

# The BLACK C O M M E N T A T O R

Commentary, analysis and investigations  
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**Black Moses Then and Black Self-Hate Now!  
Represent Our Resistance  
By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD  
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

Who taught you to hate the color of your skin? Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair? Who taught you to hate the shape of your nose and the shape of your lips? Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much so that you don't want to be around each other?...you should ask yourself who taught you to hate being what God made you.

-Malcolm

As a strategy of colonization, encouraging enslaved blacks to embrace and uphold white supremacist aesthetics was a masterstroke. Teaching black

folks to hate dark skin was one way to ensure that whether white oppressors were present or not, the values of white supremacy would still rule the day.

-bell hooks, [Salvation: Black People and Love](#)

Woe to the tumbling ivory towers, And to the captives of mimics.

-Mahmud Daewish, "To Nabir Mahfur"

My younger sister called and told me. Ike had died. My sister and I had nose-bleed seats at the then McCormick Place in Chicago. *But I see him.* "When?"

It wasn't *Shaft*. I saw that film so many times. I knew lines by heart. No, Isaac Hayes gave us a powerful image of blackness in 1969. Then, on Sunday, August 10, 2008, Black Moses died.

Hayes rose from abject poverty, presenting himself proudly as a Black man! I see him - unafraid to be Black. The chains he wore outwardly in defiance of our condition in Amerikkka are now worn inwardly by Black Americans, symbolic of our re-enslavement to the American Empire.

Here, in Amerikkka, hating blackness is a practice that engenders apartheid-like conditions among Black Americans. Apartheid - U. S. fashion - marginalizes those who refuse to engage in self-hate and those who do. This apartheid "selects" Black Americans for positions in the marketing of Black self-hate. Today, we witness politicians, entrepreneurs, entertainers, intellectuals, and community leaders, substitutes for overseers of old, exchange the well being of the Black poor and working class, the unemployed, the incarcerated and Black women for personal and corporate profits. The new overseers want so much to be, that they are willing to *be* anything and do anything in the service of American Empire. On the weekends, they wear the words "racial progress" on T-shirts worn to the golf course or to the "islands." I can't imagine what they saw when they heard Black Moses had died.

Even more than a business, Black self-hatred has become a way to be "Black" in Amerikkka. What would it be like if we had pride in our Blackness again?

A few weeks ago, a Bill Moyers (*Bill Moyer's Journal*) report on loan sharks brought out the real SHARKS! The report looked at the predatory tactics of capitalist entrepreneurs as they target marginalized Black and Latino communities and charge outrageous interests for financing a car or receiving a "pay-day" loan. In one community in Ohio, people fought back. After some effort, a law is in effect that sets a cap on the amount of interest these loan sharks can charge their targeted prey. Hear the righteous indignation of Black leaders! They are angry and screaming. Oh, our poor Blacks have no other recourse but pay day loan companies! Our poor brothers and sisters need their cars! Are they really concerned about the "poor" brothers and sisters in the "hood" or are they concerned about something else closer to home - their homes - away from the "hood"? Why isn't this leadership kicking and screaming with outrage about the conditions that place Blacks in the condition to be prey to the loan sharks? Who are these *concerned* leaders? Well, there's a coalition of the "Black" elite organizations: the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM), and local chapters of the National Urban League (NUB). These *concerned* leaders are actively campaigning to repeal the law in Ohio - when they are not on the sidelines cheering for the presidential candidacy of Sen. Barack Obama! Who cares when the target is Black Americans, specifically poor and working class Black Americans and Black "leadership", is an active cheering squad?

Speaking of Obama - or rather - they Obamas, there was that cover of *The New Yorker* on July 21, 2008. The Obamas, Barack and Michelle, are in the Oval Office. The American flag burns in the fireplace. Barack wears a turban and Michelle totes a gun. Her hair isn't straightened; she wears a *natural*.

Political pundits have focused on the turban-wearing Obama. All Muslims are terrorists. Barack's middle name is Hussein. What if Obama is a secret Muslim? Look, there's a picture of Osama Lin Laden on the wall!

Barack Obama has done everything possible to position himself on the Right. His allegiance is to Empire. But for many in Amerikkka, his allegiance to imperialism isn't enough - not enough! Take note of this!

*The New Yorker* illustration satirizes the fears of the American public. But there's more.

It is the image of Michelle sporting a *natural* that disturbs me. I wear dreads. I used to wear my hair in a natural or naturally from my mid-teens into my twenties. I have worn my hair naturally again, in dreads, for the last eight years. This image of a Black woman wearing a natural didn't attract any notice. It was so *natural* to assume the hair was - a problem, like the turban on the cartoon image of the Black man. Black critics and supporters of Obama condemned *The New Yorker* illustration, arguing it was more a political strategy to denounce Obama rather than a political satire (titled, "The Politics of Fear") about the fears of the American public. Michelle's natural is equated with "gun-toting" radicals. No one commented on the depiction of a Black woman wearing a *natural* as a cultural strategy to continue the campaign of Black self-hate.

I listened to Cynthia Black, *Action Point* radio host, discuss the illustration and describe the image of Michelle as "radical" - an image, she told her listeners associated with Blacks from "the 70s."

So let's see. To wear your hair *naturally* is to suggest your alliance with "radical" days of old! Blond hair is not associated with the "old" days of Marilyn Monroe or old days of anything. Blond hair is natural and desired by whites, Blacks, Latina, and Asian women. There's a market for blond hair dye; it's big business - global business now!

