shoehorn.

The White woman looks terrified (*Hustler*, November 1988, p. 100). In another cartoon, a similar-looking couple are walking down the street. The Black man has his arm around the White woman and on his shirt is written "Fuckee" and on hers, "Fuckee" (*Hustler*, May 1987, p. 79). Although the man is clothed, the outline of his huge penis can be seen. The woman's vagina, on the other hand, is clearly visible because it is hanging below her knees and is again red and sore, a marker of what Black men can and will do to White women if not stopped by the White male protector of White womanhood.

In *Hustler* cartoons, the White man is constructed as anything but the protector of White womanhood. He is a lower-working-class, middle-aged man whose flabby body is no match for the muscular, enormous Black body. In stark contrast to the big Black penis is the small-to-average White penis that is rarely erect and never threatening to White women. On the contrary, the size of the White man's penis is a source of ridicule or frustration to his sex partner (who is always White). Rather than showing empathy, the woman is constantly poking fun at his manhood by searching for it with magnifying glasses or binoculars. One cartoon, for example, has a White couple in bed, with the woman under the covers gleefully shouting, "Oh, I found it" (*Hustler*, May 1992, p. 10). The man is clearly embarrassed and is covering up his penis. Other cartoons show the White man endlessly searching pornography shops for penis enlargers (presumably the same enlargers that can be mail-ordered from the ads in the back of *Hustler*). A cartoon that speaks to the racial differences constructed in the cartoons depicts a Black man with a small penis. The joke is focused on the size, as a Black preacher is praying for his penis to grow. The caption reads, "Sweet Jesus—heal this poor brother! Rid him of his honkie pecker" (*Hustler*, March 1984, p. 15).

The size of the Black penis is the theme of a full-page interview between *Hustler* editors and "The Biggest, Blackest Cock

Ever!" (1983). The page is in the same format as *Hustler* interviews, only in place of a person is a picture of a large Black penis. The subtitle reads: "A candid, explosive man-to-dick conversation with the most sought after piece of meat in the world." *Hustler* editors ask, "Why do women love big, black cocks?" The answer given by the cock (written, of course, by the *Hustler* editors) is, "They love the size. . . . You know any White guys hung like this?" The editors continue by framing the discussion in clearly political terms through their answer to the question of why Black men prefer White women: "I likes [*sic*] white pussy best. It's my way of gettin back at you honkies by tearin up all that tight white pussy. . . . I fuck those bitches blind." Indeed, the cartoons surrounding this interview provide visual testimony of how much damage the Black penis can do to White women.

The small penis would seem to be one of the reasons why White male cartoon characters, in contrast to Black male cartoon characters, have trouble finding willing sex partners. His sexual frustration leads him to seek female surrogates in the form of dolls, bowling balls, children, chickens, and skulls. The Black man, however, appears to have no problem attracting a bevy of young, White women. When the White man does find a willing sex partner, she tends to be middle-aged, overweight, and very hairy. The Black man's White sexual partner is, however, usually thin, attractive, and lacks body hair. This is a very unusual female image in *Hustler* cartoons and suggests that the Black man is siphoning off the few sexually available, attractive women, leaving the White man with rejects.

The message that White women prefer Black men is the theme of a spoof on Barbie, a doll that represents the all-American woman with her blonde hair, tiny waist, and silicone-like breasts. The picture is of Barbie dressed in black underwear, on her knees with ejaculate around her mouth. Standing next to her is a Black male doll pulling a very large penis out of her mouth.

The caption reads, "In an attempt to capture the market the manufacturer has been testing some new designs. . . . We're not sure, but perhaps this Slut Barbie (with her hard nipples, a permanently wet, open pussy and sperm dripping from her mouth) goes a bit too far" (*Hustler*, July 1984, p. 23). The obvious choice for Barbie's sex partner would have been Ken, her long-term boyfriend, but the suggestion here is that Ken, with his White penis, would not have been enough to entice an all-American girl to give up her virginal status.

Because of the lack of willing sex partners, the White man is often reduced to paying for sex. However, once again, Black men have the upper hand because almost all the pimps in *Hustler* cartoons are Black. These Black men have, however, traded in their large penises for big Cadillacs, heavy gold jewelry, and fur coats, riches no doubt obtained from White johns. The prostitutes are both Black and White, but the johns are almost always depicted as White. Many of the cartoons have as their theme the White man trying to barter down the Black pimp, with the Black pimp refusing to change the price. The power of the Black man is now absolute—not only can he get his pick of attractive White women, he also controls White prostitutes, leaving the White man having to negotiate to buy what he once got for free.

Not only is the Black man draining the White man's access to women, he is also draining his pocket in the form of welfare. The Black man is shown as deserting his family and numerous unkempt, diseased children, leaving the welfare system to pick up the tab. One cartoon features a Black woman surrounded by children and saying to a White interviewer, "Yes, we does [*sic*] believe in Welfare" (*Hustler*, December 1992, p. 47). Another example is a cartoon advertising different dolls. The first doll, called "Beach Darbie," is a Barbie look-alike in a bathing costume. The second doll, also Darbie, is dressed in a white jacket and is called "Ski Darbie." The third doll is an overweight White woman with bedroom

slippers and a cigarette hanging out of her mouth; she is called "Knocked-Up Inner-City Welfare Darbie." In each hand she has a Black baby (*Hustler*, December 1992, p. 107).

