

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE U.S. AND CONCEPTS
OF RACE AND RACISM

By

TOMOKA MIYAMOTO

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in

Anthropology

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

May 2010

Approved by:



Dr. Frances Jane H. Hill
School of Anthropology

The University of Arizona Electronic Theses and Dissertations Reproduction and Distribution Rights Form

Name (Last, First, Middle): Miyamoto, Tomoka	
Degree title (eg BA, BS, BSE, BSB, BFA): BA	
Honors area (eg Molecular and Cellular Biology, English, Studio Art): Anthropology	
Date thesis submitted to Honors College: May 5, 2010	
Title of Honors thesis: President Obama's Election Campaign in the U.S. and Concepts of Race and Racism	
The University of Arizona Library Release:	<p>I hereby grant to the University of Arizona Library the nonexclusive worldwide right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation or thesis and abstract (herein, the "licensed materials"), in whole or in part, in any and all media of distribution and in any format in existence now or developed in the future. I represent and warrant to the University of Arizona that the licensed materials are my original work, that I am the sole owner of all rights in and to the licensed materials, and that none of the licensed materials infringe or violate the rights of others. I further represent that I have obtained all necessary rights to permit the University of Arizona Library to reproduce and distribute any nonpublic third party software necessary to access, display, run or print my dissertation or thesis. I acknowledge that University of Arizona Library may elect not to distribute my dissertation or thesis in digital format if, in its reasonable judgment, it believes all such rights have not been secured.</p> <p>Signed: <u>Tomoka Miyamoto</u></p> <p>Date: <u>5/5/2010</u></p>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: PERPETUATION OF STIGMA

CHAPTER 2: RACIAL SLURS

CHAPTER 3: AUTHENTICITY

CHAPTER 4: MAGIC NEGRO

CHAPTER 5: MAGIC PEOPLE OF COLOR

CHAPTER 6: THE WHITE SAVIOR AND THE MAGIC NEGRO

CONCLUSION

FIGURES

REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

Documents from President Obama's election campaign show that he was consistently racialized by White people as a member of the African American minority group, providing a pointed demonstration of the continuing importance of White racism in America. His campaign evoked emotional responses to race issues against his will. In U.S. society, where "White privilege" is embedded, White people have a power to create and sustain negative stereotypical images of people of color and thus control both images and people. I have focused on media sources such as news, online clips, and movies, and collected examples of various racist representations of Obama circulating in the public space. I will argue that basic messages behind the stereotypes of people of color have not changed much since the Jim Crow era. Some apparently positive stereotypes are in circulation, and during the campaign they were used to depict Obama, such as the image of the "Magic Negro." My research reveals that this "magic" image is not only limited to African Americans, but can also apply to people of color in general. By providing examples from movies, such as *Australia* (2008), I will demonstrate that even such apparently positive stereotypes are just as harmful as negative ones and can be applied for all minority groups.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2008, I began my research about President Barack Obama's election campaign. My paper examines social reactions to Obama becoming President of the United States by specifically focusing on their concepts and representations of race and racism. From the very beginning of his election campaign, to around the time of his inauguration as President of the United States, many U.S. people have had difficulty separating the ethnic and racial concepts from an individual. As a result, people view President Obama not as an individual U.S. citizen, rather they view him as a member of the African American minority demographic. He always receives nationwide media attention not just because he is the first African American president in the history of the U.S., but also because his campaign brought race and racism issues into the spotlight against his will, clearly proving that racism is still very deeply rooted in U.S. society.

People in the United States acknowledge that racism, without a doubt, must not be tolerated. However, not everybody actually notices that race is not a biological fact of human variation but is rather socially constructed. The concept of race functions to create social divisions among people and the (re)production of a race-based hierarchy within the social structure, which we all unconsciously participate in. What we should keep in mind is that we are all taking part in institutional racism in some way on a daily basis. Within our society where racial hierarchy fundamentally exists, ethnic images and racial slurs are constantly used in the public space. For instance, the media devalues certain group identities and promotes stigmatized stereotypes of people of color in U.S. society.

Analyzing people's reactions to President Obama has allowed me to have a better understanding of how racial stereotypes and people's beliefs about people of color, prevent

Americans from acknowledging the reality of the existence of White racism in the United States. Moore (1999) explains the concept of stereotype as, “stereotyping occurs when an entire group is characterized in specific ways and these characteristics are attributed to all individuals who belong to that group” (59). Some stereotypical images towards people of color have changed through endless efforts by previous generations. At first sight, positive stereotypes can also be found even in media nowadays, which may be seen as an improvement. Yet, one of the important perspectives that I would like to present in my paper is that basic messages behind the stereotypes have not changed much since the Jim Crow era. Through this study of President Obama’s election campaign, I intend to show that even such apparently positive stereotypes are just as harmful as negative ones to all minority groups.

CHAPTER 1: PERPETUATION OF STIGMA

White Privilege, Stereotypes, and Racism

More than we imagine, a larger number of people in the United States believe that we live in a color-blind society. As a result, they consider that mentioning and questioning about race and racism is no longer necessary, as they trust that racial discrimination has completely disappeared from their daily lives. At a macro level, the U.S. history of racism has indeed shown dramatic improvement since the segregation era of Jim Crow. At a micro level, however, many U.S. people still deal with social inequality due to race on a daily basis; their experiences vary dynamically depending on which racial category they belong to. White people have a benefit over other people of color, which we call “White privilege.” This privilege is due to the U.S. social structure based on racial hierarchy. McIntosh illustrates the concept of “White privilege” as,

an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an *invisible weightless knapsack* of special provisions, maps, passport, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks. [McIntosh 1998:165, emphasis added]

On the other hand, people of color live without benefiting from any privilege, living without the ‘knapsack’ filled with opportunities such as better access to education and housing. Contrary to White people who benefit from “White privilege,” people of color can be described as a group of people who carry a *visibly weighted* knapsack filled with *useless* tools. The knapsack only serves to devalue its owners by merely having it. In U.S. society, where the system of “White privilege” is embedded, White people and their culture are highly valued over people of color, because White people are considered as the “norm.” As a result, this social structure distributes power to only Whites and allows them to create and sustain certain negative stereotypical images of

people of color and control both images and people. Furthermore, such negative beliefs about people of color are conveniently used as a tool when justifying the existence of social inequality by devaluing people who are viewed to belong to the category of “people of color.”

Racial Stereotypes: Controversy over the Obama Monkey Doll

Various racist representations of President Obama have been used in many public places throughout his election campaign. Whenever new racist pictures appeared, there were controversial public debates on whether or not the images were racist. [Place Figure 1 and 2 here] On October 11, 2008, at a Sarah Palin rally in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, an elderly supporter flaunted a racist Obama monkey doll and commented to the video camera, “This is little *Hussein!*” [2008, emphasis added] Obama’s middle name is Hussein, associated with the late Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein by many Americans. Considering that monkey images were used to symbolize African American descendants throughout U.S. history, this Palin supporter cannot have an excuse from just being careless about his speech. His attitudes and laughter among the surrounding bystanders demonstrate that even after the abolition of slavery more than 140 years ago, the monkey image is still used in the public sphere to symbolize African Americans as a way to dehumanize them.

Racial Stereotypes: Controversy over Obama Monkey T-shirt

Similar to what we see in the previous example, another monkey image was printed on T-shirts to represent President Obama, and African Americans, in a pejorative way. On May 12, 2008, Mike Norman, a bar owner in Marietta, Georgia, was accused of being racist for selling T-shirts depicting President Obama as the cartoon character “Curious George.” The T-shirt

featured a monkey peeling a banana with the letters *OBAMA In '08* written underneath. [Place Figure 3 here] When CNN interviewed Norman (2008), he commented, “Oh my god, look at the ear ... look at the hairline ... he looks like Obama!” He insisted that he strongly believes that President Obama resembles Curious George in appearance and tried to justify himself as not being racist by asserting that he did not mean to offend anybody. Even though he should have already noticed that he had hurt many people due to his thoughtless behavior, throughout his interview with CNN, Norman did not apologize for selling racist T-shirts. Instead, he concluded his interview by saying, “If you don’t understand what I just said, there is a little something wrong with you” (Norman 2008). His narrow and obstinate views on the race matter are described by Kaufman (2002): “A racist atmosphere can be created simply by denying the reality experienced by people of color” (34). Norman justified his opinions and behaviors by simply ignoring the struggles and the oppressions of people of color.

In the beginning of his interview, Norman still cheerfully talked about his opinions and his original intention of vending the T-shirts. Towards the end of the interview, he turned out to have changed his attitude, as evidenced by the change of his tone of voice when the CNN interviewer used the word “racist” to describe what he had done. We will have a better understanding of this changing of attitudes by analyzing the mechanism of race and racism. Anthropologist Jane H. Hill uses the “folk theory of race and racism” to describe a set of shared ideas about race and racism among White people in the U.S. (Hill 2008:6). The first premise of the folk theory states that everyone is assigned to their own racial categories based on biological variation. Second, a racist is understood in individualistic terms as people who individually believe in the biological inferiority of people of color, such as White supremacists (Hill 2008:6). The third major characteristic of the folk theory holds that prejudice towards other groups of

people is natural—naturalizing the idea that favoring people from one’s own race is a normal thing (Hill 2008:6). However, as Hill explains, “In the folk theory of racism, to call a person a racist is a dire insult, since racists are uneducated, marginal, and backward individuals” (Hill 2008:62-63). In this case, Norman still wanted to represent himself to the public as not being racist and apparently deeply believed that what he had done was not an example of racism.

“Chimpanzee” caricatures of George W. Bush

When it comes to the arguments of whether or not ape-like caricatures of Barack Obama are racist, many people compare and contrast them to the chimpanzee caricatures of George W. Bush, a former President of the United States, which calls the racist argument into question. This is because Bush was also depicted as a chimpanzee for more than eight years. [Place Figure 4-6 here] Some even called him “Curious George W. Bush,” since both Curious George and Bush have the name *George* in common. In addition to his name, former president George Bush has been thought of resembling a chimpanzee in other respects: his lack of intelligence has often been questioned throughout his Administration; his ears look somewhat outstanding due to their size and the angles; and he sometimes carries a confused demeanor on his face. However, the huge difference between the chimpanzee caricatures of George W. Bush and those of Barack Obama is that the chimpanzee caricatures of Bush do not carry any racial implications. Furthermore, the chimpanzee figure of Bush represents him as an individual, who resembles a chimpanzee based on his appearance. In short, his cartoon does not represent the category of race, of White people, to which Bush belongs. On the other hand, the caricatures of Obama always carry racial implications symbolizing the racial inferiority of African Americans compared to Whites by dehumanizing the African American minority group as a whole.

Racial Stereotypes: Controversy over Racial Cartoons

Throughout his election campaign, there was no end to depicting President Obama as associated with historical, negative African American stereotypes. On October 2008, the Inland Republican women's group featured President Obama in a striking parody of a food stamp. In the food stamp image, President Obama takes the shape of a donkey surrounded by a watermelon, red Kool-Aid, and pork ribs. [Place Figure 7 here] Except for the figure of the donkey, which symbolizes the Democratic Party in the U.S., the watermelon, Kool-Aid, and pork ribs are well-known negative stereotypes historically associated with African Americans. The president of the group, Diane Fedele (2008), commented: "I didn't see it the way that it's being taken. I never connected. [. . .] It was just food to me. It didn't mean anything else." Fedele demonstrated her immediate racist linkage of the food stamp to President Obama by commenting, "Obama talks about all those presidents that got their names on bills. If elected, what bill would he be on????? Food Stamps, what else!" (Dearmond 2008) According to her, her intention was not to do so.

