



White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture

By Jan Nederveen Pieterse

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White on Black is a compelling visual history of the development of European and American stereotypes of black people over the last two hundred years. Its purpose is to show the pervasiveness of prejudice against blacks throughout the western world as expressed in stock-in-trade racist imagery and caricature. Reproducing a wide range of illustrations—from engravings and lithographs to advertisements, candy wrappings, biscuit tins, dolls, posters, and comic strips—the book challenges the hidden assumptions of even those who view themselves as unprejudiced.

Jan Nederveen Pieterse sets Western images of Africa and blacks in a chronological framework, including representations from medieval times, from the colonial period with its explorers, settlers, and missionaries, from the era of slavery and abolition, and from the multicultural societies of the present day. Pieterse shows that blacks have been routinely depicted throughout the West as servants, entertainers, and athletes, and that particular countries have developed their own comforting black stereotypes about blacks: Sambo and Uncle Tom in the United States, Golliwog in Britain, Bamboula in France, and Black Peter in the Netherlands. Looking at conventional portrayals of blacks in the nursery, in sexual arenas, and in commerce and advertising, Pieterse analyzes the conceptual roots of the stereotypes about them. The images that he presents have a direct and dramatic impact, and they raise questions about the expression of power within popular culture and the force of caricature, humor, and parody as instruments of oppression.

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Editorial Review

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Jan Nederveen Pieterse is Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

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