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Patrick O'BRIEN

ABSTRACT

African American actor Morgan Freeman portrayed the President of the United States in the 1998 film *Deep Impact*; now America has an African American president. For two decades Hollywood images of blacks have preceded the actual progress of blacks in American life. This paper examines those images with respect to Academy Award winning actor Morgan Freeman.

"I knew at an early age I wanted to act. Acting was always easy for me. I don't believe in predestination, but I do believe that once you get wherever it is you are going, that is where you were going to be."

— Morgan Freeman¹

Introduction

Eight years ago, my essay "Role Reversal in Hollywood: The Noble Black vs. the Fallen White Male" appeared in *The Journal of Hokkai-Gakuen University* (No. 107, March 2001). I began with a reference to *The Birth of a Nation*, one of the first major motion picture features ever made. This, I wrote, was D.W. Griffith's "portrayal of white American fears that its newly emancipated slaves would rise up against the white order, rape white women, and visit violence upon white Americans in general. Since that time, the celluloid images of both blacks and whites in America have undergone a series of changes, changes linked to a variety of factors at play in contemporary society, as well as the sensibilities of both those who created the content of American film and those who viewed them."

One may now reflect on the fact that a vast array of filmic portrayals of the African American and the white man have almost completely changed place in so much of the fare that has come out of Hollywood since then. In essence, the images have achieved an almost

perfect reversal from the days of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. This essay will assess the image of one of the most iconic African Americans to appear on screen over the last two decades: Morgan Freeman.

The Birth of a Nation

Thomas W. Dixon's novel and stage melodrama *The Clansmen*, a celebration of the Ku Klux Klan's campaigns against blacks, was the basis for D.W. Griffith's epic film. One film scholar explained how Griffith created a sympathetic White family on which the audience was allowed to focus:

The Cameron family of South Carolina, focus of the plot, is continually the tragic victim of black rapine. After losing two sons in the Civil War and having a third saved from execution by a pardon from the "Great Heart," Lincoln, they have their home looted by vicious black soldiers; a daughter, Flora, leaps to her death resisting the advances of a black man; the father is dragged away by black troops for harboring a Klansman; mother, father and the last remaining daughter are about to be wiped out by blacks when they are rescued by the Klan; the Klan's leader, their pardoned son, has just saved his Northern sweetheart... from rape by an evil mulatto. Few people could resist responding to the plight of this white family, continually wounded and threatened by cruel and lustful blacks. Audiences cheered when the Klan riders gathered and swept to the rescue, as Vachel Lindsay wrote, "as powerfully as Niagara pours over the cliff."²

Such negative stereotypes of blacks in American film persisted. *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first feature "talkie," or film with integrated sound, featured Al Jolson as a vaudeville singer in blackface.³ *Gone With the Wind*, David O. Selznick's 1939 classic, continued this characterization of Blacks. "Far from playing themselves in *Gone With the Wind*," writes political science professor Michael Rogin, "black actors and actresses were assigned roles minstrelsy had already defined."⁴ Also, there was the ubiquitous character played by African American actor Lincoln Perry in his (in) famous Stepin Fetchit role. Perry's "laziest man in the world" persona began with the 1927 silent film *In Old Kentucky* and continued to great acclaim through the 1930s. As one writer notes, however, "Although he never won an Oscar, Lincoln Perry was America's first black movie star. But for that distinction, Perry paid a heavy price-he is best known as the character of Stepin Fetchit, a befuddled, mumbling, shiftless fool."⁵

White hegemony continued to be based on oppression of blacks, as pictures from the

post-World War Two era proved. Margaret Miles, for instance, found that “a spate of films dealt with racial tensions more or less openly, but in the McCarthy era of the 1950s, to be a real American was to be a White racist.” Despite the growth of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, “It was not until the late 1960s that African Americans began to play nonstereotypical roles, and the 1970s finally saw some serious and important films about African American history and life, like the made-for-television-films *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974) and *Roots* (1975).”⁶

In fact, in the wake left by extensive social changes in the Sixties, viewers found a change in the prime-time television line-up to mark the beginning of the end of the dominance of Euro-derived people in the United States. Concurrent with this was a rise in roles for African Americans and other ethnics. By the early 1970's, the “hayseed” shows about the heartland and American Majority life had vanished from the three major networks' evening offerings and were replaced by decidedly more ethnic fare. In a few short years, essentially all-white shows like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Andy Griffith Show*/*Mayberry R.F.D.*, *Green Acres*, and *Petticoat Junction* gave way to “hip, urban” shows that “pushed the socially engaged agenda into the ethno-racial arena.” In place of Andy Griffith and Don Knotts, viewers were now watching characters from “ethnicoms” in shows like *Sanford and Son*, *The Jeffersons*, and *Chico and the Man*.⁷ Alongside these shows came socially conscious sitcoms often critical of mainstream values, led by Norman Lear's *All in the Family*. One result of this sentiment was that shows portraying American life in small towns simply disappeared. The change in American television in the early 1970s was so abrupt that Wikipedia even has an entry on it called “the Rural Purge.”⁸

Naturally, television was not alone in nurturing this change. Hollywood film developed along similar lines, so much so that by the late 1980s, film portrayals of blacks had changed radically since the early days of film. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, audiences saw a wide range of both comedic and serious roles for African American actors, roles which led to further success by other actors. Among this pantheon can be found James Earl Jones, Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Morgan Freeman, Denzel Washington, Wesley Snipes, Will Smith, Samuel L. Jackson, Cuba Gooding, Jr, Jamie Foxx, Chris Rock, and Halle Berry. Black directors have also contributed their own views of African American life. Foremost among these directors is Spike Lee, who burst upon the scene in 1989 with *Do the Right Thing*, and John Singleton, who directed the gritty tale of life in South Central Los Angeles, *Boyz N the Hood* (1991).

Though these more realistic portrayals were long overdue, by about 1990 Hollywood had

begun to swing away from such realism and started to venture into the realm of ideological exaggeration. Blacks were increasingly idealized and whites assumed the roles of one-dimensional villains and fools. The tendency has continued unabated as the first decade of the new millennium nears its end. Again, these fictional representations on screen fail to portray life as it is. Regarding the basic question of which racial groups are currently responsible for what percentages of various crimes, the answer is more in accord with John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood* than a typical Morgan Freeman or Denzel Washington character. The real-life issue in America of black violence against whites – but especially against other blacks – continues to be a challenge American society has yet to overcome.⁹

At the same time, a profound emphasis on the sins of white men against non-whites has become a common theme of Hollywood movies in the last dozen or so years. From racism against Native Americans in Kevin Costner's *Dances With Wolves* (1990) to that against Japanese Americans in *Come See the Paradise* (1990) or *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999) to the very common depiction of anti-Black racism in movies such as *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *A Time to Kill* (1996), *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1996), *The Hurricane* (2000), or *The Green Mile* (2000), the modern American (and world) movie-goer is given an image of the white male as intrinsically racist and evil.¹⁰

“Always Bet on Black”

A questionable instance of the rise of black power in film are the “blaxploitation” films of the early 1970s. *Shaft* (1971) is often considered to be the start of the genre. In addition to giving black actors weapons with which to exercise agency, “Ethnic slurs against whites (e.g. ‘honky’), and negative white characters like corrupt cops, politicians, women of ill-repute and easily fooled organized crime members were common. Blaxploitation films set in the South often take place on a plantation, dealing with slavery and miscegenation.”¹¹

A more representative example of a black star appearing as both morally and intellectually superior to his white rivals is Eddy Murphy's *Beverly Hills Cop* series, which spanned the decade 1984–1994. In this series, former Saturday Night Live comedian Murphy emerged as a screen sensation, playing a street smart Detroit detective able to outwit and outperform the goofy white policemen he encounters in Los Angeles. The *Lethal Weapon* franchise, which comprised four films (1987–98) starred Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as cop “buddies.” This pairing also succeeded in making the positive black male image on screen normative.