Fedele's excuse resembles that of Norman, who peddled the racist Obama T-shirts—both repeatedly insisted that they did not see their derogatory depictions of President Obama as problematic at all. Kaufman (2002) explains the difficulty of Whites to acknowledge the existence of racism as follows: "One of the reasons it is hard for whites to see racism is that it offers us a sense of ourselves as good, responsible, respectable, deserving people through the contrast with people of color who are constructed as the opposite" (34). Both Norman and Fedele do not seem to understand how much social power they hold as being Whites in U.S., which allows them to create and sustain marginalizing images of people of color and perpetuate the stigma by deciding whether or not their views are acceptable for themselves.

Historical Jim Crow Imagery until Present (1)

From the segregation of the Jim Crow era, people of color have always been separated from Whites and perceived as less sophisticated, filthy, violent, wild, poor, bad looking, less professional and so on. For instance, in Figure 8 (a White man on the left) and 9 (a White man on the right), both White people dress properly and are portrayed as trustworthy, while the African American portrait in Figure 8 does not wear a tie and the top button of his shirt is open. [Place Figure 8 and 9 here] In Figure 9, the African American male does not even wear shoes, which is easily associated with his careless and unprofessional characteristics. As Figure 8 and 9 demonstrate, the depictions exaggerate the negative stereotypes of people of color and portray their innate racial inferiority. As we can see in Figure 10 under the title, “The Man Who Won the Elephant at the Raffle: Gen. Weiteel—The question is, What Am I to Do with the Creature?,” the African American man, portrayed as an elephant, is depicted as a wild but obedient animal who belongs to White people. [Place Figure 10 here] This picture impresses on White people’s power and intelligence to be able to handle such a huge “creature.” African Americans have been also portrayed as foolish in the Bull Durham tobacco advertisement, which we can observe in Figure 11. [Place Figure 11 here] Figure 12, “March of Progress,” was published in the *Time-Life Book Early Man* in 1970, and depicted human evolution, which starts from a chimpanzee and ends with a White man. [Place Figure 12 here] This clearly exhibits that African Americans are considered not to be fully evolved yet since they are thought of as being primitive when compared to White people. Figure 12 represents how people of color are thought to possess inherently negative characteristics, which are very different from those of White people.

However, White people do not associate themselves with these characteristics, but are valued as individual persons based on their skills and experiences.

Historical Jim Crow Imagery until Present (2)

In the *New York Post* (2009), President Obama was depicted by the cartoonist Sean Delonas as a dead and bleeding monkey shot by a police officer holding a gun. [Place Figure 13 here] The police officer commented, “They’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill.” This shows the readers that the monkey actually represents Barack Obama. Furthermore, an email titled “No Easter egg hunt this year” sent by the mayor of Los Alamitos in California portrays the White House lawn fully planted with watermelons. [Place Figure 14 here] As Figure 15 through 18 demonstrate, stereotypical images used to describe people of color have not changed much since the Jim Crow era. [Place Figure 15-18 here] As my examples illustrate, the Jim Crow era pictures and stereotypes still function in U.S. society to manufacture the system of “White privilege” by marginalizing people of color with negative images and stereotypes.

CHAPTER 2: RACIAL SLURS

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, negative images of President Obama are circulating through various offensive visual images associated with historical stereotypes of African Americans, which primarily indicate the racial inferiority of people of color. In this chapter, I will describe how stigmatized images of people of color, particularly African Americans, circulate through the use of language in public space. I would like to specifically pay attention to the circulation of offensive words in the media, although I understand that, in media discourse, people are more careful in their speech and action than in what they do during their daily lives. Analyzing media discourse corroborates the fact that even in a highly restricted official setting, highly skilled individuals, such as columnists, still sometimes use racial epithets, particularly when referring to people of color.

Circulation of Images through Language: *N-word*

Only a day after Barack Obama was elected the U.S. president, a controversial political comic strip “The K Chronicles: Stories from the Campaign Trail” was printed in *The Daily Wildcat*, the student newspaper at The University of Arizona. [Place Figure 19 here] The comic strip depicts an individual using a derogatory racial slur against African Americans. In the cartoon, a presidential election campaign canvasser asks a woman who she will vote for. The lady and her husband, Melville, use the N-word (spelled out as half of the N-word in the strip) to refer to presidential candidate Barack Obama, indicating that they intend to vote for him. According to an African American political cartoonist and the author of the cartoon series *The K Chronicles*, Keith Knight, he intended to stir discussion of race issues in the U.S. by creating the cartoon strip based on a real incident, which happened to a canvasser for the Obama campaign.

Although it seems that Knight's initial intention of creating the strip was anti-racist, it is very clear that his purpose and message, especially employing the N-word, was not perceived that way. In fact, many students at The University of Arizona were strongly offended that the N-word actually appeared in print. During the evening of the day the cartoon was published, approximately 100 community members and students gathered to discuss the issue of the comic strip and its overt racial slur against African Americans. This community reaction demonstrates that it is still not acceptable in contemporary American society to publicly employ racial slurs, even if they are used to address the issue of racism and oppose the disgraceful, intentional use of racial epithets against African Americans. Regardless of the initial intention in the use of the racial slur, the circulation of the word itself ends up keeping the word alive and also keeping the derogatory images of people of color accessible through language.

In order to understand the reason why the N-word can cause such uproar in U.S. society, evoking emotional responses, we should understand its troublesome characteristics and its particular usages. In a letter addressed to her daughter, an African American woman, Lisa, mentions a timeless joke referring to African Americans to explain that racism still exists in U.S. society: "What do you call a black man with a Ph.D. in America? And the answer is — Nigger" (Lisa 1999:189). As this example shows, the N-word is used not only to generalize African Americans, but also to connote their racial inferiority compared to White people. Similar to Lisa's example of an offensive way of using the N-word, Kennedy (2002) gives several examples quoted from the web site, "KKK Comedy Central-Micetrap's Nigger Joke Center," to demonstrate how the N-word is used in derogatory and hateful ways among White people. Kennedy does not abbreviate the N-word:

Q. What do you call a nigger boy riding a bike?

A. Thief!

Q. How do you make a nigger nervous?

A. Take him to an auction.

Q. How do you get a nigger to commit suicide?

A. Toss a bucket of KFC into traffic.

Q. How do you keep niggers out of your backyard?

A. Hang one in the front yard.

Q. How do you stop five niggers from raping a white woman?

A. Throw them a basketball. [Kennedy 2002: 7-8]

These examples demonstrate how the N-word functions to portray African American individuals as a whole group of people who lack morality, are unable to control their sexual appetites, act on instinct, and whose proper position in society is that of a slave.¹ As Kennedy (2002) explains, the N-word attained its derogatory meaning through American history, and the word played an important role in segregating people of color from Whites in American politics. Consequently, the word always carries a pejorative significance by specifically connotating the racial inferiority of African Americans compared to the standard norm, Whites. Therefore, keeping the N-word circulating in U.S. society and public discourse contributes to (re)producing and sustaining racial stereotypes.

Circulation of Images through Language: *Uppity*

The notion of political correctness makes people avoid certain expressions that might insult or offend others. Throughout U.S. history, certain pejorative words were intended to be

¹ Addition to the N-word used in hatred, Kennedy (2002) also mentions about the N-word used to indicate the solidarity among African Americans when using the term to address each other. He also mentions that this renovation of the solidarity use of the N-word is also popular among White people.

abandoned. As seen in the public reaction to *The K-Chronicles* cartoon, many people have been educated to be very sensitive about identifying racial slurs in order to avoid using them. On the other hand, some racially offensive terms labeling non-Whites still survive because they have been remodeled in euphemistic ways. For instance, the word *uppity* has been used to refer to Barack Obama throughout his election campaign. According to Capitol Hill newspaper, Rep. Lynn Westmoreland, a conservative Republican from Georgia, commented about Obama, “Just from what little I’ve seen of her [Michelle Obama] and Mister Obama, Senator Obama, they’re a member of an elitist class individual that thinks that they’re *uppity*.” [Westmoreland 2008, emphasized added] In order to understand how and why Westmoreland’s remarks have something to do with racial epithets, we should understand the core meaning of the word *uppity*.

The *Longman Dictionary* defines the word *uppity* as “behaving as if you are more important than *you really are*, or not showing someone enough respect.” [1995:1996, emphasized added] Considering the situation underlying the usage of the word *uppity* when referring to Barack Obama, if I rephrase, it probably means that, “Obama, merely an African American, behaves as if he is more important than he really is and does not actually understand where he should be socially placed; and worse, he does not even show enough respect to White people: he is *uppity*.” (emphasized added) Like the N-word, the word *uppity* has had its pejorative meanings constructed over time, particularly when referring to African Americans. The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* illustrates the historically different use of *uppity* in colloquial expressions:

Above oneself, self-important, ‘jumped-up’: arrogant, haughty, pert, putting on airs.

1880 J.C. Harris *Uncle Remus* 86 Hit wuz winner deze yer uppity little Jack Sparrers, I speck. **1933** *Times Lit. Suppl.* 9 Nov. 776/2 Grammy is living contentedly enough with an ‘uppity’ young creature named Penny. **1952** F. L. Allen *Big Change* II. Viii. 130 The effect of the automobile revolution was

especially noticeable in the South, where one began to hear whites complaining about ‘uppity niggers’ on the highways, where there was no Jim Crow. 1982 B. CHATWIN On *Black Hill* v. 28 He had a head for figures and a method for dealing with ‘uppity’ tenants. [J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner 1989:309]

As this example shows, the word *uppity* has existed at least since the 1880s. Uncle Remus is a fictional character in a collection of African American folklore tales produced by Joel Chandler Harris. The folklore is told in Uncle Remus’s voice, who is an African American storyteller. The word *uppity* is associated with the African American minority group in the sense that it was produced through the voice of an African American character, Uncle Remus. His line exhibits heavily accented African American English, “Hit wuz wunner deze yer uppity little Jack Sparrers, I speck,” which almost means that [it was one of these here uppity little Jack Sparrows, I suspect.] The little Jack Sparrows addressed by Uncle Remus by using the word *uppity* is a bird. However, inserting the word *uppity* in this line with the intent of portraying an African American dialect surely impresses the audience. It also makes them somehow believe that *uppity* has something to do with the African American minority group, which contributes to creating the sense of the “appropriate” use of *uppity* in American society. The data given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) shows that, at least in 1952, the term *uppity* started to be used in dialect associated with the N-word to specifically indicate African Americans who were thought to be achieving, or “stealing,” the higher social status provided only for Whites. The example of the usage of *uppity niggers* from the dictionary reveals that the semantic expansion of the word *uppity* in the modern English along with the historical development has been done to marginalize African Americans as a racially less important group of people.

Circulation of Images through Language: *Presumptuous*

As well as the significance of the word *uppity*, there is another similar expression used to indicate President Obama's behavior and success as being the first African American President in U.S. history. In the article "President Obama Continues Hectic Victory Tour" published in *The Washington Post* on July 30, 2008, a columnist of the Washington Sketch, Dana Milbank, mentions that "Barack Obama has long been his party's presumptive nominee. Now he's becoming its *presumptuous* nominee." [Milbank 2008, emphasized added] Milbank uses the word *presumptuous* to illustrate President Obama and his behavior. According to the definition in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the word *presumptuous* is defined as "(of a person or their behavior) failing to observe the limits of what is *permitted* or *appropriate*" (2003:1394, emphasized added). The word *presumptuous* seems to be a type of a euphemism in many situations for the word *uppity* used particularly when describing African Americans who have ("too much") ambition to reach a higher social position. Regarding Milbank who referred to Barack Obama as a *presumptuous* nominee, it seems that what he meant was that Obama is behaving inappropriately, as he is going beyond his rightful behavior because of his lack of politeness to White people. Although compared to the N-word and the *uppity* term, the word *presumptuous* is still less restricted in its use. As the two previous examples demonstrate, the message behind its use is basically identical, especially as a description of an African American. In short, all offensive terms portray ignorance and unworthiness of African Americans by dehumanizing them both as individuals and as a whole group.

