

Ethnic notions: sambo character analysis

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



“ Ethnic Notions” is a historical film that takes the viewer through the entire course of American history from the 1820s to the 1980s. The songs, watching the films and seeing all the artifacts is what makes this film such a powerful tool. The film describes some of the terms that were used to depict black Americans. Well into the twentieth century the “ Mammy”, the “ Coon”, and the “ Sambo” were all terms used in reference to black Americans. In 1941 the cartoon was made and made its way into many of the homes of American culture.

In the early 1900s the image of the “ Sambo” spread and it became a portrayal of black men in film. The Character is lazy and irresponsible that will easily avoid work to take part in food and dance. As the civil war approached, a new character accompanied the “ Sambo”, the “ Zip Coon”. This character tried to portray whites that mocked the notion of racial equality. With these two together, they both defended slavery by saying that blacks can’t handle freedom.

In films the role of the “ Mammy” was a servant that was stereotypically a very dark and heavy woman that had her priorities set to doing whatever her master or mistress wished. “ Mammy” was shown as a loyal person that was protective over the white household. She was a powerful person which became a stable figure in each image of the south. It became hard to go without seeing this character in a southern home. This character was also a defender of slavery. But within her own family the “ Mammy” is the controlling force which is the direct opposite of the way the household is viewed in society. She is shown as being asexual and unattractive.

Once the slaves became emancipated many white people said that the former slaves couldn't handle being without constant subordination to their white masters. Society called the emancipated blacks brutes, and the increasing public fear of them gave them the nickname of "black menace." Once motion picture was developed in the 20th century the images and the depiction of black Americans didn't change at all. The only difference now is the hate is now on film. Blacks began to enter theater and they used it as a step in the right direction to get out of the south and start a new life with opportunities.

Through the 1940s the blackface became discarded but its image left its mark on society. Soon cartoons became the voice for racism. This way when any violence or mistreatment were occurring it would be entertaining and humorous. The cartoons had the power to influence young minds to see stereotypes as being entertaining by making references to black Americans being savages. Furthermore the only thing that domesticated black Americans was slavery. The myth says without the whites control over the blacks, their entire race would wind up being nothing more than savages.

"Ethnic Notions" is an in depth look at the roots of African American racism and stereotypes. The movie goes through 150 years of racism and hatred towards black Americans, and the images that were spread throughout society that depicted African Americans to being lazy and careless. Also without slavery to keep them in check, myths say that they would resort to savage behavior.