This transition from white male stars (with either no black actors or blacks as low status or criminal figures) to blacks emerging in their own right as the heroes of more and more

major films was not a disjointed process. Rather, as we have seen, it took well over a decade, as one may see in the following sequence. A stark but mildly humorous portrayal of blacks besting whites can be found in the case of the Wesley Snipes film *Passenger 57* (1992). Snipes plays John Cutter, an employee of Atlantic International Airways, charged with instituting cabin safety measures in dangerous skies. On a flight to Los Angeles, he is confronted by hijacker Charles Rane, a calculating, sadistic killer. Race as an issue is consciously employed, most prominently in the contest for control between Snipes and his former girlfriend (a black flight attendant), and blue-eyed Rane. In addition, when the TriStar is forced to land in Nashville, good-ol' boy sheriffs greet the plane and simply make the assumption that Cutter, as an African American, is the bad guy. The ongoing challenges Snipes meets in the South play throughout the film. Later, in a fight scene aboard the plane between Cutter and Rane, the European confidentially assumes he will prevail, but Cutter begs to differ, telling him to "always bet on black." And in fact, Cutter defeats Rane. Four years later, in a different film, the humor was gone.

In *A Time to Kill*, director Joel Schumacher works with a script that has a black man justifiably murdering two white men. These white men are Hollywood's stock image of the Southern redneck, always drinking beer from a bottle and racing around the countryside in a souped-up pick-up. In addition to terrorizing blacks, they assault a ten-year-old black girl, rape her, and attempt to lynch her. When her father (Samuel L. Jackson) learns of this infamy, he takes justice into his own hands and plots revenge. By hiding in a locker in the courthouse, he is able to ambush the two white suspects and shoot them dead on the courtroom stairs. In the trial that follows, he is acquitted, to the glee of his many supporters outside the courthouse. This trend only gained momentum as two African American actors in particular appeared in more and more such films. They are Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman.

Numinous Negroes

In this long transition in film from the negro as violent and stupid to the ones seen above where blacks begin to appear as positive protagonists, more powerful and morally upright than their white nemeses, one image begins to solidify: that of the noble black man. Richard Brookhiser, a writer for *The National Review*, translated this image into the concept of the "Numinous Negro." He defines "numinous" as a Roman term for "the presiding divinity... of a place." It also means "spiritually elevated." The Numinous Negro, for Brookhiser, presides over America, "and contact with him elevates us spiritually." The most obvious

example comes in the presence of Morgan Freeman in films such as *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Deep Impact* (U.S. President) and *Bruce Almighty*, where he plays a more powerful character: God. The saintly prisoner hero of *The Green Mile* also fits the bill. Though Brookhiser adds that “the Numinous Negro need not be a man – Toni Morrison and Oprah are Numinous Negroes (Ms. Morrison is a seer; Oprah is a sage)” – the vast majority of recent films featuring the Numinous Negro star male characters.¹²

Freeman is rivaled only by Denzel Washington in the iconic Numinous Negro pantheon. Consider that by 1998, when Freeman played the role of kindly U.S. President in *Deep Impact*, his film persona was fixed as the intelligent moral center of each of his films. Steve Sailer, the film critic for *The American Conservative* and VDARE’s special Sunday columnist, aptly dubs Freeman America’s “Spiritual Presence-in-Chief.” Sailer explains further, noting how millions of Americans “want Will Smith to be their Hero-in-Chief or Morgan Freeman as their Spiritual Presence-in-Chief. Some want James Earl Jones, the Lion King himself, to be their Father-in-Chief.”¹³ How Morgan Freeman fits the role of Numinous Negro will comprise the remainder of this essay.

Morgan Freeman’s Biography¹⁴

“I’ve been sucked into a kind of mold of a good guy and that’s actually almost beyond my ability to control.”¹⁵

Memphis, Tennessee was the birthplace of Morgan Freeman. His barber father, Morgan Porterfield Freeman, Sr., died from cirrhosis of the liver in 1961. His schoolteacher mother was Mayme Edna. Freeman himself came into the world on June 1, 1937. When his parents sought work in Chicago, the young Morgan went to live with his grandmother in Charleston, Mississippi, until her death when Morgan was six. Because of fond memories of those years, Freeman continues to own a house there. At age nine Freeman appeared in the lead role in a school play, and at age twelve he won a statewide drama competition. While tempted to accept a partial scholarship for drama from Jackson State University, he chose a five-year enlistment in the United States Air Force because of dreams of becoming a fighter pilot. Life turned out to be more prosaic: He served instead as a mechanic. When that ended in 1959, he moved to Los Angeles, where he was a transcript clerk at Los Angeles Community College.

His love of the stage remained, however, and he appeared as a dancer at the 1964 World’s Fair in New York City, and as a member of the Opera Ring music group in San Francisco.

He had a role as an extra in Sidney Lumet's 1965 film *The Pawnbroker*, and made his off-Broadway debut in 1967 in the provocatively titled play "The Nigger Lovers," which was about the civil rights era Freedom Riders. His major acting debut came in the all-African American Broadway version of "Hello, Dolly!", which also starred Pearl Bailey and Cab Calloway.

Freeman further honed his acting skills as a main character on the children's educational program, *The Electric Company*, which was a product of The Children's Television Workshop and ran on the Public Broadcasting Service. In hindsight, one can view this show as a concerted effort at social engineering, following as it did the earlier success of *Sesame Street*. Funds came from a familiar cast of liberal sources, such as the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Corporation For Public Broadcasting, and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.¹⁶ Freeman's roles included Easy Reader, a "smooth hipster who loved to read at every opportunity and every printed thing he saw." (Ironically, in the 1989 Academy Award-winning film *Driving Miss Daisy*, Freeman's character was originally illiterate.) He also did Mel Mounds, a hip disc jockey who introduced songs, where his signature phrase was "Sounds righteous, delightful, and out-of-sighteous! Heavy, heavy!" Vincent the Vegetable Vampire was another of his roles.¹⁷

When *The Electric Company* ended in 1976, Freeman stumbled as his career lost direction. Drinking too much, this son of an alcoholic saw his marriage to Jeanette Adair Bradshaw end. Then, however, his dreams of the big screen seemed to get a boost when he appeared as a prison inmate in the Robert Redford film, *Brubaker* (1980). Unfortunately, fame was yet to come, and Freeman was forced to return to television, playing Dr. Roy Bingham on the soap opera *Another World*.

Film Breakthrough

Freeman's film breakthrough came with *Street Smart* (1987), in which he played the ruthless pimp Fast Black. Though very much out of character for what was to come, the role proved to be a huge success for Freeman, earning him an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor. After viewing this movie, film critic Pauline Kael even went so far as to ask out loud, "Is Morgan Freeman the greatest American actor?"¹⁸ This role as a cruel pimp did not presage his metamorphosis into a modern American paragon of virtue. This had to wait two years until he appeared as the aw-shucks chauffeur in *Driving Miss Daisy*. From that point on, Freeman has consistently been cast as a man of rare intelligence, sensitivity,

and moral grounding. As a victim of white racism in Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992) to the wise fellow inmate of Tim Robbins's character in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) to the U.S. President in *Deep Impact* (1998) to God Himself in *Bruce Almighty* (2003), Freeman's characters have marched in lockstep with the multicultural ideology that elevates blacks in the American imagination.