Another thing that I would like to point out is that the repeating of offensive words in the media will ultimately keep the word alive, even if the word is used especially to raise public

awareness of the offensive use of racial slurs, as we saw in *The Daily Wildcat* student newspaper case. Spitulnik (1997) employs Urban's (1991) study of social circulation and its role in the construction of communities and discusses how the social circulation of media discourse creates "public accessibility" – an essential component necessary in producing shared meaning in every culture or society (Spitulnik 1997: 95-96). By using Urban's concept, Spitulnik argues,

the repeating, recycling, and recontextualizing of media discourse is an important component in the formation of community in a kind of subterranean way, because it establishes an indirect connectivity or intertextuality across media consumers and across instances of media consumption. [Spitulnik 1997: 98]

As Spitulnik (1997) demonstrates, the media plays a very important role in constructing imagined communities without requiring them to interact directly with each other, but by repeating and circulating the shared knowledge in a way which forms a point of view for members of the same community. Therefore, we cannot excuse the circulation of images through language in the media since it can (re)produce and sustain derogatory views toward people of color from older to newer generations, all of whom may not have an awareness of the painful historical origins of racial slurs.

CHAPTER 3: AUTHENTICITY

Patriotism, Citizenship, and Covert Racial Discourse

In Chapter 1 and 2, I addressed how both pejorative stereotypes of African Americans and derogatory racial slurs have been employed and circulated in U.S. society to implant the concept of racial hierarchies by placing people of color in the lowest position. I also discussed how Barack Obama tends to be regarded as a member of the African American minority rather than seen as an individual, which seems to me against the value of American individualism. As opposed to the overt use of offensive racial slurs, images, and stereotypes of people of color, there is also a “covert racial discourse.” This discourse is not visible so that Whites are easily able to deny acknowledging the racist views that exist in utterances, which contributes to reproducing these derogatory stereotypes (Hill 2008:155). In this chapter, I will analyze how such “covert racial discourse” also contributes to establishing racial hierarchies in the United States.

Questioning President Obama’s Patriotism

President Barack Obama is a multiethnic person due to his unique family background. He was born in Hawaii, which many people associate as a very different place from the U.S. mainland due to its exotic nature. Furthermore, his father was from Kenya, his step-father from Indonesia, and his mother from the U.S. Barack Obama was raised by his grandparents, who are White Americans. He was born in the U.S. and grew up in America as an American citizen. However, in fact his authenticity as an American or an African American are often questioned since he does not seem like a typical American to many people when trying to analyze his race and ethnicity and categorize him. First of all, Barack Obama’s patriotism toward the U.S. has

been questioned by analyzing whether or not he exhibits “proper” behaviors and “standard” practices associated with patriots to check who he really is. For instance, people who criticize Obama as less patriotic refer to the fact that at a ceremony in September 2007, Barack Obama did not put his hands on his heart during the singing of the national anthem. Regarding this, he has also been called “anti-American.” Furthermore, he has been viewed as if he does not care about the U.S. since he does not wear a pin of the American flag on his chest. However, Obama had other reasons to not wear the pin. In an *ABC NEWS* interview, he commented that he will contribute to making America a great country, and he hopes that his contribution becomes a testimony to his patriotism instead of just wearing the pin². Also, I would like to point out that John McCain has never worn the pin, but nobody questioned him and his patriotism. People who believe Barack Obama is anti-American or less patriotic often argue that both the national flag and the anthem are symbols of America. Therefore, they see Obama who does not overtly exhibit “proper” symbolic patriotism, as disrespectful and even threatening to individuals and the whole country because they seem to think that he is not like one of them—an American.

Questioning President Obama’s Citizenship

President Obama has been subjected to authenticity tests to determine whether or not he is an authentic American. As I addressed previously, he has a very unique and also diverse cultural and family background. The fact that he was born in Hawaii, not on the U.S. mainland, seems to make him less authentic compared to “real” Americans, those who were born and raised in mainland states. Also, there have been suspicions about whether Obama really was born in the U.S. since there are some people who claim that he was born in Kenya and brought to America

² Obama now, Spring of 2009, wears a pin sometimes.

to obtain a birth certificate in Hawaii. American people, especially those who do not support Obama, became very curious about investigating Obama's birth place to prevent him becoming President of the United States. In addition to questioning his birth place, manipulative religious concepts are used to exclude him from the U.S. mainstream by making him sound like a less authentic American citizen.

After Obama's parents divorced, his father, Barack Obama Sr. left his family and went back to Kenya; his mother married an Indonesian man, Lolo Soetoro. Later, Obama and his parents moved to Indonesia. While living in Indonesia, Obama attended a Muslim elementary school for a few years and thereafter attended a Catholic school for a few more years. His biological father was a Muslim, and his stepfather, Soetoro, was a Muslim too. Some people argue that by Islamic law, Obama has to be a Muslim since his father was a Muslim. By emphasizing the fact that Obama spent his time in a Muslim school in Indonesia, a largely Muslim country, and that his biological father was a Muslim, some people have attacked Barack Obama as a Muslim. After the September 11 attacks in 2001, many Americans associate Muslims with terrorism. By associating Obama with the Muslim religion, his degree of authenticity seems to have decreased. Furthermore, Obama's middle name, Hussein, has been constantly used in a negative way to make him a less authentic American person. This is because many Americans associate his middle name with the late Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. Ong (1996) argues that cultural and racial boundaries are negotiated by immigrants in U.S. society through constructing a "cultural citizenship," which she defines as "a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (738). We have seen how some people are suspicious of Barack Obama's credibility, and cultural and racial boundaries have been constructed, making his unique characteristics to negatively signify that he

lacks authenticity as an American citizen. As shown in the examples above, the citizenship critics actually question not only the legality of his American citizenship, but also address in a broader sense his “cultural citizenship” as Ong (1996) defines that concept. The striking thing for me is that even non-immigrant English-speaking individuals who were born and grew up in the U.S. must negotiate their “cultural citizenship” on a daily basis unless they are White people.

Questioning President Obama’s Authenticity as an African American

Since President Obama is not accepted as a White, standard authentic American, it once seemed that he would be automatically considered as a member of the African American minority group. However, that is not as simple as it sounds in the real world. In short, Barack Obama’s authenticity as an African American has been questioned. In March 2007, an African American columnist, David Ehrenstein, published a column entitled, “Obama the Magic Negro,” in the *Los Angeles Times*. I will address more about the characteristics of the “Magic Negro,” and how Magic Negro’s images impact Barack Obama’s image in the following chapters. Here, I will simply define the concept of “Magic Negro” based on Glenn’s (2007) definition. A “Magic Negro” is basically a stereotypical African American supporting character in movies, and he or she only exists to save the White protagonists from a crisis by the use of magical skills.

Ehrenstein (2007) describes Barack Obama as a “Magic Negro” in his column by mentioning that President Obama is there to help Americans “magically,” like a superhero in a comic-book. Ehrenstein (2007) also says, “The only mud that momentarily stuck was criticism (white and black alike) concerning Obama’s alleged ‘inauthenticity,’ as compared to such ‘sterling’ examples of ‘genuine’ blackness as Al Sharpton [Alfred Charles] and Snoop Dogg.” His comment demonstrates that even among African Americans, Obama cannot be accepted as

an “authentic” member. Al Sharpton, mentioned by Ehrenstein, is an African American minister of the American Baptist Churches USA, who is very active in protecting social justice and political and civil rights. Snoop Dogg is also a well-known African American rap musician in the U.S. Both Al Sharpton and Snoop Dogg, as public figures, are known to many Whites and regarded by them as representatives of African Americans. Snoop Dogg tends to be seen as misogynistic, and Sharpton is perceived playing the racial card all the time, both carrying negative images. On the other hand, Obama is not like either of them. Compared to them, Barack Obama was evaluated as inauthentic as an African American in terms of his lack of blackness, not of physical color but of a perceived lack of common cultural experience.

According to Ong (1996:740), “when we attend to the pragmatic construction of belonging, we see that official racial categories are reproduced by everyday American activities of inclusion and exclusion, separating the civilized from the primitive.” As we see here, to be thought of as an authentic member of the African American minority group is clearly not determined by physical characteristics but is rather determined by the criteria based on how much commonality of life style and experiences the individual shares with the rest of the members of the group. As a result, Barack Obama is seen as an outsider of the African American minority group by those who cannot find any common experiences associated with him. In addition to his unique cultural background which differs considerably from typical African American backgrounds that often include slave ancestry³, Obama’s authenticity as an African American has been further questioned due to his capability to speak in different styles since he

³ John Baugh at The Washington University has defined the African American core population as descendents of north American African slaves.

grew up in a multiethnic background—he is able to speak comfortably in both American Standard English (ASE) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

At the New York Public Library, Zadie Smith (2008) gave a lecture about Obama using different discourse styles for a variety of occasions. She comments,

Who is he? people kept asking. *I mean, who is this guy, really?* He says *sweet potato pie* in Philly and *Main Street* in Iowa! When he talks to us, he sure *sounds* like us—but behind our backs he says we’re clinging to our religion, to our guns. [. . .] Obama made many black men and women of [Jesse] Jackson’s generation *suspicious*. How can the man who passes between culturally black and white voices with such flexibility, with such ease, be an honest man? How *will* the man from Dream City keep it real? Why won’t he speak with a clear and unified voice? [Smith 2008: 42, emphasized added]

Jesse Louis Jackson, an American civil rights activist and a Baptist minister, is mentioned by Smith as having been a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in the years 1984 and 1988. Jackson is invoked here as an ideal representative of the authentic African American who is not willing to code-switch when speaking and acting. Smith’s observation of the public reactions to Obama shows that Obama’s flexibility in representing himself in a variety of languages and cultural personas creates suspicions about his identity. Skeptics question whether or not they can “trust” Obama, although it will be very natural for Obama, who grew up in a multi-ethnic family, to be able to be at home in a variety of cultural environments.

Covert Racial Discourse: A Controversial Parody—“Barack the Magic Negro”

The idea of Obama as a “Magic Negro,” introduced in Ehrenstein’s column, “Obama the Magic Negro,” was parodied in a controversial song, “Barack the Magic Negro,” by a White comedian, Paul Shanklin. In the parody, Shanklin sings about Barack Obama, drawing on negative racial stereotypes of African Americans by employing the tune of “Puff the Magic Dragon,” a popular cartoon and song for children in the U.S. for many years.

Barack the Magic Negro lives in D.C.
 The L.A. Times, they called him that
 'Cause he's not authentic like me.
 Yeah, the guy from the L.A. paper
 Said he makes guilty whites feel good
 They'll vote for him, and not for me
 'Cause he's not from the hood.
 See, real black men, like Snoop Dog,
 Or me, or Farrakhan
 Have talked the talk, and walked the walk.
 Not come in late and won!
 [refrain]
 Oh, Barack the Magic Negro, lives in D.C.
 The L.A. Times, they called him that
 'Cause he's black, but not authentically.
 Oh, Barack the Magic Negro, lives in D.C.
 The L.A. Times, they called him that
 'Cause he's black, but not authentically.
 Some say Barack's "articulate"
 And bright and new and "clean."
 The media sure loves this guy,
 A white interloper's dream!
 But, when you vote for president,
 Watch out, and don't be fooled!
 Don't vote the Magic Negro in –
 'Cause — 'cause I won't have nothing after all these years of sacrifice
 And I won't get justice. This is about justice. This isn't about me, it's about justice.
 It's about buffet. I don't have no buffet and there won't be any church contributions,
 And there'll be no cash in the collection plate.
 There ain't gonna be no cash money, no walkin' around money, no phoning money.
 Now, Barack going to come in here and –

In the last six lines of the song, Shanklin imitates the voice of Al Sharpton using a megaphone.