Straight, slick hair is still *in* style for white women. It's *in* for Black and Latina women. But hair in a *natural* is not just *out*; it's equal to radical - anti-American days? *Black women's hair is a political statement for or against white mainstream*. Black hair - not white hair. White young people can sport dreads. No problem there. But you are suspect if you are a Black woman wearing your hair naturally. You are a "homegrown" terrorist if you wear your hair naturally nappy! Straight hair on Black women is American!

White women in America don't wake up in the morning trying to figure out ways to look Black. There's an industry of bleaching and straighten products specifically targeting Black women with that "unruly" hair. Tame the hair and the mind will follow! Opposition to the "unruly" ways of American Empire will cease. Capitalism, good old capitalism with its new, open face, has capitalized on the acceptance of "racial progress" and the absence of opposition. Yes, what a "masterstroke"!

*The New Yorker* cover revealed the inward chains that have re-enslaved so many of us to bow before the American Empire. And I say *before* because no amount of blond hair dye or streaky-straight-shaky hair on black heads will alter a system determined to remain white, patriarchal, and capitalist. Greenbacks will let you *in* in a space reserved for the "fall guy" or "fall gal." But there's something exchanged for money, status,

power.

It's the lack of pride among Black Americans, a "disaster" that capitalism anticipated and has, subsequent to their efforts, turned into big business. This disaster takes place everyday and is profitable everyday. Our willingness to assimilate to what we have always known is *unnatural*; our willingness to hate what we can barely remember is marketable; our willingness to *be* just an "American" is a commodity that capitalists of the American Empire count on just as they count on F-16's and military issue weaponry.

*There's a market for this Black self-hate. The New Yorker cover captured this almost invisible disaster: It's become so natural to look at a Black woman with "kinky," curly hair and see her as a threat to America!*

*"Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet?"*

We know we do, now! Our emptiness is filled with the things exchanged for our complicity with consumerism. This emptiness has put us *in* - deep trouble. Yet, Obama's appeal to whites and Blacks, particularly to young Blacks programmed by the "captives of mimics" to shun the old days when Black pride challenged the narratives of white supremacy, depends on the disaster of Black self-hate that he supports and calls racial progress. It's not an accident to experience young Black college students giving me and some older Black faculty *the Look!* Some of us know that Look. Now we see it emanating from a young Black adult rather than a politically "corrected" white face. *Something in Amerikkka will do this to you!* It will make you acquiesce to your own murder - and its murder!

*Kill the blackness!*

Listen to Obama tell the Black audience - kill the blackness. Those Blacks in bad shape are responsible for their own problem. Blackness is criminal. Blackness is responsible for not getting along, joining the rest of the crowd up the road. He hasn't noticed an entire history of governmental irresponsibility when it has come to Black Americans.

Instead, Obama urges Black parents to teach their girls to reject the "negative" images they see on the television! Would those "negative" images include the hair products that straighten nappy hair? Isaac Hayes said he shaved his hair because Black men at the time wore the "conk." He didn't want to wear that message on his body! Today, we have the shaved head or close cut worn by Black men to *hide* the natural hair texture that is outlawed!

How about a positive image starting with Michelle?

This issue of hair reflects the conditioning of our minds. It's the first tell-tale sign something has been undone. We are losing our pride in our blackness one diamond ring at a time, one Lexus, one strand of curly or kinky hair at a time, and, of course, one pair of Ferragamo shoes at a time. It's easy to imagine the American Empire saying to the world - look at what we have done! We've muddled the powerful political and moral message of the Ella Bakers, Malcolms, Martin Luther Kings and the Black Panthers, and have arranged for them to be taught as "dead and gone." Those times in which Blacks resisted are taught as "done and over," replaced with the "racial progress" racket, spearheaded by the chosen Black leaders, celebrities, and intellectuals.

In turn, we Black Americans have experienced such a drive to integrate and assimilate,

and it is now impossible to question where this drive toward whitestream/mainstream has taken us or to ask how much farther *up* the road we have to go before we turn back or fall over the cliff. We see the outer ring but never look deeply at the core conditions that led us to the road in the first place.

The horror is that we, as a collective, haven't left the circle. We drive around and around, some of us, thinking we are rising to somewhere. But we are still on the auction block, being scrutinized, handled, and ultimately bought, based on our desire to please Master. We Black Americans have learned to despise ourselves, and in turn, others despise Blackness. This is the vicious circle in which some of us run around thinking we have been liberated. We have been liberated from ourselves! We are *in* deep trouble, spiraling downhill.

There's a young Black male high school student out there who came to class with a T-shirt that read: GHETTO REPORT CARD. Underneath this heading was a list of subjects: English, Math, Science, etc. Next to each subject was the letter - the grade, "F." The student wore the T-shirt *proudly*. When I asked him why? What was he *thinking* when he purchased that T-shirt? He smiled, but he didn't have an answer.

What a masterstroke - to enslave us *in* chains, once again!

I mourn the death of Black Moses, and I hope for the day when proud Black Americans return to life.

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer, for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and facilitator of student-teacher communities behind the walls of academia for the last twenty years. Dr. Daniels holds a PhD in Modern American Literatures, with a specialty in Cultural Theory (race, gender, class narratives) from Loyola University, Chicago. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.

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