In *Hustler* cartoons, Black men have precisely the two status symbols that White men lack: big penises and money. The White man's poor sexual performance is matched by his poor economic performance. Reduced to living in trailer homes, poorly furnished apartments, or tract houses, the *Hustler* White male cartoon character is clearly depicted as lower working class. His beer gut, stubble, bad teeth, and workingman's clothes signify his economic status and stand in sharp contrast to the signifiers of power attached to the image of the Black man.

A New Ending to an Old Story ♦

The coding of Black men as sexual and economic threats takes on a contemporary twist in *Hustler*, as this threat cannot be easily murdered as in *King Kong*, but rather is now uncontainable and returns month after month to wreak havoc on White women's bodies and the White men's paychecks. This new ending changes the relationship between the binary representations of Black and White masculinity. In his analysis of the racial coding of masculinity in cinema, Snead (1994) argues that "American films . . . have always featured . . . implicit or explicit correlations between the debasement of Blacks and the elevation and mythification of Whites" (p. 142). In *Hustler* cartoons, both Black and White men are debased, the former for being hypermasculine and the latter for not being masculine enough.

As the target audience of *Hustler* is White men, it seems surprising that the cartoons regularly ridicule White men for being sexually and economically impotent

and for failing to contain the Black menace. However, when class is factored into the analysis, it becomes apparent that it is not White men as a group who are being ridiculed. The debasement of White masculinity in *Hustler* cartoons is played out on the caricatured flabby, unkempt body of the lower-working-class White man, a class that few Whites see themselves as belonging to, irrespective of their income. Thus, in between the hypermasculinity of the Black man and the undermasculinized White lower-working-class man is the reader inscribed in the text who can feel superior to both types of "deviants." The reader is invited to identify with what is absent in the cartoons, a "real man" (*Hustler's* first issue ran an editorial that introduced the magazine as one for "real men") who turns to *Hustler* because it is, according to its editors, "truly the only magazine that deals with the concerns and interests of the average American."

The reader, constructed as the average American, is, as *Hustler* is careful about pointing out, not the same as the cartoon characters. In an editorial praising Tinsley, the editors wrote, "Dwayne Tinsley is not a black, a Jew, a wino, a child molester, or a bigot. But the characters in his cartoon are. They are everything you have nightmares about, everything you despise" (p. 6). Thus, in coded terms, *Hustler* provides distance between the reader and the cartoon characters, who are either lower class (Black, wino, child molester, bigot) or the elite (Jew), by leaving open the middle class, the category in which most White Americans situate themselves (Jhally & Lewis, 1992).

The lower-class, sexually impotent White man in *Hustler* cartoons is, thus, not an object of identification, but rather of ridicule, and serves as a pitiful example of what could happen if White men fail to assert their masculinity and allow the Black man to roam the streets and bedrooms of White society. The *Hustler* White male cartoon character thus stands as a symbol of the devastation that Blacks can cause, a devastation brought about by bleeding-heart

liberals who mistakenly allowed Blacks too much freedom. Just as Gus (the Black, would-be rapist) in *The Birth of a Nation* is an example of what might happen when Blacks are given their freedom from slavery (a dead White woman being the end result), the *Hustler* Black man is an example of what could happen if Black men are not contained by White institutional forces, such as the police and the courts. Whereas *The Birth of a Nation* and *King Kong* were, according to Snead (1994), the past's nightmare visions of the future, *Hustler's* representation of Black men can be seen as the current nightmare vision of the future, because it "re-enacts what never happened, but does so in an attempt to keep it from ever happening" (p. 148).

By making the White man the loser, *Hustler* departs from the traditional racial coding of masculinity and provides a different ending to the nightmare vision of Black men taking over. This ending is, however, not simply restricted to the pages of *Hustler*; rather, it is articulated in the numerous news stories on welfare cheats, inner-city violence, and reverse discrimination. The White man is, according to the media, fast becoming the new minority who has to support Black families in the inner city and give up his job to an unqualified Black person because of past oppression. The White man is under siege and unless he fights back, he will lose his masculine status as breadwinner. The absence in *Hustler* cartoons of elite Whites as exploiters of poor Whites firmly positions the Black man as the other who is the source of White male discontent. Given the current economic conditions, which include falling wages, downsizing, and off-shore production, the average White man (along with everyone else who is not a member of the economic elite) is experiencing increasing levels of discontent and, as in previous periods of economic decline, it is the Black population that is demonized and scapegoated as the cause of the economic woes.

Although the racial codings of masculinity may shift, depending on the socio-economic conditions, from the feminized Uncle

Tom to the hypermasculinized "buck," Black masculinity continues to be represented as deviant. It is this constructed, deviant status that continues to legitimize the oppression and brutality that condemns young Black men to a life on the margins of society and makes them the convenient scapegoat for the economic and social upheaval brought about by global capitalism and right-wing government policies. Although this [chapter] has foregrounded *Hustler* cartoons, the regime of racial representation discussed continues to inform most mainstream media content and contributes to the commonsense notion that Black culture, not White supremacy, is the source of racial strife in America.

♦ Note

1. Pornography is defined here as any product that is produced for the primary purpose of facilitating arousal and masturbation. Although the product may have other uses (for example, *Playboy* as a magazine to teach men how to live a playboy lifestyle), its main selling feature for the producer, distributor, and consumer (whether overtly or covertly) is sexual arousal.

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