The phrase, "no walkin' around money," appearing in this final part of the song demonstrates an allusion to "street money," which is supposed to refer to African American political corruption.

This song was first played on an American radio show hosted by Rush Limbaugh, a conservative political commentator. To a caller, who felt that it was very offensive that the term *negro* was used in the song, Limbaugh answered:

Well, I can tell you think the term *negro* is inappropriate, that it's old hat and shouldn't be used, that it's divisive and this sort of thing, and *you may have a*

point, but remember what we do on this program. *We illustrate absurdity by being absurd*, and the other element of this is that Sharpton has been quoted in the *New York Post* as being jealous that Obama is getting all this support as a black presidential candidate. Remember, Joe Biden said, “Hey, we got the first clean, articulate, intelligent black guy running for president.” How do you think this makes Sharpton feel? He’s run for president twice. How do you think it’s going to make the Reverend Jackson feel? So the story was that there’s a little jealousy out there. So, these two things just fit together. It was like a harmonic convergence here on this, Uriah. Now that you know the context and the details, *let’s listen together* to Al Sharpton and “Barack the Magic Negro.” [Limbaugh 2007, emphasized added]

This example exhibits not only Limbaugh’s condescending and insulting behavior towards the caller, who found offense with the actual use of the term *negro* in the song, but also shows how the function of “covert racial discourse” in (re)producing racial views is difficult to acknowledge. Limbaugh (2007) does not acknowledge the potentially offensive character of the word (or does not really want to admit that he was in the wrong), and he answers frivolously to the caller as if it were a joke, “you may have a point.”

Hill (2008) explains “covert racist discourses” as derived from “authors, influential Whites who appropriate new linguistic resources from ways of speaking associated with people of color, and reshape these to serve their own purposes” (177). Whites are not only allowed to use offensive terms to describe people of color, but also absorb the jargons of people of color. Smitherman (2000) claims that African Americans do not have their own culture because it has mostly been borrowed by Whites (33). She argues that jargon which originated among African Americans is now used among young Whites and in White society. Smitherman (2000) comments that “this thievery [of black jargon] is evident even in the media, as the use of black jargon by white entertainers is a common practice on radio and television . . . much of this represents a naïve attempt to identify with black people and form some sort of meaningful bond” (28). For instance, a Minnesota congresswoman, Michele Bachmann (2009), told Michael Steele,

the Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman, who made a speech about a revolution to transform America at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, “Michael Steele! You be da man! You be da man.” By borrowing the grammatical rule⁴ of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Bachmann tried to elevate her coolness by demonstrating her capability of the use of AAVE “perfectly” in the “right” context (at least she believed so).

Covert Racial Discourse: a CD with the “Barack the Magic Negro” Song

As I demonstrated, at first, the word *negro* was employed by a White comedian Paul Shanklin, and then more broadly circulated in the U.S. by a White American radio host, Rush Limbaugh. Furthermore, Chip Saltsman, a candidate for chairmanship of the Republican National Committee (RNC), made a CD with the “Barack the Magic Negro” song and distributed it as a Christmas gift in 2008 to RNC members. This clearly shows that Whites have a power, right, and authority to be able to excuse their use of “covert racist discourse” by actively denying the fact that the term *negro* is actually a racist utterance. *Negro* can be used in a neutral sense such as in historical documentary films, and it depends very much on the context of usage whether or not it carries a negative connotation, although, here, *negro* is used in a negative way. Eliasoph (1999) explains how people act differently in the public, “frontstage” setting, and in the private, “backstage” setting. By employing Erving Goffman’s concept of “backstage,” Eliasoph (1999) argues that overtly racist discourses tend to appear in private, “backstage” settings—“in situations where people do not have to worry about making a good impression, where they are

⁴ “The conjugated or inflected be has the ability to allow the *is* or *are* to disappear, yielding a ‘zero copula’” (Hatcher 2006).

‘free’ to speak” (481). The RNC’s Saltsman might have thought that the space among the RNC members is a “safe” space for him to overtly exhibit racist views articulated by Shanklin, a singer of the “Barack the Magic Negro,” as Saltsman assumed that it is a “backstage” setting.

Eliasoph also points out that within a certain group,

members [make] jokes [...] to violate norms and appear defiant. They [are] ‘doing things with words’ together. They—especially the man—very eagerly spoke out as the bad, the wild ones, the unsanctimonious, the wicked, the violators of a taboo that ‘everyone knows’ is there, so that they could appear free in their leisure time. [Eliasoph 1990:490]

In such a unique group environment, being sensitive about racist jokes, opposing them, is seen as somehow not having a sense of humor.

Expanding on Eliasoph’s theory, some people, especially men, seem to use racial jokes to challenge others as if they were asking indirectly, “Are you cool enough to get my racist jokes? Do you have the confidence to laugh at my jokes with me? Are you a man?” As I demonstrated in this chapter, there are different types and degrees of racial discourses. However, explicit or implicit utterances in fact cause the same result, since people of color have been plunged into the lowest racial position by the use of both overt and covert racial discourses. In short, I can conclude that racist discourses have been employed by Whites in order to exclude people of color culturally and politically from the U.S. mainstream. Such discourses are also available to challenge the cultural citizenship of any people of color, including Obama.

CHAPTER 4: MAGIC NEGRO

Media Messages behind Certain Roles of People of Color

In the previous chapter, I wrote that White people have difficulty in acknowledging covert racial discourse. Such discourse is so well-camouflaged that it seems almost completely irrelevant to racism against people of color. My earlier example about the controversial parody entitled “Barack the Magic Negro” demonstrates how White people employ such covert racial discourses in our daily lives by continuously ignoring marginalized people’s mental anguish. In many cases, White people excused themselves as just being funny when accused of being racist. In this chapter, I will explore in more depth the problematic characteristics of the image of the “Magic Negro” by examining various media sources, specifically focusing on Hollywood movies and online clips. My intention is to analyze how the concept of the “Magic Negro” and its influences on people’s perspectives on race and ethnicity, since this “magic” image promotes the circulation of prejudiced views toward people of color.

“The Bad Negro” vs. “The Good Negro” Referred to as “The Saint”

Appiah (1993), a professor of philosophy at Princeton University, calls movies authored by White people as “‘white’ Hollywood movies” compared to “‘black’ movies” where most of the primary protagonists are African Americans. He claims that certain roles available for African American actors in “white” Hollywood movies are “crooks, thugs, muggers, whores [...], servants” in contemporary settings and are “slaves” in costume dramas (Appiah 1993:79). Appiah calls another second type of the African American character appearing in “white” Hollywood films “the good Negro.” He defines the characteristics of “the good Negro” as “the

noble, good-hearted black man or woman, friendly to whites, working-class[,] but better educated than most working class Americans” (Appiah 1993:80). Compared to the previous roles of muggers or slaves, the latter role of “the good Negro” is an apparently positive stereotype provided for African Americans.

Appiah later replaces the term, “the good Negro” with another term, “the Saint” (Appiah 1993:81) in order to describe a type of positive Negro character. Appiah illustrates “the Saint” character of African Americans in movies such as *Ghost* (1990) with the role of the psychic, Oda Mae Brown, played by Whoopie Goldberg (81). According to Appiah, the role of Oda Mae Brown is categorized as “the Saint” because she has the sanctity and the capacity to save the White protagonists by performing miracles. Sam, played by Patrick Swayze, is accidentally killed, but even after he dies he can communicate with his partner, Molly played by Demi Moore, through Oda Mae. Oda Mae helps Sam to avenge his death and also to save Molly’s life, which is threatened by the betrayer. Furthermore, Oda Mae plays an active part in saving Molly from her mental crisis caused by the loss of her partner. Through Oda Mae’s help, Sam and Molly are able to validate their deep love for each other. Finally, at ease, Sam passes on to heaven. This “magic” image of Oda Mae is based on a more general impression of the otherness of African Americans, who are regarded as mysterious, non-ordinary people.

Thoughtlessly seeing the current roles available for African American actors in movies, people might easily conclude that the black roles have become more open than they once were and are no longer limited to positions only carrying negative stereotypes of people of color. Analyzing the characteristics of “the Saint” reveals that people of color are thought to have extraordinary, outstanding, and exotic skills. In such particular contexts, people of color seem to be viewed as trustworthy and as valued as White people or even beyond White people. What I

would like to argue is that even with such apparently positive roles and characters in movies, these roles ultimately promote the perpetuation of the subjugation of people of color by circulating false images of them. As Cunningham (2007) also discusses, in addition to the misrepresentation of people of color, the primary role of African American characters in Hollywood movies remains, after all, to assist White characters throughout the narratives. In short, the figures appearing in Hollywood movies reinforce stereotypes of people of color by distinguishing them based on their physical appearances and race.

The Roles of Magic(al) Negro: *Matrix* (Morpheus vs. Neo)

Glenn summarizes the criteria of the characteristics of the magical Negro as

(a) using magical and spiritual gifts for the White character, (b) assuming primarily service roles, (c) exhibiting folk wisdom as opposed to intellectual cognition, and (e) displaying an inability to use his or her powers to help himself or herself. [Glenn 2007:8]

The *Matrix* movie series (1999, 2003) by the Wachowski brothers have had a huge social impact in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and have ultimately become a sub-culture in U.S. society. For instance, people try to interpret the messages from the movies to apply those principles to their life philosophy, wear the costumes of the primary characters, and play with its videogames. In the *Matrix*, the African American man named Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburne, leads a large group of people living in the underground Zion city, the last human stronghold against the machine world. However, it is easy to see that all his decisions and actions are made to assist Neo, played by Keanu Reeves (a White man), considered as “the One” who has the capacity to save human beings from the machine world (the Matrix world). The Morpheus characterization largely conforms to Glenn’s characterization of the magical Negro in

the sense that Morpheus always puts off his own concerns until fulfilling Neo's (12). Morpheus teaches Neo martial arts skills and guides him to become "the One" to prepare for the fight against the machines. This is what Glenn calls the (a) character of the magical Negro because he uses his skills for a White man (8). Whenever Neo faces various crises, Morpheus is always there to assist him and even is willing to die for him. On the other hand, regardless of his masterly skills, when attacked by a part of the Matrix, Morpheus cannot protect himself, and this is a good representation of Glenn's (e) characteristics of the magical Negro (12).

Matrix (Oracle vs. Neo)

Expanding on Glenn's examples (2007), there is also another African American character, the Oracle, portrayed by Gloria Foster, who plays a very important role throughout the story. Although she herself later turns out to be a part of the old computer programming system, the Oracle appears as a human figure who possesses the power of foresight when giving advice and guiding Neo in order to fight against the Matrix world. Her role is very similar to that of Morpheus, in the sense that she has special skills that she brings to the service of Neo. However, her skills are useless when it comes to her facing her own crisis when many agents from the Matrix system attack her house to destroy her. Both the roles of Morpheus and the Oracle represent the concept of the Magic Negro very well since both of them exhibit typical characteristics of African Americans in Hollywood films.

