

# The myth of the latin woman: stereotypes essay sample



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After so many decades of media's influence to the society, stereotyping is one of the prevailing media occurrences even in the contemporary society. The mass media continued to mold the society through the information they disseminate in various forms—print, television, and radio. These media types highlight the positive and the negative features of every race in the country, together with the ethnic origin of immigrants and half-blooded Americans.

Stereotypes are usually based on the classifications of gender, ethnicity, and social status. The way media presents the stereotypes affects the molding of the public's view towards a specific classification.

The only Hispanics who made it onto the newsstands were criminals, drug dealers, gang members, or their victims. On the other hand, the successful Latinos have talked about the dangerous communities and the dysfunctional families they overcame. As a result, it gives an impression to the readers that most Hispanics came from such backgrounds.

Such stereotypes have brought negative and drawbacks in terms of its outcomes in the consumers of media. Stereotypes of Hispanics as criminals or drug lords create a prejudice and racial discrimination for the media consumers. These judgments will soon manifest in the public by generalizing that all Hispanics are criminals and undesirable people that must be eliminated in order to have a harmonious place of living.

In Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Myth of the Latin Woman: Just Met a Girl Named Maria*, she discussed the difficulties encountered by a Latina living in the United States. Since the popularity of media has transcended in various

regions, like the United States, it is evident that Latina women are regarded as domestics.

“ They make good domestics....’Mammy’ from Gone with the Wind.... The big and the little screens have presented us with the picture of the funny Hispanic maid, mispronouncing words and cooking up a spicy storm in a shiny California kitchen (Rothenberg, 2004).”

The slave stereotype limited women of color and other ethnicity in television programs and advertisements. The slave is connoted as a person who is unreliable, unpredictable, and undependable. These slaves are also responsible in plotting the secretive double-crossing to his master in order to steal his material possessions or just because of his madness. The whites are usually portrayed as the master of the slave, giving orders and mocking the domestic helper.

Natives are also portrayed as someone who is predisposed to barbarism and savagery. They are the cannibals, the tribes, and the cults who are connected with the evil doings and threats to the surroundings. These natives are also blamed to be responsible for the kidnapping of children, burning of public and private property, and the rebellious acts of uprising and mass demonstrations that threaten the business sector of the United States.

The prime component of any news or media type itself tends to be crime, degradation, and conflict. As a result, when the Hispanics commit a crime, are portrayed as chamber maids or domestic helpers, and destabilizes the peace in the community that is considered as a newsworthy or something

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that would be a hit in their targeted audience. Media is more inclined to be a profit-oriented institution than an entity which presents objective, balanced, and fair news.

In the newspapers, the problem comes when the only coverage of the Latinos is as Hispanic criminals. The papers must also take into consideration to present the other side of the world—to present the white community's disturbances and crimes committed in the society. That needs to be written and to be published. Half of the truth is presented by the media most of the time and it results in a distortion of the image and the degrading morality of the ethnicity. If Hispanics do not appear in the papers as experts, as people in the White American mainstream, as leaders, then the image of Hispanics that rests in the minds of the society is in fact negative.

“ He began to shout-sing a ditty to the tune of ‘ La Bamba’—except the lyrics were about a girl named Maria whose exploits all rhymed with her name and gonorrhea (Rothenberg, 2004).”

These stereotypes send the message that it is futile for members of minority groups to overcome their prescribed roles and capabilities. Recently, some primetime programs featuring Hispanics have moved beyond these traditional stereotypes. But these shows often fall into the trap of denying that race is even an issue in America and suggest that overcoming racism is simply a result of individual effort. The cumulative messages cited above contribute to an ideology of apathy, cynicism, and lack of connectedness, ultimately discouraging public participation in the political process.

The problem is not so much of the quality as with the quantity of the news or television programs. The extent of news coverage and media depiction of the Hispanic community has much wider scope than any other communities. The ethnic affairs beat covers all the racial minorities and the ethnic issues in a particular location. The stories in the newspapers have sensationalized the typical Hispanic news. It can be argued that while newspapers have a journalistic obligation to fairly cover Hispanics, this ideal really translates into dollar signs.

Beyond the role of maid or domestic helpers, Hispanic ethnicity is also stereotyped as sex kittens. Latinas still portrayed the role that connotes sex and sexuality. Hispanic women are always featured in hot Latin romance and the role as a Latin lover or a home wrecker or a happily married couple or a destroyer of the friendship of two young white females. Latino characters are also involved in the gang wars in depressed areas. Poverty and racism has always been in conjunction with one another as a part of the institutionalized racism prevailing in the country.

The stereotyping prevalent in the media all boils down to marketing strategies. The demand of media consumers for this type of films, television shows, news, and programs are much higher compared to that of an all-white American shows. The rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States also demands this kind of shows, so the market of media consumers is aimed to these immigrants. This is sort-of concealment in the anti-immigrant movement in the United States. If the Hispanic feel offended, they might as well move to another location in order to stop seeing these maltreatment and belittlement in their race.

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Reference:

Rothenberg, Paula S., Ed. (2004). Cofer “ The Myth of the Latin Woman” in Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study (Sixth Edition). New York: St. Martin’s Press.