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Hollywood in Blackface: Black Images in Film from Night of the Living Dead to Thor

Paul Kersey

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In Black Run America (BRA), Hollywood is one of the primary cultural unifiers. Everyone sees and talks about the same films and movies across geographically diverse places from Bismark, North Dakota to Oxford, Mississippi. Filmmakers skillfully manipulate character and dialogue, conflict and action, in ways that allow them to cast positive and negative images; in so doing, filmmakers profoundly shape the perceptions their audiences hold of different racial groups which they, the audience, rarely encounter in real life. It is through this constant and careful manipulation of Black characters in popular films that has manufactured a positive representation for all Black people. Black Fictional Images (BFI) from the character of Captain Stephen Hiller played by Will Smith in Independence Day to Miles Dyson played by Joe Morton in Terminator 2: Judgment Day, from the character of Azeem played by Morgan Freeman in Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves to Terence Mann as played by James Earl Jones in Field of Dreams, these and numerous other actors and films have done more to burnish the image of Black people in America than all the Civil Rights activists combined. Indeed, the manipulation of characters like these and numerous others over the years have gone far toward manufacturing perceptions of Black people that reality just cannot replicate. Now even Thor, a movie based upon Nordic gods and mythology, has cast Black actor Idris Elba as a Northern European deity. Often characters such as these -- dubbed by one writer as the "Numinous Negro" -- provide moral clarity and guidance, helping the feckless white protagonist to overcome some obstacle or achieve some quest, and thus the positive image of the Black person is manufactured. A transference occurs, then, from this "Numinous Negro" that is rarely seen in a negative light into the positive image of Black Americans today that is out of kilter with reality. The book you hold in your hands, Hollywood in Blackface, will be your guide to the films and the characters that manipulated minds along the way in creating Black Run America.

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