



BlackEconomics.org

“*TNYT* and *TWP*: Enemies of Black America”

Table 1.—Images of Blacks in *TNYT* and *TWP* during January 2019

	TNYT		TWP	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent*
Total number of Black images	366	100.00%	192	100.00%
Not adverse stereotypical images	27	7.38%	11	5.73%
Neutral images	148	40.44%	85	44.27%
Adverse stereotypical images	191	52.19%	96	50.00%
Male images	108	56.54%	50	52.08%
Female images	50	26.18%	32	33.33%
Both genders	33	17.28%	14	14.58%

*--Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Black History Month is always a wonderful and innovative experience for Black Americans. During the month, we re-realize our greatness in the struggle for human equality in the wilderness of North America and the world beyond. However, as many have often intimated, we must be careful to not permit the month to transfix us on the past and lose focus on issues of the day and how those issues stand to impact our future.

One of the most pressing issues of today is income and wealth inequality. Scholarly studies indicate that one cannot fully explain income and wealth inequality without accounting for the role of racial discrimination.¹

We have reported that racial discrimination against Black Americans derives, in significant measure, from the perpetual presence of adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans in the media.² Till now, most of our work in this area focused on electronic media. Now we venture into print media as presented over the Internet. In this case, we examine the role that two of the most powerful print media sources in the world play in presenting adverse stereotypical images of Black Americans—*The New York Times* (*TNYT*) and *The Washington Post* (*TWP*).

The study was quite direct and constrained. For one month, January 2019, we observed each non-advertisement image of Black Americans—more broadly, Black people of the world—that

¹ For an early exploration of income inequality see Glenn C. Loury (1977), “A Dynamic Theory of Racial Income Differences,” in *Women, Minorities, and Employment Discrimination*, Phyllis A. Wallace and Annette A. Lamond, editors, Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, pp. 153-86. One of the most comprehensive works on Black American wealth inequality is Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, editors (2006), *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, Routledge-Taylor and Francis Group, New York, NY.

² Brooks Robinson. (2009) “Black Unemployment and Infotainment.” *Economic Inquiry*: Vol. 47; No. 1, pp. 98-117.

appeared on the front page of the *TNYT* and *TWP*.^{3,4} Because “a picture paints a thousand words,” we observed the images in isolation of the related headlines and captions, and evaluated the images alone on their adverse stereotypical content.⁵

How does one identify an adverse stereotypical image? By knowing the myths and mantras that have been leveled against Black Americans for centuries. “You know one when you see one.” For example, images that portray Black Americans in religious settings (“Blacks are ready to sing, pray, and request God’s assistance, but unwilling to work and fight to help ourselves”), as entertainers (“Blacks are often depicted as buffoons, trainable animals, or gifted beings in the world of sports, music, and media (television and cinema)”), as linked to drugs and crime (this and the previously described image are melded in Hip-Hop entertainment), as being sexually promiscuous, and as involved in civil protests (“Blacks are often depicted with our mouths wide open, screaming and complaining, but unwilling and unable to perform fundamental bootstrapping acts that create improved outcomes for our lives”) are all examples of adverse stereotypical images that haunt our existence in America and the world.

Ingroup (White Americans) presentations of adverse stereotypical images of the outgroup (Black Americans), delegitimize the latter for the former and the latter, and create a subtle perceived reality that the latter has no right to exist in the former’s society. And if the outgroup has a right to exist in the ingroup’s society, then it is with degraded/diminished rights and privileges.

More importantly, adverse stereotypical portrayals of the outgroup inform the ingroup that the former is incapable of contributing in positive and significant ways to the upliftment of the broader society. Outgroup members can pray, sing, run, jump, catch, shoot, and procreate, but they cannot be the scientist, engineers, tacticians, medical healers, and organizers of law and commerce that build and drive the society to ever higher levels. The latter positions are reserved for ingroup members. And, if by chance, an outgroup member displays ingroup characteristics, then it is because that outgroup member has been especially gifted by God or is not an outgroup member after all—i.e., the genetic roots of the outgroup member derive from the ingroup.

Having these concepts in mind, what do images of Blacks that were presented by these two media giants tell us? Our general findings were that one-half or more of the images presented of Black people by *TNYT* and *TWP* were adverse stereotypical in nature. Importantly, most of the adverse images that were presented by these sources featured Black males, which is consistent with the historical villanization of Black males. On a comparative basis, *TWP* was a less egregious purveyor of adverse stereotypical images of Blacks than *TNYT*. Table 1 (above) summarizes the specific statistical results of our observations.

Of the adverse images, which types were most prominent? *TNYT* presented a preponderance of adverse stereotypical images of Blacks as entertainers (60), in sports (38), protesting (11), and as sexually promiscuous (11). Predominant adverse stereotypical images of Blacks presented by *TWP*

³ We observed these images for each day during January 2019, except for January 21st, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

⁴ The Microsoft EXCEL database that contains the observations used for this analysis is available upon request. Write to BlackEconomics@BlackEconomics.org.

⁵ The images were evaluated as being “adverse stereotypical,” “not adverse stereotypical,” or “neutral.”

involved sports (25), entertainment (21), and civil protests (13). These images represent a narrow slice of the broad and rich contributions that Blacks make to life every day in America and around the world.

In today's technological world, although economic agents read newspapers less and rely on other sources for information, *TNYT* and *TWP* still serve as iconic media sources that sway the thinking/opinions of the world. Therefore, when the data show that one-half or more of the images that are presented of Black persons in these media sources are adverse and stereotypical, it is easy to comprehend why the world has an adverse opinion of Black people. As a result, Black people suffer the indignities and the adverse income and wealth outcomes.

In short, *TNYT* and *TWP*, and other print media sources like them, constitute a barrier to Black Americans' progress and success and are, therefore, an enemy. Black Americans must identify strategies for defanging such enemies, seek recompense from them for their crippling actions, and produce countervailing media forces that present more accurate and balanced images of Black Americans.

Let us work to ensure that future Black History Months recount the story of our actions to defeat these enemies, make them repair us, and pave our way to a more laudable position in the eyes of the world.

B.B. Robinson
February 16, 2019
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