It is thus not surprising that there are several African American actors whose roles tend to be associated with the Magic Negro characteristics, such as the actor, Morgan Freeman. In the movies, *Bruce Almighty* (2003) and *Evan Almighty* (2007), Morgan Freeman plays the role of God, who appears when the white protagonists, Jim Carrey as Bruce and Steve Carell as Evan,

need his help. He possesses the supernatural power to control people and nature, and his primary task is to help people. In both movies, God gives the white protagonists a lesson and constantly supports them to help them discover their strengths. He disappears when the white protagonists finally find their own values and happy lives with their families under the guidance of God, indicating that he has, as the Magic Negro, served nobly. The roles of African Americans are very limited in both movies. Another African American figure appears in *Evan Almighty*. The African American secretary, Rita played by Wanda Sykes, speaks African American English and plays a mostly comical role. Thus, throughout the stories, African American characters are mainly either exoticized or humorous.

Barack Obama as the “Magic Negro”

The terminologies used to describe African Americans slightly differ such as “the good Negro,” “the Saint,” and “the magic(al) Negro.” However, the messages behind the images of many African American characters in Hollywood movies are the same since these characters are expected to be there to support White people standing on the edge of a precipice. The concept of the “Magic Negro” has been used in both positive and negative ways in regard to President Obama. I will address how people view how his success in his career separates him from ordinary people, as he is “the One.” Due to the extremely bad U.S. economy during the year of 2008 and on into 2010, the U.S. people desperately seem to expect the appearance of “the One” who is capable of saving America from the economic crisis. Ever since his presidential election campaign, Barack Obama, who tends to be seen as a non-authentic African American, has been associated with the image and expectation that he can bring about massive change through his “magical” skills.

Obama as “the One”

A short clip used in a John McCain campaign advertisement (2008) pictures Barack Obama as a man of extraordinary ability. Another interpretation can be of mocking his success at being a Presidential candidate as a non-White person. In the clip, a figure of Moses, a leader of the Jewish people who according to the Bible led them out of Egypt, appears intercut with a picture of Obama with some comments mentioning that Obama is “a leader that God has blessed us with at this time,” and that “his hand guides the world.” Additionally the description, “In Denver, you will see the light,” reflects how the clip wants viewers to perceive Barack Obama as separate from ordinary Americans. One interpretation of the use of the word *light* can be associated with the saintliness of Obama. However, recognizing that the advertisement was used by the John McCain campaign, the image of Barack Obama as a leader of the world was more likely created as a controversial parody to separate him completely from average White Americans. Also, the clip might to some people include the message that “Obama will lead to nowhere” as Moses and his followers wandered for forty years after crossing the Red Sea before entering the Holy Land. In another song clip from a *Youtube* video, entitled “The Barack Obama Song,” Obama is described as a non-human character flying past the White House like some kind of superhero. The contents of the song, sung by a man in the clip, do not make sense at all but try to mock President Obama somewhat by repeating: “he loves Obama and heard that Barack Obama has special powers and has laser eye beams, and one time Obama ate a kid.” These two clips, one created for McCain’s campaign and another for entertainment, are similar in that both clips feature an increased sense of distance between Obama and other people in the real world. This is done, not because he is the President (formerly a presidential candidate), but mainly in order to add eccentricity to the allegedly extraordinary skills of Obama.

The Impact of the Magic Negro in the Real World

The common characteristics of African Americans portrayed as the Magic Negro as seen in Hollywood movies have a huge impact on our daily lives. In fact, as a *Youtube* video clip demonstrates, people started to compare and contrast Morpheus's powerful speech in front of Zion's people with Obama's speeches. Actually, Obama himself sometimes has been called "the One." It seems to me that people might have expectations for Barack Obama both as Neo, who can save the American people from the current crisis, and as Morpheus, who can assist and lead White people in the correct direction. The reason that Obama is permitted to have access to the two roles at the same time is that, as I discussed earlier in his association with both Neo and Moses, there is some ambiguity about his "color" identification. Obama is viewed neither as Black enough or White enough. Consequently, Obama's roles seem to be flexible in the sense of identity switching, depending on how people need and desire to perceive him. My research reveals that the "magic" figure is not only limited to African American roles, but it can also be observed in the roles of people of color in general in Hollywood films, such as Asians, Mexicans, and Native Americans.

CHAPTER 5: Magic People of Color

As I discussed in Chapter 4, even clearly positive media images and stereotypes of African Americans influence the way White people perceive them. In this chapter, my analysis of Hollywood movies will further develop and support my argument that the figures of people of color are consistently racialized by White people in the media. Those media images have a negative impact on their views toward non-Whites. My research reveals that Glenn's (2007) characterization of the magical Negro, as discussed in Chapter 4, can also apply to the character roles generally played by people of color in Hollywood movies. In short, the magical Negro and the character roles played by people of color have much in common, in the sense that all of the minority characters can be adapted to the "magic" image. The magical skills of people of color are represented in slightly different ways from one characterization to another, depending on their particular race or ethnic background. However, their mysterious powers, like the powers of the Magic Negro, regularly manage to solve various crisis situations which occur to White protagonists. On the other hand, people of color never try to use their folk wisdom and magical powers for their own private purposes. As a result, their own concerns and needs are seldom addressed and dealt with. Comparing and contrasting the roles and characteristics of people of color, as portrayed in Hollywood films, will allow us to understand how White people perceive all people of color, in general.

The Magic Mexicans in *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*

The first example informs us of the characterization of Mexicans as the magic Mexicans. Most of the movie characters appearing in *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* (2008) exhibit "magic" images and stereotypes of Mexicans throughout the film. Even though this film is presented as a

comedy and features talking dogs, it is still structured around classic ethnic stereotypes. The film has a very simple plot with simple jokes, and we must read between the lines to realize that the story contains racial messages. At the outset, the female Chihuahua from Beverly Hills named Chloe gets lost in Mexico and tries to find her way home. A white Chihuahua, Chloe, is easily associated with a White person, not only because she has white fur, but also because she is treated like a daughter by her owner, a White woman named Aunt Viv, played by Jamie Lee Curtis. She meets a solitary male German Shepard named Delgado, who used to play an active part in a police dog team. Delgado is locked into a cage with other dogs in a dog-fight ring. Delgado helps Chloe to escape from El Diablo, a cruel Doberman who works for a heartless and violent Mexican man named Rafferty, played by Maury Sterling, who owns the illegal dog-fighting business.

At first, when Delgado witnesses Chloe almost starting to be beaten at the dog-fighting competition by El Diablo, he decides to open the lock of the cage where he was in to save Chloe. Miraculously, Delgado, Chloe and other dogs succeed in escaping. However, their adventurous getaway story raises my first question of why Delgado stays in the cage obediently if he knows how to open the lock and escape. Audiences might guess that Delgado just wanted to live quietly in the environment given to him, so he did not want to cause any trouble with the dog-fighting ringleader, Rafferty, who exercises his authority through El Diablo. Audiences can imagine another possibility, namely that Delgado was satisfied with his life in the dog-fighting competition as long as he is fed. Regardless of considerable possibilities that existed for Delgado, he did not try to make a getaway from Rafferty until Chloe enters the picture. His decision and behavior as the magic Mexican (dog) resembles the features of the Magic Negro in the sense that he postpones private profit for the happiness of a White (dog). Delgado once

leaves Chloe because of a misunderstanding but comes back to save her when she is in a pinch, as if he notices her crisis instinctively or “magically.”

The magical figure is not limited to Delgado, but it is also found in the other characters in the film such as a Mexican Chihuahua, called Papi, who belongs to a Latino landscaper, Sam, played by Manolo Cardona, who works for Chloe’s owner. Papi and Sam also go to Mexico to help Rachael, played by Piper Perabo, an irresponsible niece of Aunt Viv, who originally took Chloe to Mexico for her vacation. Furthermore, a Mexican Chihuahua “tribe leader” teaches Chloe how to be more proud of herself as a member of the Chihuahua tribe. His encouragement ultimately makes her recognize that her own values come from herself, but not from decorating herself with her diamond collar, beautiful clothes, and paw gloves. Chloe displays great courage in barking powerfully and protects herself from a dognapping, which was taught to her by the magic Mexican Chihuahua tribe leader. Delgado, Papi, Sam, and other stray Mexican dogs, all marked as Mexicans, are all there to help the innocent White protagonists from Beverly Hills, Chloe and Rachael, by giving them life lessons and helping them realize what is important in their lives. Although the White protagonists usually develop their characteristics and show their step-by-step progression, the roles of people (and dogs) of color are underlined mostly when using their wisdom as they save the main White protagonists from tragedy.

The Magic Japanese in *The Karate Kid* Series

My next example contains aspects of a magic Japanese Karate instructor. In *The Karate Kid* (1984) and *The Karate Kid, Part II* (1986), we can observe the role of the Japanese man as a magical figure. The magic Japanese man serves as a key person in giving lessons to an immature White protagonist by keeping an eye on both the mental and physical development of White

people and occasionally performing with mysterious powers. A White teenage boy, Daniel, moves to California and meets a Japanese man named Mr. Miyagi. Miyagi is portrayed as an inscrutable man from the beginning. For instance, he often chases a fly with a pair of chopsticks to improve his concentration skills and speaks English slowly with a foreign accent, occasionally inserting Japanese words. Miyagi becomes Daniel's Karate teacher after he witnesses Daniel being bullied by other students who know Karate. Miyagi's Karate lessons are very mysterious as he basically just assigns various household chores to Daniel such as waxing his cars, and painting and sanding his newly built fences and wooden floors.

Although at first, Daniel does not realize that Miyagi has been teaching him a variety of defensive skills in Karate through these chores, soon he has a chance to exercise those skills when he faces an unexpected attack by the same group of bullies. Miyagi teaches Daniel folklore wisdom and one of the most important principles of Karate, which it should not be used for the purpose of fighting but should be only used to defend oneself. Audiences are made aware of Daniel's unfortunate prior history to help them understand his character development. As for Miyagi, however, there is very limited information provided about him or his past. This continuously gives the image of an incomprehensible character who somehow possesses many classic American cars and has mastered the skill to build floors and fences. He lets Daniel choose a car from his collection as a gift, and Miyagi uses his magical powers to fix the car when Daniel visits him. In the final game of the Karate tournament, Daniel's knee gets seriously injured by the evil tactics of his opponent, and he cannot stand anymore. However, Miyagi's miracle of laying his hands on Daniel gives him a transient strength and leads him to become the tournament champion.

Daniel, an immature teenager at the beginning, turns out to master Karate skills, owns a car, gets a pretty girlfriend, and becomes a hero for the people by being a Karate champion—all of which he could have not been able to do without Miyagi. Furthermore, Miyagi's moral lessons have the miraculous effect of reclaiming bullied kids from a life of vice.

Meanwhile, Miyagi's character has not developed much from the beginning of the story until the end. Miyagi's incapability of solving his own life matters by utilizing his own wisdom is especially highlighted in *The Karate Kid, Part II* (1986), when he and Daniel go to Japan and Miyagi must confront an old friend who has a grudge against him. Although Daniel tries to help Miyagi solve his problems, it does not work well. Therefore, similar to the roles and the characters of people of color in other movies, Miyagi, for his part, does not ask for any help from the White protagonist, Daniel in this case, but tries to manage the situation by himself. Compared to the magical, but also practical, skills provided by the magic Mexican, the skills of the magic Japanese are also shrouded in mystery until the end of the story. This sense of mystery might be explained how, compared to Mexicans, Japanese people are thought of as more foreign by (White) Americans; which is crucial to bring the magic image to perfection.