Driving Miss Daisy, is an excellent example of this. In the film, Jessica Tandy plays Miss Daisy, a wealthy Jewish widow who is burdened by her son with a personal chauffeur. As driver Hoke, Freeman unapologetically plays the stereotypical role of a step'n fetchit negro¹⁹ in the South of the postwar period through to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr and beyond. On a superficial level, Hoke is an offensive portrayal of a black man. Illiterate and seemingly simple, he has no greater goal than to minister to a white woman and her family. As played by Freeman, however, these qualities are transformed into a moving account of a quirky but true friendship, as both Hoke and Miss Daisy grow old together and become increasingly detached from a changing world. The languid pace and soft focus, combined with first-rate performances by Freeman and Tandy, explain why the film won the Academy Award for Best Picture of 1989.

Two points which address the Jewish role in the film are the status levels of Hoke (poor and subservient) and Miss Daisy (rich and domineering) in this "partnership" and the assumption of the modern narrative of shared suffering of both Jews and blacks in America.²⁰ Adapted from a play by Jewish playwright Alfred Uhry, the film also repeats the common negative image of Southern whites. For instance, when Hoke drives Miss Daisy to Alabama and they are pulled over by two fat patrolmen. Sending them on their way, one patrolman sneers, "There goes an old nigger and an old Jew woman. That's one sorry sight." The scene which cements the shared victim status of Miss Daisy and Hoke, however, comes when someone blows up the synagogue Miss Daisy regularly attends. When asked if he has heard who the perpetrators are, Hoke replies, "You know as good as me, Miss Daisy, it always be the same ones." This act of terrorism prompts Hoke to recall the lynching of his boyhood friend's father.

Freeman appeared in another film in 1989, *Glory*, a story about black soldiers fighting for the North during the Civil War. As Sergeant Major John Rawlins, Freeman builds on his role as a wise old man, in this case, acting as elder advisor to hot-headed former slave Private Trip (Denzel Washington). Rawlins also offers counsel to Colonel Shaw, the white Northern abolitionist who commands the troops, making Rawlins a leader figure. In 1990 Freeman obtained the role of judge in the film adaptation of Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*.

The book's Jewish judge was replaced by Freeman "when the studio decided to change the judge's ethnicity from Jewish to African-American in order to moderate criticism of the film's racial politics."²¹ In addition, in keeping with Freeman's appointed role as moral exemplar, dialogue was added which allowed him to preach to the flawed main characters.

A year later Freeman starred as a wise Muslim warrior in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. In keeping with his growing role as Numinous Negro, his character Azeem is portrayed as a heroic, learned, and noble man, leading normally critical film expert Jack Shaheen to praise the film as one of the best Hollywood portrayals of an Arab. Shaheen applauds the fact that Freeman's character is a "dignified Saracen warrior with superior judgment." Among his achievements are "employing a telescope, delivering a breach baby, and initiating gunpowder into a decisive battle."²² Freeman next played the role of gunman Ned Logan in the western *Unforgiven* (1992), a victim of racist whites who brutally whip him. He then moved behind the camera by directing a story of how apartheid affected one family in South Africa. It was in 1994, however, with his role as prisoner in *The Shawshank Redemption*, that Freeman assumed the permanent role of anointed American wise man. Director Frank Darabont cast Freeman "for his authoritative presence and demeanor,"²³ a decision that has been followed by others since.

For instance, in 1995 Freeman appeared first in *Outbreak* as Brig. Gen. Billy Ford, then as Detective Lt. William Somerset in *Seven*. In *Outbreak* Freeman acts as counterforce to the corrupt Major General McClintock, an evil mastermind behind a plan to blow up a small town full of Americans. McClintock, who is portrayed by Donald Sutherland, has white hair and piercing blue eyes, in vivid contrast to the appearance of hero General Ford. Freeman was next paired with Brad Pitt in *Seven*, reprising his role of a noble black wise man. In the hunt for a religious serial killer, Freeman's Lt. Somerset is on the verge of retirement and is tasked with working with brash, arrogant and undisciplined young detective, Sergeant Mills (Pitt). The two men are a study in contrasts: Freeman's character wise, thoughtful and introspective, Pitt's emotional, compulsive and unreflective.

Freeman's ascent up the ladder of institutional power continued in *Chain Reaction*, where he plays Paul Shannon, a man who runs a Chicago organization that supports a project aimed at producing energy from water. Taking a short detour from roles of establishment power, Freeman worked under Steven Spielberg in the slave tale *Amistad* (1997), playing a wise old former slave. Subsequently, Freeman returned to pursuing white male serial killers in *Kiss the Girls*. As savant Dr. Alex Cross, a forensic psychologist, he has written tomes on the psychology of serial killers and is unusually expert in following ambiguous clues. Once

again Freeman's character mentors a younger white, but this time it is a woman, and there are undercurrents of romance. In addition, there is a search for his niece, a light-skinned coed kidnapped by two white men. As with *A Time to Kill* and *Déjà Vu*, the plot involves the violence of white men against black women.²⁴

In the film's conclusion, one of the killer-kidnappers (played by blue-eyed Carey Elwes) attempts to rape the woman Dr. Cross is protecting. As the attack takes place in the kitchen, a knife is used to create bloody wounds on both attacker and victim, but the victim manages to handcuff her assailant to the stove. When Alex Cross arrives, the assailant taunts him with a lascivious account of ravishing Cross's niece, pushing Cross one step closer to shooting him, which he finally does. As with *Déjà Vu* a decade later, *Kiss the Girls* creates a story that is the reverse of what commonly happens in interracial rape and murder cases in America.²⁵

In the year 2000, Freeman appeared in the bizarre black comedy *Nurse Betty* (2000). In some ways, Freeman (and Chris Rock as his son) are out of character with respect to contemporary Hollywood narratives. Freeman is out of character because he plays a bad guy (ostensibly), while Rock plays a crude, violent, ignorant young African American hit man that strikes too close to home in portraying the real kind of black behavior found too often in American inner cities (see John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood*). This father and son team are hit men sent after a lowlife car dealer who has tried to cheat someone on a drug deal. This lowlife, cheating louse is married to an unhappy waitress, played by Renee Zellweger. As in *Kiss the Girls*, Freeman's character (marginally-it is a strange movie) acts as protector to the white woman but, more than in *Kiss the Girls*, there is explicit romance, though it is unrequited by Zellweger's waitress. (She has a fantasy relationship with a soap opera doctor, played well by Greg Kinnear).

Once again movie audiences are being exposed to the memes that only black males can protect white females and that romance between them is positive. (In addition to many Morgan Freeman roles, we see this as well in Denzel Washington films such as *The Pelican Brief* [1993, protecting Julia Roberts' character], *Virtuosity* [1995, protecting Kelly Colleen Lynch's character], *Courage Under Fire* [1996, playing Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Serling protecting the reputation of Meg Ryan's character, a posthumously honored soldier], and *Man on Fire* [2004, protecting a young white girl]). Film reviewer Roger Ebert admits that in *Nurse Betty* Freeman "has a tricky role.... Charlie has led a life of crime but has now gone soft under the influence of Betty, whose smile in a photo helps him to mourn his own lost innocence."

For some reason, this photo prompts Charlie to take a flight of fantasy, imagining himself romantically involved with Betty. We first see this when Charlie stands atop the Grand Canyon and loses himself in the dream that he is embracing and kissing Betty. In his final scene, he actually gets to kiss Betty, though the circumstances are less than ideal. Out in the living room, his son has gotten into a ridiculous shoot-out with some hostages, and with the police coming, Charlie wants to maintain his professional pride by opting for a suicidal escape attempt rather than being taken prisoner. In that sense, as in the vast majority of his films, he comes across as a moral man, one with whom audiences can identify. Ironically, Freeman pulls this off despite being a lowly hired killer, which he acknowledges when he tells Betty, "I'm a garbage man of the human soul." This performance prompted Ebert to announce that this final scene contains "some of Freeman's best work."²⁶

One troubling meme that appears in this movie is that of the black man humiliating, torturing and killing the white man. When Charlie and his son confront Betty's wife at their house, they tie up the shiftless husband and threaten to scalp him. The son, misconstruing a cue from his father, in fact then scalps the helpless white man, a shocking contrast to the image of the romantic comedy implied by the film's title, the presence of romantic actress Rene Zellweger, and the cover on the case of the film itself. Though father and son eventually pay for this crime, the constant repetition of such power over white men is problematic.

