



BlackEconomics.org

“Banning Adverse Stereotypes for Economic Benefit”

How important are first impressions? How powerful are first impressions when they are oft repeated? How harmful are adverse stereotypes? What is the economic impact of adverse Black American stereotypes that are ubiquitous in the media? Black Americans should ask these questions to assess the increase in well-being that we would experience absent adverse stereotypical images.

Be certain that other social groups are asking these questions. For example, in Britain, special interest groups on gender issues have questioned the harm caused by the perpetual presentation of gender-biased media images. The conclusion was that significant harm is caused by such images, and that they should be banned.

Specifically, the *New York Times* reported on July 18, 2017 that the regulator of advertisements in Britain, the Advertising Standards Authority, determined that new rules would be developed “...to ban advertising that promotes gender stereotypes or denigrates people who do not conform to them.” Why? Because “Such portrayals can limit how people see themselves, how others see them, and limit the life decisions they take.”

The impact of adverse stereotypes can be widespread (economic, social, etc.), and can be long-lasting. Therefore, they should be halted immediately, with the expectation that benefits will be reaped immediately and futuristically.

Consequently, it seems logical that Black Americans would springboard from the precedent established in Britain, identify U.S. bodies that regulate media (particularly visual media—television and movies), and seek to halt the presentation of adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans in the media.

As we move forward with this proposition, we should recognize that the media will fight back stating that, in Britain, banned stereotypes are identified only when images are not conformed to by the social group in question. The media will argue that what Black Americans identify as adverse stereotypical images are consistent with Black American behavior. We should retort that the media is a powerful tool, and that it has been used for generations to shape our behavior. In fact, we are a product of the media. However, Black Americans do not want to conform to these images because conforming is not in the best interest of our well-being. Hence, the media has an obligation to cease the creation and promulgation of these images, which will permit Black Americans to reshape our behavior and the perception of Black Americans by other social groups.

As further support for banning adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans, we should posit that there is replete evidence that many Black Americans do not conform to these images, but that non-conformance is made more difficult by the perpetuation of these images. Negative stereotypes should be banned because they suppress the rise of Black Americans from the sway of these images and prevents realization of life benefits that would accrue when these images are not present.

By the way, if you are interested in comprehending the negative economic impact of adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans, then we suggest that a good starting point is “Black Unemployment and Infotainment,” which appeared in *Economic Inquiry* in January 2009.

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