The Magic Mapuche in *Sol y Viento*

Not surprisingly, the magic image can also apply to Native Americans. My example presented here also shows that “magic people of color” is not exclusively a Hollywood phenomenon, but also found in diverse media. *Sol y Viento* (2005) is a Spanish textbook and a video material used for the first and the second semester Spanish courses at The University of Arizona. A young White American businessman, Jaime, played by Francisco Lorite, is sent to Chile to secure a land deal by buying up the land of a bankrupt winery. He meets María, played

by Javiera Contador, a Chilean anthropologist and also a member of the family that owns the winery, and falls in love with her. Jaime rediscovers what the most important things in life should be, and how land and people are connected and support each other by interacting with various local Chileans. These local Chileans include María, a taxi driver named Mario, a foreman of the winery named Traimaqueo, the matriarch of the Sol y Viento winery, named Isabel, and a friend of the family named Paco. Those Chileans do not possess a “magic” image, but they teach Jaime important life-lessons. They do this by exhibiting their agony while facing the family crisis of having to sell the winery to Jaime’s American power generation company due to their poor management of the winery business. Jaime learns the importance of bonds of friendship and family and that humans are a part of nature from Chileans.

On the other hand, the indigenous people of Chile, the Mapuche, do exhibit mysterious powers when resolving conflicts among people for the purpose of protecting their ancestral lands and sustaining harmonious relationships between people and nature. A spiritual leader named Machi and one of her sons, a nameless spirit, appear to perform magic which turns the story in the correct direction. One time the spirit emerges as a fortune teller, and his existence sets off the initial meeting of Jaime and María. However, once he accomplishes his mission to resolve the conflict among Jaime, María, a winery owner, and Jaime’s company, he disappears and never shows up again. This indicates that the spirit seems to primarily exist to help White protagonists and the people around him by teaching them a life-lesson.

The Magic Aborigine in *Australia*

There are not many real cases found in our daily lives in which people become cross-racially close to each other, compared to the ratio of forging relationships with the same-race

group. Regardless of this fact, in Hollywood movies the White protagonist frequently becomes close to one person or some people of color and has an opportunity to develop a steady and deep friendship with them. In *Australia* (2008), a British woman named Sarah, played by Nicole Kidman, moves to Australia from England to sell cattle station owned by her husband, who was murdered shortly before her arrival. Sarah meets an aboriginal boy named Nullah, played by Brandon Walters, and develops a friendship with him. [Place Figure 20 here] From the very beginning, Nullah is described as an enigmatic child since he can appear and suddenly disappear from Sarah's sight without making any sound. Also, his song and movements inspire audiences with great mystery. Nullah's mother, an aboriginal woman named Daisy, played by Ursula Yovich, drowns in a tragic accident, so later Sarah keeps an eye on Nullah by taking on the role of his mother.

Australia demonstrates many racial stereotypes throughout the story, and one of the traditional stereotypical images exhibited is in the character of Daisy. Her death can be seen as a punishment for having a cross-racial relationship with a bad White figure, Fletcher, played by David Wenham, who tries to control Sarah's ranch. Even though Daisy is portrayed as a full-blooded aborigine, her uneasy and forced sexual relationship with Fletcher "mulattoises" her, making her into a "tragic mulatto." On the other hand, strangely, there is no punishment given to the White protagonist, Sarah, for falling love with Drover, played by Hugh Jackman, soon after her husband dies. It is clear that Daisy's death largely exists to cast Sarah for the quasi-mother role to Nullah.

King George, portrayed by David Gulpilil, is an Aboriginal elder who possesses magical powers, and he is also Nullah's grandfather and teaches Nullah folklore wisdom. Nullah uses his magical power when saving Sarah's hundreds of stampeding cattle driven by the evil Fletcher.

As well as Nullah, King George performs his magical skills consistently to protect his grandson and Sarah, while the latter always protects Nullah. As we have seen in the trend of the portrayal of the Magic Negro and Magic people of color generally, both Nullah and King George never use their wisdom and magic for their own personal protection or gain, but they are willing to use it to protect the interests, property, and lives of White characters. For instance, they use their powers for Sarah such as singing a song to lead the party in the right direction in a desert when they are driving their cattle from one place to another. As a result, Nullah cannot protect his own mother or even himself but rather waits for somebody else's help when faced with the violence of Fletcher.

At the end of the movie, both King George and Nullah go back to nature, leaving Sarah as if they have accomplished their duty to serve her. Sarah has become mentally tougher, so she can live by herself. In addition to the quasi-mother/son relationship between Sarah and Nullah, a close relationship between a White man and his aboriginal worker is presented in the film. The willingness and spirit of service inside Nullah, King George, and other aboriginal characters is a crucial part of their roles as people of color in this Hollywood movie. In other words, many of the characters played by people of color basically exist to both highlight cross-racial friendship and a willingness to devote themselves to the interests of White people without any expectation for something in return.

Such media images of people of color impact on White people's views when they perceive minorities in their real lives. This means that people of color are not expected or even not welcomed to play the leading character both in fictional movies and in the real world. In short, the expectation and the perception is that people of color are happy to concentrate on playing a supporting role throughout their lives for White people, who play the most important

roles in both media and real life. Such a negative and limiting expectation and perception of people of color consistently puts great pressure upon non-Whites, those who try to achieve a higher social status, beyond the White middle classes. This perception is associated with American views of President Barack Obama, who is thought of by some as an uppity Negro, as I have discussed previously. When considering him as a member of the African American minority group, many people in general are not convinced by Obama's skills, which appear beyond those of average (White) people. However, many Americans, of all ethnicities, view Obama as the Savior who will solve the American economic crisis as well as many various other problems and issues.

CHAPTER 6: THE WHITE SAVIOR AND THE MAGIC NEGRO

Before concluding, I will explore the unique but also very problematic characteristics of the image of the “white savior,” also often appearing in Hollywood movies. At first, I will start to explain what a “White savior” is. A “White savior” is basically a stereotypical White protagonist in movies. She or he exists to save the people of color from crisis by leading them and teaching them the use of Western strategies and technology. This is an inversion of the Magic Negro. Although both the Magic Negro and the White Savior characters share the important mission of rescuing others from crisis, they rely on completely different strategies when it comes to accomplishing their missions. Regarding the Magic Negro characters, as I discussed previously in Chapter 5, they can solve any problem perfectly because of their magical powers and disappear when their job is completed. In contrast to the “Magic Negro,” as soon as the “White savior” joins a group of people of color, that character becomes the leader of the group. This is usually due to the White person’s reliable, strong, intelligent, and warm-hearted personality.

The White Savior in *Dances with Wolves*

In *Dances with Wolves* (1990), Lieutenant Dunbar, portrayed by Kevin Costner, takes a job as a guardian on the Western front. Spending time by himself in an abandoned military outpost, he becomes friends with local Native Americans. Lieutenant Dunbar learns the language spoken by the Native Americans and adopts and shows respect to their culture. Since their lands are always threatened by U.S. encroachment, one of the tribe’s leaders often asks him for information about when White people will reach their lands to convert them to U.S. territories. One day, when an enemy tribal group attacks the group Lieutenant Dunbar is with, he teaches the

Native Americans how to use a rifle and gives permission for them to use rifles that belong to him. He saves the group and leads them to victory. Under the protection and guidance of the “White savior,” people of color become trusting and worship the White protagonist as the White leader, and thus their group is united and cannot be beaten by the enemy. In most cases, the enemy is White people, but in this case the enemy is other Native Americans. In the plot, Lt. Dunbar is a civil war veteran, and the events take place in the latter part of the 19th century. From a historical point of view, those Native Americans whom he meets should have already known how to shoot a rifle. This anachronism might have been designed purposely into the plot to bring the White savior’s image to perfection.

The White Savior in *Avatar*

In *Avatar* (2009), human beings are mining a precious and special mineral called “unobtainium” on the planet Pandora. The native residents of Pandora, an indigenous group called Na’vi, are threatened by the expansion of the mine activities. The native people have exotic and magical powers which allow them to understand and live with nature. They as a group even have the talent to revitalize the dead; however, the group still ends up lacking a leader, which only the White protagonist can fulfill due to his knowledge of other White people, White culture, and the English spoken by the White people. The story of *Avatar* is very similar to that of *Dances with Wolves* in the sense that both films depict the White protagonists’ successful interactions with native people. The accomplishment of their mission leads the native people to view them as a hero, a “White savior” of their group. A gigantic aerial predator, the Great Leonopteryx, plays a very important role in Na’vi culture. The Na’vi people believe in a legend that, in the past, only a single great Na’vi succeeded in both mentally and physically connecting

with the Great Leonopteryx and riding it. Thus, they deeply believe that whoever is able to ride this predator must be the selected as the “one.” Therefore, once the White protagonist, Jake, unexpectedly rides the beast and controls it, all the Na’vi suddenly start to view him as a hero and worship him. This even convinces some Na’vi who at the beginning persistently objected to Jake’s joining their group, which demonstrates that the White protagonist is now welcome to the indigenous group as the savior expected to protect their community by using his extra-ordinary powers. Interestingly, under the White savior plot, the White savior, who becomes the leader of a group, does not disappear even after the completion of their mission, but rather decides to remain in the group as one of the people of color usually through marriage with a person of color. On the other hand, with “Magic Negro” characters, they are not usually considered as a marriage partner, but rather a temporary life supporter; they disappear from the story once their role is completed.

White Savior Myth

Themes of the White savior and the Magic People of color are ubiquitous and seen not only in leisure industry products but everywhere. Such scripts seem natural and are taken for granted in our society, and thus, even trained and thoughtful scholars such as Marshall Sahlins can easily reproduce the White savior myth. Sahlins does not notice he is doing so when he analyzes the death and deification of Captain James Cook in Hawaii in his book *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981). Sahlins never questioned the need to critique and reflect on how Cook’s historical character has been mythologized. An anthropologist of Sri Lankan origin, Gananath Obeyesekere, attacks Sahlins theory in a book titled *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* (1992). According to Obeyesekere, Sahlins falsely presumes that the native people

believed that Captain Cook was the returning God, Lono, when Captain Cook landed on the island of Hawaii in 1779. Obeyesekere argues that only native people understand the native's perspective, so Sahlins could not have accurately interpreted how native Hawaiians would have viewed Captain Cook since Sahlins was an outsider.

Although Sahlins' theory that Captain Cook was viewed as a God might be accurate, this assumption contributes to the development of the White savior myth regarding Cook, due to the ethnocentric view of Western society. In other words, unequal relationships of oppressors and subordinates and the saturation of White tradition have created an atmosphere in which White people are viewed as superior to people of color. Especially for a White audience, the White savior script is very appealing since they can easily associate themselves with the protagonists. However, since the theme of the White savior is incredibly widespread and integrated into Western society, culture, and its products, people do not realize that the White savior plot can result in reproducing a false image of the White people as the superior race.

CONCLUSION

As I demonstrated, even apparently positive stereotypes such as the images of the Magic Negro are just as harmful as the negative ones and can be applied to all non-White, minority groups. My research reveals that “othering” is an essential process to complete the magic image. In order to highlight the non-ordinary feature, Hollywood movies, which contain people of color, often exoticize them through their appearance and behavior. Also, to keep the characters mysterious, people of color frequently speak with a non-standard English accent or in their native language. For instance, when listening to Nullah’s song sung in a non-English language in *Australia* or the Mapuche’s praying words in *Sol y Viento*, both characters in the films and audiences seem to easily believe in the magical skills of people of color simply because they are not White people. People of color are also clad in different costumes, look different and sound different. However, this means that people of color in general, who are viewed as having an access to languages other than Standard English or cultures other than “American,” are consistently perceived as non-ordinary people in U.S. society.