Freeman reprised his role as Dr. Cross in *Along Came a Spider* (2001). In the film, Cross is again an agent of deliverance to a young white woman. Another similarity between the films is the abundance of black and female characters in roles once more heavily white and male-detectives, doctors, etc. For instance, a computer expert in this film is a black woman. (Dr. Cross is also unusually skilled at using a computer.) In both films, Freeman provides his trademark talents, which did not go unnoticed by critics. For example, the film critic for *the San Francisco Chronicle* wrote of *Kiss the Girls* that Freeman's character was "compelling... a hero of extraordinary power that comes almost entirely from his unemotional, calculating calm."²⁷ Stephen Holden of *the New York Times* said Freeman's Dr. Cross "projects a kindness, patience and canny intelligence."²⁸

Such traits were in full view in his next film, *Deep Impact* (1998), a picture which saw Freeman play a father figure as President of the United States. Here one really begins to suspect that such an image has been deliberately conjured rather than just "being in the air." And it is a powerful image. As a writer for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, "Black presidents, in fact, have been our awesomest presidents ever: Morgan Freeman in 'Deep Impact' and

Dennis Haysbert in '24.' And their approval ratings... have been huge."²⁹ Another minor point about *Deep Impact* is that it is a rare instance of portraying Christianity in a positive light-though only with respect to blacks. Freeman's president addresses the nation to explain the failure of a mission to destroy an earth-threatening comet. Solemnly, he intones, "I believe in God." Next, among the multicultural crew aboard a rocket, a black astronaut speaks to his wife on earth, asking her to continue "the church thing." In association with white characters, however, Hollywood has been strongly critical of Christianity for over a generation.³⁰

Freeman again had an elite government position in *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), where he plays Director of Central Intelligence to Ben Affleck's Jack Ryan of Tom Clancy thriller fame. Here the president is still an imposing white male-James Cromwell, the 6'7" actor who portrayed Prince Philip in *The Queen*-but Freeman as Director Cabot mentors the younger agent Ryan and again serves as moral center. The following year, Freeman's character gave divine guidance as God to Jim Carrey in *Bruce Almighty*. From wise prisoner to general to detective to elite psychologist to president, then CIA director, Freeman's onscreen casting has been heading ever upward. That he plays the Christian God in an American film, then, is almost predictable. (Later in 2003 Freeman was cast as Miles Evans, a kindly preacher who gives shelter to a paroled killer; he reprises the role of God in the 2007 *Evan Almighty*.)

The year 2004 then saw Freeman team up with Clint Eastwood in the drama *Million Dollar Baby*. Freeman won Best Supporting Actor for his performance as former prize fighter Eddie "Scrap-Iron" Dupris, a washed up, blind-in-one-eye boxer who manages to get by with a job as janitor at a local gym. Somehow Freeman also found the time and energy that year to star with Charlie Sheen and Owen Wilson in the Hawaii flick *The Big Bounce*. The film flopped, turning into a critical and commercial disaster. Costing an estimated \$50 million to make, it grossed only \$6,801,716 at the box office.³¹

While Freeman's main persona in Hollywood films is that of the wise and kindly mentor, generally to the young white star, in *Batman Begins* (2005) he is also elevated to the pinnacle of technological sophistication. Playing Lucius Fox, he is a scientist in biochemistry and mechanical engineering, supplying Bruce Wayne with the fabulous equipment he needs as a flying crime fighter. (He reprises the role in the 2008 sequel *The Dark Knight*.) Steve Sailer unravels the conceits in this film, beginning with the opening murder. "As an old Chicagoan, I can assure you that one aspect of *Batman Begins* is standard-issue Hollywood hokum: the murderous mugger is blond. Blond bad guys are a lot more common in movies and television

than in real life.”³² Freeman depicting an elite scientist represents another example of deliberate role reversal, with real-life white males being replaced by African Americans. Though the cream of scientists and engineers in the modern world have been and continue to be white males, Hollywood has pushed the convention that it is black men who have excelled here. Statistics, of course, show the low levels of achievement blacks have had in math and science.³³ Take, for instance, piloting, a field combining skills in math and spatial relations, and requiring years of training and discipline. In real life, African Americans account for only about two percent of American commercial pilots yet are seen more often as celluloid pilots, just as are women.³⁴

Favorable portrayals of blacks in high-tech leadership positions have become de rigueur in recent years.³⁵ In *The Hunt for Red October*, for example, both the crack radar man who tracks the Russian submarine and the American admiral in the film are black, just as is Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson, the genius computer scientist in *Terminator II* who understands the cybernetic technology handed down from the future. In *Enemy of the State* (1998), the character played by Will Smith manages to outsmart a team of rogue National Security Agency techno-agents, despite the latter's possession of everything from phone-tapping devices to orbiting satellites. Adding technological sophistication to the traits possessed by a Morgan Freeman character is just one more instance of pushing this Hollywood convention.

In 2005 Freeman also had a small part in *War of the Worlds*, where he provided the authoritative narrative voice introducing the alien invasion. He also appeared that year in the ultra-violent film *Unleashed*. In this film martial arts expert Jet Li plays Danny, who, as a boy, sees his Chinese exchange student mother sexually assaulted by a group of Scottish thugs and killed before his eyes. The boss of the thugs then raises Danny to be a trained attack dog. Needless to say, such imagery of whites is not positive, having assaulted and murdered an innocent Chinese woman, and then enslaved her son. As dark as Danny's existence is, however, he glimpses redemption when he happens to meet blind piano tuner Sam (Freeman). Freeman simply offers his standard role as warm and wise mentor and caregiver.

The following year continued to be a busy one for Freeman. He appeared in *Edison Force*, a story about police corruption, and took a minor role in *Lucky Number Slevin*, a gang film with a convoluted plot. Though a crime boss, Freeman's character is shown to be highly intelligent, beating at chess his criminal rival, “The Rabbi,” played by Ben Kingsley. Freeman is again a crime boss in 2005 in *The Contract*. In this film, he is Jack Carden, a jaded ex-military man who now works only for money. Despite this, he has a soft spot in his

heart and emerges as a positive figure in the film. For instance, when an FBI agent escorting him is about to drown in a car crash, Carden manages to save him. Later, he bonds with his captor and captor's son, and by the end of the movie he has become their protector. Finally, Freeman appeared in *10 Items or Less*, in which he has long conversations with a cashier as they drive around Los Angeles. This film was released by Freeman's movie distribution company, ClickStar (more on which below).

Seemingly defying the effects of age, Freeman plunged into the year 2007 with more projects than ever. In *Feast of Love*, he played Professor Harry Stevenson, who-true to Freeman's character-serves as an elder statesman, again the wise, Numinous Negro. Next, *Gone, Baby, Gone* saw Freeman as Capt. Jack Doyle, a kindly old cop who has deep concern for the welfare of a child in the story. Another Freeman character has even more concern for people-and animals-in the sequel to *Bruce Almighty*. Again playing God, Freeman in *Evan Almighty* directs a self-centered, arrogant man to abandon his successful life and build an Ark to save townspeople and animals from a coming flood. Though the plot attributes the deluge to a crooked white politician, the politician does not come off as vile because he is played by obese John Goodman, an actor who really cannot seem to be truly hateful. In any case, Freeman as God wears flowing white clothes and speaks soothingly to Evan, proffering the usual words of wisdom, such as telling him the Ark will save the world: A-R-K, "Acts of Random Kindness."