As we have seen, in order to change the traditional stereotypes of people of color dramatically in our real lives, we should first start changing the media images appearing in the movies or television shows. Providing healthy media representations and images, in which children from every racial group can associate the images to their own race is very important. Thus, the biased media images such as the happy Negro played by the Uncle Remus character, discussed in Chapter 4, should be completely abandoned. Apparently, Uncle Remus looks very happy singing a song and telling stories to young White children, who are thought of as the sons or daughters of the slave owners in the slave era. Such false images of minority groups survive through the media by ignoring the cruel aspects of slave eras and the valorize relationship

between the black slaves and the White slave owners. This glorified image reinforces the false messages that people of color, specifically African Americans in this case, are satisfied with their rank and happily serve White people. The primary role for characters that are people of color in Hollywood movies is to assist White protagonists. Even such apparently positive roles and characters such as the Magic Negro ultimately perpetuate the subjugation of people of color by circulating false images of them.

Now, in the spring of 2010, President Obama's magical image has slightly faded compared to the time when he had just been elected as U.S. President. This might be associated with the fact that many Americans finally started to realize that they have had too many expectations for him, or they started understanding that Obama is just a politician and a fallible man but not the Magic Negro. I hope that his decreasing magical image will lead Americans to perceive him, including people of color in general, as an ordinary human being.

FIGURES

Racist Barack Obama T-shirt



Figure 1

Palin Rally Racism 2: The Beginning



Figure 2



Figure 3

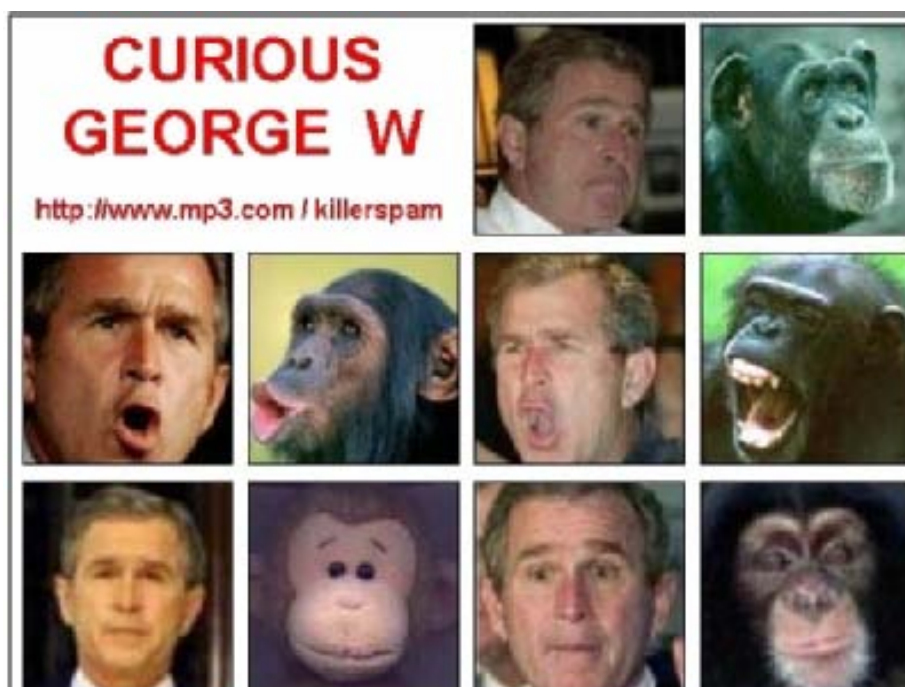


Figure 4

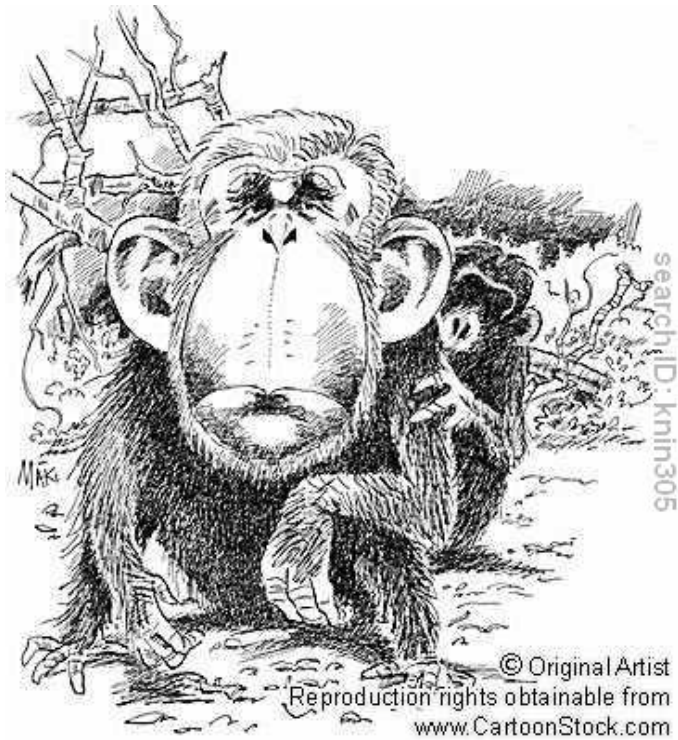


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

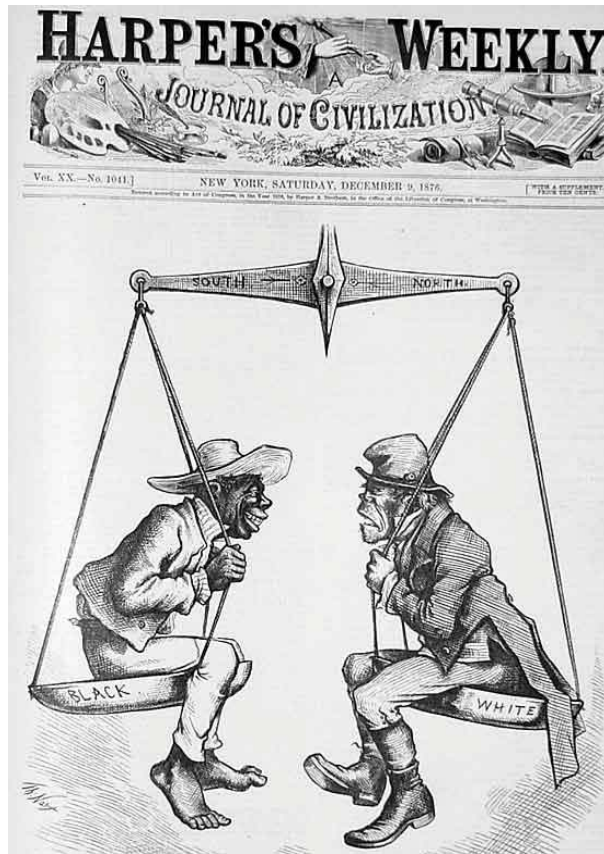


Figure 9

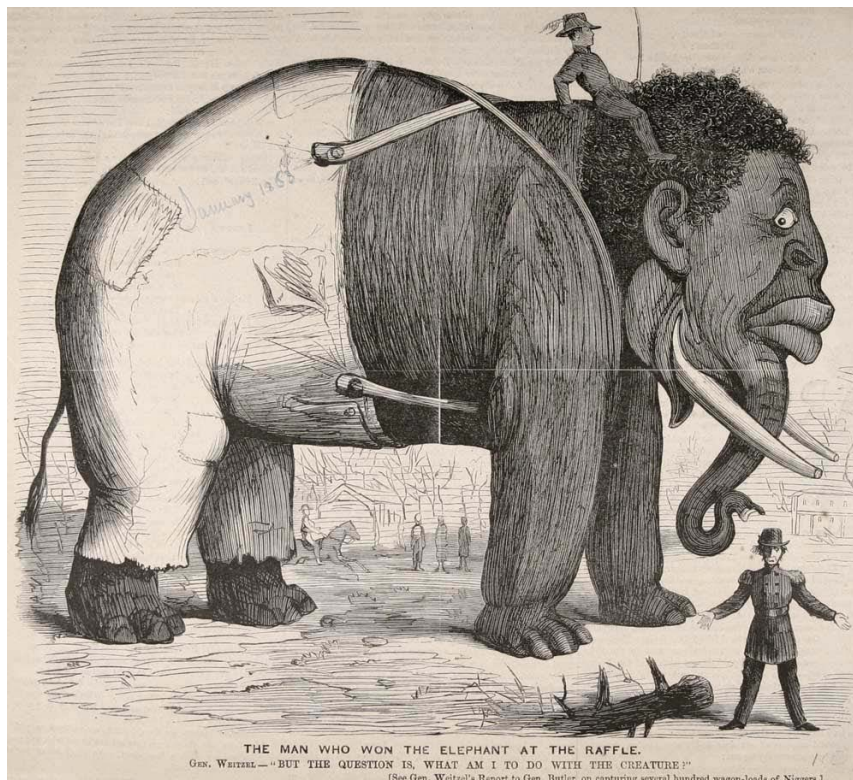


Figure 10

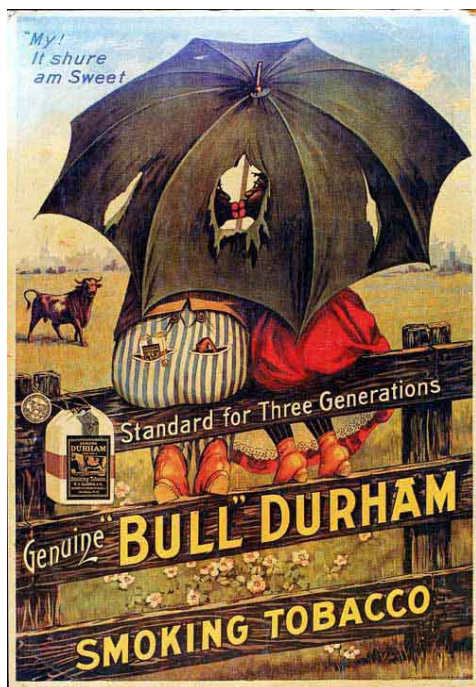


Figure 11

FIG. 339. — Apollo Belvidere.⁵⁵³



FIG. 340.⁵⁵⁶



Greek.

FIG. 341. — Negro.⁵⁵⁴



FIG. 342.⁵⁵⁷



Creole Negro.

FIG. 343. — Young Chimpanzee.⁵⁵⁵



FIG. 344.⁵⁵⁸



Young Chimpanzee.

(458)

Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

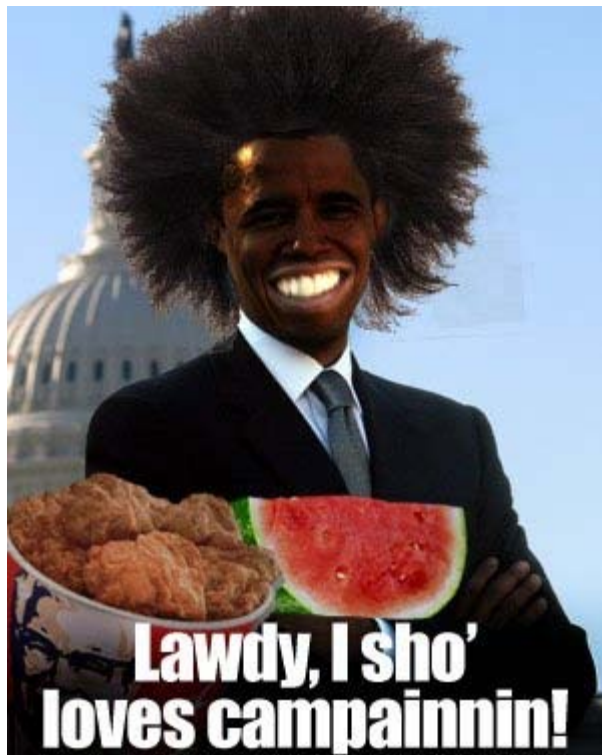


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

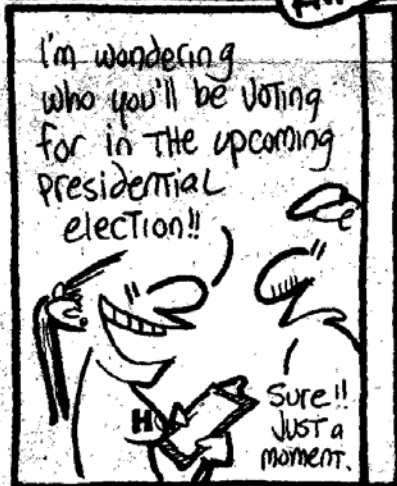


Figure 19: Knight, Keith. 2008. “The K-Chronicles: Stories from the Campaign Trail.” in *The Daily Wildcat* student newspaper, The University of Arizona, November 5: B7.