In *The Bucket List*, Freeman plays one of two terminally ill men (the other played by Jack Nicholson) who wants to realize a few longtime dreams before he "kicks the bucket." As car mechanic Carter Chambers, Freeman is able to exude his signature dignity and intelligence, here represented by the fact that he is a gifted amateur historian who had wanted to become a history professor but was prevented from doing so by the usual racist oppression of America society. Years ago, when he still had choices, he was cursed with being "broke, black, and with a baby on the way" and never had the chance to realize his true dream. In *The Bucket List*, Carter plays the savior role, in essence helping a complete stranger for a common good (one of the items on the list). Carter teaches Nicholson's character what is truly valuable in life, then makes a metaphorical sacrifice when he dies during surgery. Nicholson's selfish character is transformed by Carter's wisdom and warmth, and now is allegorically resurrected by being united with his estranged daughter and her own daughter, whom he kisses, fulfilling another item on the list: "kissing the most beautiful girl in the world."

In 2008 Freeman appeared as the leader of a gang of assassins in *Wanted*, then as Lucius

Fox in the Batman sequel, *The Dark Knight*. With all these appearances, perhaps time is catching up with the aging Freeman. In this year's *Thick as Thieves*, for example, Freeman looks like a very old man. Further, the film script was so bad that the movie was never released in theaters; rather, it went straight to DVD. Trying yet again to play a bad guy (he seems as incapable of projecting true malevolence as Jack Nicholson), he's cast as a master thief. Paired with Antonio Banderas, the plot twists simply make no sense and the movie goes nowhere. *The Maiden Heist* (2009), however, shows promise. Due for release at the end of October, the comedy revolves around three museum security guards (Freeman, Christopher Walken, and William H. Macy) who plan to steal artwork.

As evidenced above, Freeman has not often been associated with overtly political films, particularly ones that explicitly deal with race and racism (*Glory* and *Amistad* were exceptions).³⁶ This changes with his most recent performance in the Clint Eastwood - directed film *Invictus* (2009, originally known as *The Human Factor*).³⁷ Here Freeman plays the lead role in a biographical film about Nelson Mandela's life since the end of apartheid. Once released from prison, he is elected to the presidency of South Africa. One tactic to bring together the people of the nation is to court the approval of white lovers of rugby. He does this by establishing a relationship with the rugby team captain, here played by Matt Damon.

This late-life attention to racism in America can also be seen in Freeman's 2008 involvement in desegregating an annual high school prom in Mississippi. The result is a documentary titled *Prom Night In Mississippi* (2008), whose website explains:

One town. Two proms.
Until now.

In 1997, Academy Award-winning actor Morgan Freeman offered to pay for the senior prom at Charleston High School in Mississippi under one condition: the prom had to be racially integrated. His offer was ignored. In 2008, Freeman offered again. This time the school board accepted, and history was made. Charleston High School had its first-ever integrated prom-in 2008. Until then, blacks and whites had had separate proms even though their classrooms have been integrated for decades.³⁸

On the whole, however, Freeman appears to be more all-embracing in his art and activism. In 1996 he teamed up with producer Lori McCreary to found Revelations Entertainment, an entertainment production team.³⁹

Ideological Import of Morgan Freeman's Roles

Though Morgan Freeman himself may not realize the larger purpose of the consistent roles he plays as a Numinous Negro, to a film studies scholar or cultural historian it is clear that he is part of an ideological agenda aimed at changing the culture. The “cultural elite” that has been working for half a century and more to transform the United States from an overwhelmingly white Christian nation into a multicultural nation made up of peoples from all corners of the globe has worked to both dismantle the hegemony of White Christian society and replace it with diffuse centers of power, one being that of African Americans. One observer has described the process this way:

There are various names for the ideology of the elite. Some call it “political correctness.” Others call it “Cultural Marxism.” But the labels don’t matter as long as one understands what is going on: the ruling elites are waging a cultural and racial war against Western values, Western civilization, and particularly Western man, i.e., the white man. In the name of the feel-good mantras of diversity and multiculturalism, all the values of traditional white civilization have been declared bad and everything opposed to them declared good. Every idea, attitude, and institution that protects the white race and promotes its continued existence is being destroyed, as a precondition for the physical destruction of the race itself. No arena of life is spared this agenda’s icy grip. Every movie, television show, news story, book, and sermon must advance it, under the watchful eye of an army of censors and snitches demanding unyielding fidelity to the agenda. No argument or evidence is allowed to challenge it.⁴⁰

The effort with respect to blacks can be seen in the seminal work of Swedish Nobel laureate Gunnar Myrdal, *author of An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, which played a role in the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, the ruling that outlawed racial segregation in public schools. Kevin MacDonald, E. Michael Jones, and Hasia R. Diner have all written on this subject as well, drawing into question the degree to which American cultural elites were acting selflessly in their efforts to empower blacks.⁴¹

Film must not be neglected when examining how this empowerment has proceeded, for not all progress has been realized through civil rights activism, court cases, and changes in law and education. In effect, the American people needed to picture a less oppressed black minority before they could embrace it as a reality. Among others, film scholar Robert Sklar

has written about the vast power of movies to influence society. In *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, he argued that by the late 1930s, Hollywood's ascendancy in the cultural realm was already widely recognized. Many academics and literary types regarded moviemakers with "respect, awe and even envy, as the possessors of the power to create the nation's myths and dreams." Scholars and writers of the day acknowledged "that movies had taken over cultural functions they themselves had exercised, or aspired to, in the past," a theme upon which Sklar expanded:

In traditional American society the task of describing the world and communicating that vision to its members had belonged, with different emphasis at different times, to the clergy, political statesmen, educators, businessmen, essayists, poets and novelists. There had never been a totally uniform cultural expression in the United States, there had always been schisms and struggles, alternatives and counterviews, but in general the combatants had come from similar ethnic and class backgrounds and had utilized the same means—the written and spoken word. Now for the first time power to influence the culture had been grasped by a group of men whose origins and whose means were different.⁴²

This has been an important achievement because of the great impact film in general has had on modern American culture. Writing in 1975, Sklar lamented the lack of cultural studies concerning the effects of film. Setting out to effect a remedy, he composed "a single volume covering the cultural history of American movies from the 1890s to the present, to provide a broad framework for understanding their significance." Sklar stresses the impact film has had: "It is important to begin with a recognition that movies have historically been and still remain vital components in the network of cultural communication, and the nature of their content and control helps to shape the character and direction of American culture as a whole."⁴³ Later film critics shared Sklar's desire to elevate the status of film to the same level of cultural importance as literature. For example, David Desser and Lester Friedman made the case that film deserves recognition and respect as a social construct: "Like a generation of literary critics, we also seek to situate a group of texts within a stream of social, cultural, historical and ethnic factors. Our subject, however, is film instead of literature, and our focus is filmmakers instead of writers."⁴⁴

In addition, Stanley Rothman, as director of a large study on leadership and social change in America, has been associated with a number of books which examine the impact media has had on American culture. In *Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes*

in *Motion Pictures*, Stanley Rothman is joined by Stephen Powers and David J. Rothman in a work that stresses that “Hollywood’s creative leadership impacts the larger society even as it is influenced by that society.” The authors, in noting the fact that “films are made by a relatively small number of people, who... tend to share a common outlook,” argue that “over time, motion pictures have had an undeniable impact on the beliefs, lifestyles, and action of Americans.” By way of illustration, they write, “There is little reason to believe that a single film or even group of films significantly influences audiences’ views over the long haul. However, if large numbers of motion pictures portray businessmen or Jews as thieves, blacks as violent or stupid, women as weak or clinging, and the military as corrupt, as a matter of course, it is reasonable to believe that such presentations will affect audiences to a significant extent...”⁴⁵

Margaret Miles, author of *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies*, expands on the theme that the power of movies comes from their repetition of an image:

No one film has iconic power, but the recurrence of similar images *across* films weaves those images into the fabric of the common life of American society, influencing everything from clothing styles to accepted and expected behavior. Filmic conventions, of which most spectators are never consciously aware, cumulatively affect Americans’ self-esteem, expectations, attitudes, and behavior in relationships.... The answer to my question concerning the power of film, then, is that, to a greater or lesser extent, “we [as a society] are what we look upon and what we delight in,” or, in less elegant language, what you see is what you get. But we “get” (the cultural message, as Roland Barthes said), or *are*, what we see not once but repeatedly. We get, at a subliminal and hence utterly effective level, not the narrative but the conventions of Hollywood film.⁴⁶

In practice, Hollywood functions as part of a highly sophisticated propaganda machine, and to the extent its message bolsters the greater narrative decided upon by the elite, the effect on the population becomes all the greater. Jacques Ellul fully understood the power of propaganda, as can be seen in his ground-breaking 1965 work, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*. Realizing that “man is terribly malleable, uncertain of himself, ready to accept and to follow many suggestions, and is tossed about by all the winds of doctrine,” Ellul set out to offer an encompassing expose of how propaganda works and what its goals are.⁴⁷

One of his greatest insights was of the need for repetition of the propaganda message. At first, it takes great effort to sway men from their set thinking, but, in Ellul’s words,

once the individual has been filled with and reshaped by propaganda, the smallest dose now suffices. It is enough to 'refresh,' to give a 'booster shot,' to repaint, and the individual behaves in striking fashion-like certain drunks who become intoxicated on one glass of wine. The individual no longer offers any resistance to propaganda; moreover, he has ceased to believe in it consciously. He no longer attaches importance to what it says, to its proclaimed objectives, but he acts according to the proper stimuli. The individual is arrested and crystallized with regard to his thinking.⁴⁸

This is the process by which African Americans have been elevated in the American mind. Freeman, Denzel Washington, and to some extent Samuel L. Jackson are used in this respect: repeatedly they are shown in favorable roles, and the American public has been duly "filled with and reshaped by propaganda." To illustrate, let's turn to a genre not directly related to blacks, that of the media image of a threatening Arab.

Observers of American popular culture are likely familiar with scenes of murderous Arabs from highly acclaimed movies such as *Exodus*, starring Paul Newman (1960), *Flight of the Phoenix*, with James Stewart (1966), *The Black Stallion*, (1979), *Back to the Future*, (1985), *True Lies*, featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis (1994), *Father of the Bride Part II*, with Steve Martin (1995), and Denzel Washington's action-packed *The Siege*, (1998). All of these films with highly negative images of Arabs appeared well before 9/11. Children have been exposed to these images as well. For instance, as Jack Shaheen notes, on *The Electric Company* there was a character known as the evil Spell Binder, "a short, grubby-looking villain who resembles those turbanned Arabs in the escapist Arabian Nights' films of the fifties and sixties."⁴⁹ He also notes that most other children's shows had negative images of Arabs, too-*Popeye*, *Bugs Bunny*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Speed Racer*, *Tennessee Tuxedo*, *Jonny Quest* among others.

As an Arab American, Shaheen is naturally sensitive to the images his fellow Americans see and has thus chastised television for creating and perpetuating a noxious image of Muslim Arabs. The mid-eighties, after all, were a time when a wide range of American minorities were critically studying and contesting the images majority society created of them. In academic shorthand, this became known through Edward Said's explication of the construction of "The Other" in his influential *Orientalism*-admittedly the foundation of what has become an entrenched bastion of anti-white "postcolonial studies" in vast areas of the humanities and social sciences.⁵⁰

Shaheen then spent nearly two more decades viewing and compiling images of Arabs in Hollywood films, resulting in a tome that was as thick as his TV Arab book was thin. The

new book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, canvassed nine hundred films, “the vast majority of which portray Arabs by distorting at every turn what most Arab men, women, and children are really like.”⁵¹ In the book, Shaheen convincingly makes the point that Hollywood for one hundred years has regularly-and often deliberately-created a de-humanized image of Arabs. Unfortunately, fate intervened to make this book one of the more ill-timed studies of our age: It was released in early 2001, just prior to the terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. This Al Qaeda-led attack made the image of the Arab as blood-thirsty terrorist even more indelibly imprinted on the brains of not only American viewers but of people throughout the world. Subsequent attacks such as those in Madrid and London only reinforced this.

If Shaheen was troubled by the strength and persistence of negative portrayals of Muslims and Arabs prior to the 9/11 attacks, his discomfort likely grew exponentially when the new hit TV series *24* starring Keifer Sutherland as Counter Terrorism Unit agent Jack Bauer began to run on Fox TV immediately after the Twin Towers collapse of September 11th. The show presented a never-ending series of terrorist attacks on the U.S., including nuclear attacks. Because many of these episodes featured Muslim bad guys, Shaheen criticized the show for creating “a new Arab-American bogeyman.”⁵² Indeed, for one season a terrorist named Habib Marwan controlled a series of Middle Eastern terrorist cells that gravely threatened the American people.

The most egregious image of Muslims, however, probably came with the introduction in season four of the immigrant Araz family, composed of father Navi, mother Dina, and 17-year-old son Behrooz. Though Behrooz dates an American girl, the family is vile and corrupt in almost every other way. The entire family is on a knowing mission to destroy large parts of the United States with nuclear weapons. Father Navi exhibits his vileness by telling his son things such as “I listen to your phone calls, I read your e-mail” and striking him on the face. This is nothing, however, compared to the father’s decision to murder his own son. Fearing the America girlfriend will expose the terrorist plot, Navi orders Behrooz to cold-bloodedly murder her. Suspecting Behrooz does not have the inner strength to do so, mother Dina poisons the girlfriend by spiking her tea. Dina is at least considerate enough to then shoot the girl’s body in an attempt to persuade her husband that Behrooz had carried out orders. Next, as Behrooz and one of his father’s henchmen are digging the girlfriend’s grave, the henchman tries to kill Behrooz. Incapacitating the attacker, Behrooz demands to know who ordered his death: It is his own father Navi.

Shaheen latest book about Hollywood’s vilification of Arabs is *Guilty: Hollywood’s*

Verdict on Arabs After 9/11.⁵³ In an interview about the book, Shaheen says that since 9/11 a few films such as *Babel* (2006) and *Rendition* (2007) had more even-handed images of Arabs, yet steadily worsening images were the rule. For instance, Shaheen cited last year's *The Kingdom*, an action movie with FBI agents hunting terrorists in Saudi Arabia, as "one of the most damaging depictions of Arabs of recent times." It is a film in which "even Arab children cannot be trusted." Shades of young Behrooz in *24*.⁵⁴

To return to the point of propaganda, we might note that Shaheen is wise to focus on the selective framing of Arabs and the repetition of that framing. "You cannot deny the reality—there are people who really want to kill Americans. But those are basically the only images we see." Naturally, such repetition has a goal, one captured in an old Arabic saying: "*Al tiktarr biallem il hmar*. By repetition even the donkey learns."⁵⁵ The donkey in this case is presumably the American people, who, as we all know, are pliable to sustained manipulation. The same thing is being done with respect to white males in America and is responsible for the host of positive images of African Americans since at least the 1980s.