Figure 20

REFERENCES

Appiah, K.A.

1993 "No bad nigger": Blacks as the ethical principle in the movies. *In Media spectacles*. M. Garber, J. Malock, & R.L. Walkowitz, eds. Pp. 77-90. New York: Routledge.

Barack Obama The anti-American & Big Brother

2008 Youtube, February 28.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCngeFqFoks>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Brock, Kev

2008 Cool Video: 'Barack the Magic Negro' parody is LOL hilarious!!! Brock N' Roll Entertainment, December 29.

<http://brocknroll.wordpress.com/2008/12/29/cool-video-barack-the-magic-negro-parody-is-lol-hilarious/>, accessed April 29, 2009.

Bush Monkey Image. Electronic image,

http://willtoexist.com/images/bush_monkey3.jpg, accessed May 1, 2010.

Childers, Joel and Shain Bergan

2008 Daily Wildcat Cartoon Causes Campus Uproar. *The Daily Wildcat*, November 6: 1,3.

<http://media.wildcat.arizona.edu/media/storage/paper997/news/2008/11/06/News/Daily.Wildcat.Cartoon.Causes.Campus.Uproar-3529135.shtml?refsource=collegeheadlines>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Countdown - Questioning Obama's Patriotism

2008 Youtube, February 25.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBDW0aIReDU>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Curious George W.

2006 Electronic image,

<http://www.esnips.com/doc/a68e7399-a201-4dcf-8df7-040e47f8b3b7/!-Curious-George-W-Bush-comedy>, accessed April 29, 2009.

Curtis, Adam

2008 Comic Creator Comes after Chaos. *The Daily Wildcat*, November 19.

<http://media.wildcat.arizona.edu/media/storage/paper997/news/2008/11/19/News/Comic.Creator.Comes.After.Chaos-3551840.shtml>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Dearmond, Michelle

2008 Inland GOP Mailing Depicts Obama's Face on Food Stamp. *The Press Enterprise.com*.

http://www.pe.com/localnews/inland/stories/PE_News_Local_S_buck16.3d67d4a.html, accessed May 1, 2010.

Delpit, Lisa

1999 A Letter to My Daughter on the Occasion of Considering Racism in the United States, in *Racism Explained to my Daughter*, by Tahar Ben Jelloun. New York: The New Press. 174-193.

Discrimination against Blacks Linked To Dehumanization, Study Finds

2008 Science Daily, February 8. Electronic image,
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080207163811.htm>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Does Obama Love America?

2008 Youtube, February 20.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arsoMPghb9I&feature=related>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Ehrenstein, David

2007 Obama the 'Magic Negro.' Los Angeles Times, March 19. Electronic document,
<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-ehrenstein19mar19,0,5335087.story?coll=la-opinion-center>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Eliasoph, Nina

1999 "Everyday Racism" in a Culture of Political Avoidance: Civil Society, Speech, and Taboo" in *Social Problems*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pages 479-502.

Farmington Hills, Mich

2004 Jesse Jackson. The Gale Group. Electronic document,
http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/bhm/bio/jackson_j.htm, accessed May 1, 2010.

Frederick, Don

2008 Rep. Westmoreland Says He Was Clueless in Making 'Uppity' Comment about the Obamas. Los Angeles Times, September 5. Electronic document,
<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2008/09/rep-westmorelan.html>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Friedman, Ian

2008 No Laughing Matter: Artist Gives Viewpoint on Notorious Cartoon. The Daily Wildcat, November 20. Electronic document,
<http://media.wildcat.arizona.edu/media/storage/paper997/news/2008/11/20/News/No.Laughing.Matter-3554705.shtml>, accessed May 1, 2010.

George 'Monkey' Bush.

(year unknown) CSL News Cartoons. Electronic image,
<http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/c/chimpanzee.asp>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Glenn, Cerise L. 2007. The Power of Black Magic: The Magical Negro and White Salvation in Film. *Journal of Black Studies*. Oct. 2007.

Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization
(year unknown) Electronic image,
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/exploring/images/harpers.jpg>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Hatcher, Tierra
2006 African American Vernacular English (AAVE), The North Park University Writing Center. Electronic document,
<http://www.npuwritingcenter.com/AAVE.pdf>, accessed April 29, 2009.

Heath, Majhid
2008 *Australia*. Electronic image,
<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/stories/s2443697.htm>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Hill, Jane H.
2008 *The everyday language of White racism*. Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken.

J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. *The Oxford English Dictionary*
1989 Second edition. Vol. XIX. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Kaufman, Cynthia
2002 A User's Guide to White Privilege. *Radical Philosophy Review*. 4: 1/2:
30-38.

Knight, Keith
2008 *The K-Chronicles: Stories from the Campaign Trail*. *The Daily Wildcat*, The University of Arizona, November 5: B7.

Longman Corpus Network. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*
1995 Pearson P T R; 3rd Pkg edition.

KFC, Obama, and Watermelon
2009 *Funny Junk.com*. Electronic image,
www.funnyjunk.com/showcomment/1620423/, accessed May 1, 2010.

Martin Luther King Jr. Meets Morpheus Meets Obama
2008 Youtube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jg6qZ8Cc3cg>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Obama and Curious George
2008 Matthew's blog. *MatthewSumpter.com*. 3 March 2008. Electronic image,
http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.matthewsumpter.com/media/obama_george.jpg&imgrefurl=http://matthewsumpter.com/%3Fq%3Dnode/9&h=300&w=600&s

z=23&tbnid=bq9YJCKG1qLILM::&tbnh=68&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3DCurious%2BGeorge%2BObama&hl=en&usg=__AQm7x5jD8sL2bMHDA27sqGnkUeQ=&sa=X&oi=image_result&resnum=2&ct=image&cd=1, accessed April 29, 2009.

Michele Bachmann Tells Michael Steele: “You Be Da Man!”

2009 Huffington Post, February 26. Electronic document,

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/26/michele-bachmann-tells-mi_n_170426.html, accessed May 1, 2010.

Milbank, Dana

2008 President Obama Continues Hectic Victory Tour The Washington Post, July 30: A03.

Electronic document,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/29/AR2008072902068.html>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Moore, B. Robert and Arlene B. Hirschfelder

1999 American Indian Stereotypes in the World

of Children: A Reader and Bibliography. Ed. By Arlene Hirschfelder, Lanham, MD: The Scarce Crow Press, Inc. 55-60.

Moore, Robert B. and Arlene B. Hirschfelder

1999 Feathers, Tomahawks and Tipis: A Study of

Stereotyped “Indian” Imagery in Children’s Picture Books, in American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography, ed. by Arlene .

More Racism at a Palin Rally in PA.

2008 Youtube.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_MA4BINoLg&feature=related, accessed May 1, 2010.

Obama Monkey Image

(year unknown) Electronic image,

http://images.quickblogcast.com/4/6/1/0/1/117902-110164/obama_monkey_nigger.jpg, accessed May 1, 2010.

Obama Monkey sock toy

2008 Sheeple People.com Electronic image,

<http://www.sheeplepeople.com/is-the-obama-sock-monkey-racist/>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Obama Monkey T-Shirt Stirs Protest

2008 Youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QU2sQ5ukOko>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Obeyesekere, Gananath

1992 *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ong, Aihwa

1996 "Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making" in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 37, No. 5, Pp. 737-762.

Publisher Mulls Legal Action to Stop Sales of 'Racist' Obama T-Shirts

2008 WSBTV.com., May 14.

Kuper, Adam

1999 *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Racist Barack Obama T-shirt

2009 Youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL3mTBe-E-o>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Randall Kennedy

2001 "The Protean N-Word" in *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* by Randall Kennedy. New York: Pantheon Books. 3-55.

Sahlins, Marshall

1981 *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom*. Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.

Smith, Zadie

2009 "Speaking in Tongues" in *The New York Review of Books*. Feb 26, 2009. Vol. LVI, Number 3.

Smitherman, Geneva

2000 "I-Own Know What Dem White Folk Talkin Bout—We Never Did Git Our Forty Acres" in *Black Talk: Words and Phrases from the Hood to the Amen Corner*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Spitulnik, Debra

1997 "The social circulation of media discourse and the mediation of communities," in *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*, by Alessandro Duranti (ed.) 2001. Malden MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. Pp. 95-118.

Stein, Sam

2009 New York Post Chimp Cartoon Compares Stimulus Author to Dead Primate. The Huffington Post, February 18. Electronic document, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/18/new-york-post-chimp-carto_n_167841.html

The Barack Obama Song

2008 Youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix-9A7O9Phg&feature=related>, accessed May 1, 2010.

The Black South African Mind

(year unknown) Electronic image,

http://lh6.ggpht.com/john.jollyjack/R1W4VZj_ibI/AAAAAAAAAtQ/zuSW9IGLByE/, accessed May 1, 2010.

The History of Jim Crow

1866 A series of racist posters attacking Radical Republican exponents of black suffrage

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/gallery.cgi?collection=crow>, accessed may 1, 2010.

The History of Jim Crow

(19--) Bull Durham tobacco ads. Electronic image,

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/gallery.cgi?term=&collection=crow&index=60>, accessed May 1, 2010.

The Man Who Won the Elephant at the Raffle

(year unknown) Electronic image,

<http://mac110.assumption.edu/aas/graphics/elephantx.jpg>, accessed May 1, 2010.

The One II: Road to Denver

2008 Youtube.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PetxaA42OuE>, accessed May 1, 2010.

The Rush Limbaugh Show

2007 Barack the Magic Negro, Explained, March 23.

http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/estack_12_13_06/BarackSection/Barack_the_Magic_Negro__Explained.guest.html, accessed May 1, 2010.

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

2008 *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*

<http://adisney.go.com/disneyvideos/liveaction/beverlyhillsschihuahua>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Weisman, Jonathan

2008 Georgia GOP Congressman Calls Obama 'Uppity.' The Washington Post, September 4.

http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/09/04/georgia_gop_congressman_calls.html, accessed May 1, 2010.

White House Watermelon Email From California Mayor Dean Grose Inspires Outrage
2009 The Huffington Post, February 25. Electronic image,
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/25/white-house-watermelon-em_n_169933.html,
accessed May 1, 2010.

Wright, David and Sunlen Miller
2007 Obama Dropped Flag Pin in War Statement. abc News, October 4.
<http://abcnews.go.com/politics/story?id=3690000>, accessed May 1, 2010.

Zion, hear me!
2008 Youtube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5ZWN0m4r2k&feature=related>, accessed may 1,
2010.