Conclusion

On the surface, it may appear that this tactic of elevating black characters to central and heroic positions is an honest attempt at creating role models for a historically downtrodden group. Such may be the case, but only to a degree. In addition, the flip side must be considered as well – the concomitant denigrating of whites in contemporary Hollywood film. As one writer argues, this "campaign of demonization of the European American Christian majority and its culture that we see in the media" is real. "We have been publicly demonized as 'racists' and deliberately conditioned by the media *not* to respond at all. Our inertia ensures our decline.... [W]e are being demonized, dispersed and impoverished until we are no longer a threat."⁵⁶

Seemingly, majority whites have lost the power to control the image their own society constructs of them. In some ways, it parallels the failure of Arabs to control the images of Arabs that Westerners see. Increasingly, whites have been on a downward slope when it comes to their media image. Again, a comparison to the image of Arabs Hollywood has created is revealing: "The images have remained primarily fixed and have only been changed in the sense that they have become more vindictive and damaging." The intent here, as Shaheen makes clear, is control: "the images help enforce policy."⁵⁷

Based on the patterns emerging from Hollywood these last few decades, one might conclude that there is in fact an intent, if not a policy, to diminish the place of whites in film,

beginning with the public face of white authority, the white male. Hollywood's role in this dispossession should be taken seriously, for as Plato said, "Those who tell the stories rule society." Now that America has its first African American president (and first Latina Supreme Court Justice), a pundit like Peter Brimelow can be taken more seriously when he writes something such as "The plain fact is that the Obama Administration has very shallow roots in historic America. It is, to put it brutally, a minority occupation government."⁵⁸ Clearly, given the substance and impact of his movies, Morgan Freeman has long played a role in preparing the ground for this minority occupation government. Though there is no reason to claim that Freeman has played this role wittingly, from a wider perspective it is clear that his films have had a powerful impact on perceptions about race held by Americans and are therefore worth studying.

Appendix: Morgan Freeman's Filmography:

Brubaker (1980); *Eyewitness* (1981); *Teachers* (1984); *Harry & Son* (1984); *Marie* (1985); *That Was Then... This Is Now* (1985); *Street Smart* (1987); *Clean and Sober* (1988); *Glory* (1989); *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989); *Lean on Me* (1989); *Johnny Handsome* (1989); *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990); *The Civil War* (1990); *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991); *Unforgiven* (1992); *The Power of One* (1992); *Bopha!* (1993); *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994); *Outbreak* (1995); *Seven* (1995); *Chain Reaction* (1996); *Moll Flanders* (1996); *Cosmic Voyage* (1996); *Amistad* (1997); *Kiss The Girls* (1997); *Deep Impact* (1998); *Hard Rain* (1998); *Nurse Betty* (2000); *Under Suspicion* (2000); *Along Came a Spider* (2001); *The Sum of All Fears* (2002); *High Crimes* (2002); *Bruce Almighty* (2003); *Dreamcatcher* (2003); *Levity* (2003); *Drug War* (2003); *Million Dollar Baby* (2004); *The Hunting of the President* (2004); *The Big Bounce* (2004); *An Unfinished Life* (2005); *War of the Worlds* (2005); *March of the Penguins* (2005); *Batman Begins* (2005); *Unleashed* (2005); *Edison Force* (2006); *The Contract* (2006); *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006); *10 Items or Less* (2006); *Evan Almighty* (2007); *Feast of Love* (2007); *Gone, Baby, Gone* (2007); *The Bucket List* (2007); *Wanted* (2008); *The Love Guru* (2008); *The Dark Knight* (2008); *Prom Night In Mississippi* (2008); *Thick as Thieves* (2009); *The Maiden Heist* (2009); *The Human Factor* (2009); *Invictus* (2009).

1. See http://www.askmen.com/celebs/men/entertainment_150/164_morgan_freeman.html.
2. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 58-60.
3. See, for example, Michael Rogin's *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998); and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
4. Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 15.
5. Roy Hurst, "Stepin Fetchit, Hollywood's First Black Film Star," <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5245089>. See also Mel Watkins, *Stepin Fetchit: The Life and Times of Lincoln Perry* (New York: Pantheon, 2005).
6. Margaret R. Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 118-119.
7. Vincent Brook, *Something Ain't Kosher Here: The Rise of the "Jewish" Sitcom* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 49. Incidentally, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres* and

- Petticoat Junction* were all creations of Paul Henning. See Paul Buhle, *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture* (New York, Verso 2004), 263 n39.
8. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rural_purge.
 9. See *The Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR) of the FBI, the standard reference work for crime in the United States, at <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>.
 10. For further descriptions of these negative images of white American males, see my essay "Falling Down: Images of the White Majority in Peril," *The Journal of Hokkai-Gakuen University* (No. 111, March 2002). There I also talk about the concept of the "righteous white," in which a white male acts as the hero and moral center of a film by ignoring or working against the interests of his fellow whites in favor of helping a minority member. In the 1996 film *A Time to Kill*, for example, a white lawyer struggles to achieve justice for a black family. More recently, director and star Clint Eastwood has created such a character in *Gran Torino* (2008). Historian Peter Novick, for one, has problematized the whole concept of "righteous gentile" because, as he points out, the term's real purpose is less to honor the rare righteous gentile than to "damn the vast 'unrighteous majority.'" (*The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 180. See also my essay "Images of the White American Male in Decline," 北海道大学人文論集第 21 号 (2002 年 3 月).
 11. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaxploitation>.
 12. Richard Brookhiser, "The Numinous Negro-His importance in our lives; why he is fading," *National Review*, August 20, 2001.
 13. See http://www.vdare.com/Sailer/080330_obama.htm; and http://www.vdare.com/Sailer/080330_obama.htm.
 14. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morgan_Freeman#Early_life; <http://www.biography.com/articles/Morgan-Freeman-9301982>; and <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/entertainment/film/biography/artist/morgan-freeman/biography/87>. See also Kathleen Tracy, *Morgan Freeman: A Biography* (Fort Lee, New Jersey: Barricade Books, 2006).
 15. See <http://www.biography.com/articles/Morgan-Freeman-9301982>.
 16. Both *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company* may be considered the very models for what was to become multiculturalism in America, introducing the tolerant cast of mixed races and genders that later became the official norm throughout the country.
 17. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Electric_Company.
 18. See http://www.zurichfilmfestival.org/en/news/news_detail/article/324/3/.
 19. Stepin Fetchit was, according to The Internet Movie Database, "a character actor-supporting player who actually achieved superstar status in the 1930s (becoming a millionaire to boot), [whose] characterization as a lazy, slow-witted, jive-talkin' 'coon' offended African Americans at the time he was a major attraction in motion pictures (primarily the 1930s) and still offends African Americans in the 21st." See Century <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0275297/bio>.
 20. Film critic Kathryn Bernheimer uncritically adopts this view as well, writing of these "two persecuted minorities" and the "precarious position in the stubbornly bigoted American South" occupied by Jews like Miss Daisy. (*The 50 Greatest Jewish Movies: A Critic's Ranking of the Very Best* [Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press, 1998], 121). This is fiction, as Jews almost universally enjoyed safety and valued positions in the pre-civil rights South. See, for instance, Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915* (NY: Cambridge, 1991), 223-229.
 21. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bonfire_of_the_Vanities_\(film\)#Main_cast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bonfire_of_the_Vanities_(film)#Main_cast).
 22. Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, Massachusetts, 2001), 399-400.
 23. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shawshank_Redemption.
 24. In the original James Patterson novel, a presumably Jewish reporter in Los Angeles is working on a story about the serial killer nicknamed "The Gentleman Caller." To give an idea of the level of sadism the white killer displays, he has just murdered a 14 year old girl and cut off her feet. (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000).

25. White-on-black rape in America is an exceedingly rare thing. For example, when leftist writer Andrew Hacker came out with his indictment of white society, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, even he had to admit that "None of the survey respondents reported a case of rape where the assailant was white and the victim black." (Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1995], 190.) The *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR) of the FBI, the standard reference work for crime in the United States, show that black-on-white crimes, including rape, are much higher than the reverse. Yearly, cases of the rape, torture and murder of white women in America are documented, though they rarely reach public consciousness. See *The Color of Crime: Race, Crime, and Violence in America*, (Oakton, VA: New Century Foundation, 1998), 1; See also Michael Levin, *Why Race Matters: Race Differences and What They Mean*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 294-295.
26. <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20000908/REVIEWS/9080303/1023>.
27. Peter Stack, *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 3, 1997.
28. *New York Times*, October 3, 1997.
29. Joel Stein, "A black president? Seen a few," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2008.
30. See, for example, Ted Baehr and Pat Boone, *The Culture-Wise Family: Upholding Christian Values in a Mass Media World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007); John Gibson, *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal Plot to Ban the Sacred Holiday is Worse Than You Thought* (New York: Sentinel, 2005); David Limbaugh, *Persecution: How Liberals are Waging War Against Christianity* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003); and Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas: A Culture History of America's Most Cherished Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).
31. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0315824/businessoffice>. <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bigbounce.htm>.
32. See http://www.vdare.com/sailer/050619_obsession.htm.
33. Among the many scientific treatments of this topic are Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), chapter 13; J. Philippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life-History Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995); Levin, *Why Race Matters*; and Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen, *IQ and Global Inequality* (Augusta, GA: Washington Summit Publishers, 2006).
34. See Keith L. Alexander, "The 21st Century's Answer To the Wright Brothers: Father and Daughter Team Up in 737 Cockpit," *Washington Post*, August 5, 2003. Ironically, this very story points up the difficulty of making racial classifications and producing clear statistics on the race of American pilots. The daughter in this story, for example, is "a child of an interracial marriage — her mother is white." Figures from the Organization of Black Airline Pilots (OBAP) show that black pilots at major national, regional and commuter passenger airlines and freight carriers "make up just one percent of the 70,000 U.S. pilots in the U.S." For statistics on female commercial airline pilots, see: <http://www.iswap.org/ISAFaqs.html> and: <http://www.aviationnow.com/content/careercenter/global/car2001g.htm>. As recently as 1976, the number of black pilots was only 80 and 400 ten years later. (Patricia Brown, "Special Report: Blacks in Aviation," *2003 Aviation Week*, <http://www.aviationnow.com/avnow/spSec/blackhistory1.jsp>.)
35. This tendency is not limited to Hollywood film. Textbooks have adopted the same convention for minorities in general, showing them in dominant status professions in illustrations and photographs. Big business appears to be on board as well, judging from their public commitments to diversity. Thus Microsoft, an organization with presumably many left-brain employees, sponsored a series of ads earlier this decade in *The Atlantic Monthly* imparting the message that their desire was to see women and minorities in the positions traditionally filled in America by white men. This conceit was raised to its highest level when Lockheed Martin commissioned a full-page color ad for the designers and fabricators of its future fighter jet; the two employees featured were a black female and an Asian female. (*The Atlantic Monthly*, July/Aug. 2003, p. 13.)
36. This is in marked contrast to his younger rival for head Numinous Negro, Denzel Washington. Early in his career, Washington starred as black Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X and has gone on to do many

films that one-sidedly portray racism in American life.

37. Much has been made of the fact that Eastwood began his career as a violent gunslinger, including his famous Dirty Harry franchise, which was not-for our times-politically correct. Since then he has become far more interested in creating sympathetic stories about minorities. See, for example, *True Crime* (1999) and *Gran Torino* (2008). About the latter, one reviewer writes that “this movie convincingly portrays the dispossession of white, middle-class America.” As the only remaining white in the neighborhood, “He is clearly the alien here.” To reconcile this, he becomes a surrogate father to Thao, a Hmong boy who tries to steal Kowalski’s prized Ford Gran Torino. (This parallels a similar turn to a non-white child to compensate for the lack of a relationship with one’s biological white children, as seen in Jack Nicholson’s 2002 film *About Schmidt*, where the actor’s character effectively adopts an African child.) The reviewer of *Gran Torino* writes about the film: “The far more interesting theme of *Gran Torino* is white displacement. Walt Kowalski is part of Harry Callahan’s America-white America-but that America is gone.” Thus, the film is really about “white America graciously giving way to its non-white future.” One symbol of this is the juxtaposition of Kowalski’s wife’s funeral with the birth of a Hmong child. See Stephen Webster, “Elegy for the White Man,” *American Renaissance*, Vol. 20. No. 9 (September 2009), 10–12.
38. <http://www.promnightinmississippi.com/the-film>.
39. This ambitious effort is described on their website:

Our History & Mission

Revelations Entertainment’s ability to fuse artistic integrity with technological innovation positions it as one of the most viable and promising independent production teams in the industry. Principals Morgan Freeman and Lori McCreary lead a group of inspired professionals who develop and produce compelling human stories that enlighten, express heart and glorify the human experience.

A creative group of actors including Matt Damon, Pierce Brosnan, Gene Hackman, Danny Glover, Billy Bob Thornton, Greg Kinnear, Holly Hunter, Paz Vega, William H Macy, Kirsten Dunst, Thomas Jane, Christopher Walken, Antonio Banderas and Monica Bellucci have been attracted to Revelations’ productions.

Revelations has collaborated with many of the most innovative filmmakers in the industry, drawing inspiration from artists like Brad Silberling (*City of Angels*, *Moonlight Mile*), Robert Benton (*Superman*, *Kramer vs Kramer*), Stephan Hopkins (*The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, *Under Suspicion*, *Lost in Space*), Lee Tamahori (*The Sopranos*, *Die Another Day*, *When We Were Warriors*, *Along Came a Spider*), Ed Solomon (*Men In Black*, *Levity*, *The In-Laws*), and Mimi Leder (*Pay it Forward*, *Deep Impact*) .

Future collaborators will include Clint Eastwood (*Million Dollar Baby*, *Unforgiven*), David Fincher (*Se7en*, *Fight Club*), and Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*, *Shooter*).

Revelations Entertainment’s commitment to produce films that provoke imagination have enticed artists and fans alike. The team’s relationships with entertainment industry leaders combined with an expertise in digital technologies have attracted prominent investors to support the company’s slate of projects. See <http://www.revelationsent.com/catAboutUs.php>.

40. See J.B. Cash, “The Racial Caste System in Sports,” *The Occidental Quarterly online*, <http://www.toqonline.com/2009/04/the-racial-caste-system-in-sports/>. William Lind provides further analysis of the phenomenon. See “Who Stole Our Culture?” (http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=55833).
41. See Kevin MacDonald, “Jews, Blacks, and Race,” in *Race and the American Prospect: Essays on the Racial Realities of Our Nation and Our Time*, ed. Samuel Francis (Mt. Airy, MD: The Occidental Press,

- 2006); E. Michael Jones, *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit and Its Impact on World History* (South Bend, Indiana: Fidelity Press, 2008); and Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), respectively.
42. Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 195.
43. Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, ix-x.
44. David Desser and Lester D. Friedman, *American-Jewish Filmmakers: Traditions and Trends* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4-5.
45. Stephen Powers, David J. Rothman, and Stanley Rothman, *Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 10, 287.
46. Miles, *Seeing and Believing*, 190-191.
47. Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Random House, 1965), xvi.
48. Ellul, *Propaganda*, 184.
49. Jack Shaheen, *The TV Arab* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), 35.
50. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
51. Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs*, 1.
52. See <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainmentNews/idUSL0132230620080501?sp=true>.
53. Jack Shaheen, *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11* (Northhampton, Massachusetts, 2008).
54. See <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainmentNews/idUSL0132230620080501?sp=true>
55. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs*, 1.
56. Richard Faussette, "Niche Theory, Population Transfer, and the Origin of the Anti-Semitic Cycle," *The Occidental Quarterly*, 6 (4); and "The Book of Genesis from a Darwinian Perspective," *The Occidental Quarterly*, 7 (2).
57. Tom Perry, "Critic accuses Hollywood of vilifying Arabs, Reuters, May 1, 2008.
58. http://vdare.com/pb/091006_race.htm.