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VOICE-OVER:

A is for Aunty, de oldes 'er all, she rocks all us chil'ren t' sleep in her shawl.

D is for Daniel, who tends to de do', he took care of massa, way back 'fo de woh.

F is for Felix, who won't do no wuk, he's lazy and shif'less and ready to shirk.

Z is for Zonia, chunky and small, but 'ere comes de Missus so I guess dis am all.

VIDEO/SYNC: (Cartoon) SCRUB ME MAMA WITH THE BOOGIE WOOGIE BEAT

"Listen, Mammy, that ain't no way to wash clothes. What you all need is rhythm!"

"Wh- wh- what do you all mean, rhythm?"

"Ha ha ha ha. I'll show you what I mean!" (music)

NARR: The mammy ... the pickaninny ... the coon ... the sambo ... the uncle: Well into the middle of the twentieth century, these were some of the most popular depictions of black Americans.

By 1941, when this cartoon was made, images like these permeated American culture.

These were the images that decorated our homes, that served and amused and made us laugh.

Taken for granted, they worked their way into the mainstream of American life. Of ethnic caricatures in America, these have been the most enduring.

Today there's little doubt that they shaped the most gut-level feelings about race.

LEVINE: When you see hundreds of them, uh in all parts of the country persisting over a very long period of time, they have to have meaning. They obviously appeal to people. They appeal to the creator, but they appeal also to the consumers, those who read the car-- look at the cartoons, or read the novels, or buy the artifacts.

CHRISTIAN: It is not just that it's in the figurines, and the uhn coffee pots and so on, it is that we are seen that way, perceived that way, even in terms of public policy. And that our lives are lived under that shadow, and sometimes we then, even become to believe it ourselves.

LEVINE: Blacks don't really look like that. So why is it so appealing to people to think they look like that, and pretend they look like that, and to like to look at icons that look like that. You look at them often enough and black people begin to look like that, even though they don't. Um, so that they've had a great impact in our society.

They therefore tell us both about the inner desires of the people who create and consume them, and also they tell us about some of the forces that shape reality, for large portions of our population.

VIDEO/SYNC: "Uncle Tom's Cabana"

Well now, chil'ren, ol' Uncle Tom's gon' tell you the real true story about Uncle Tom's Cabin....

NARR: Contained in these cultural images is the history of our national conscience: a conscience striving to reconcile the paradox of racism in a nation founded on human equality -- a conscience coping with this profound contradiction ... through caricature.

What were the consequences of these caricatures? How did they mold and mirror the reality of racial tensions in America for more than 100 years?

VOICE-OVER:

Laughing Ben: "I got a hat on my head, shoes on my feet, so what need I care, cuz I'm the luckiest coon in this town...(laughter)"

NARR: In the early 1900's, images and songs portrayed a simple, docile, laughing black man: the Sambo.

This image became one of the classic portrayals of black men in film.

Care free and irresponsible, the sambo was quick to avoid work while revelling in the easy pleasures of food, dance and song. His life was one of child-like contentment.

VIDEO/SYNC: **Rhapsody in Black and Blue (film)**

Man: Dog gonnit, can't this boy go to town! Listen here. Ha, ha, ha!

Woman: Come away from that old box.

Man: Well, can I help it 'cause I got an ear for music?

Woman: Yeah, that's all you got, is an ear for music, and a mouth for po'k chop. You better get a desire for work.

NARR: The happy sambo began his stage life in the late 1820's. . . when a man named T.D. Rice brought a new sensation to American theater.

Rice was known as an Ethiopian delineator, a white comedian who performed in blackface. The name of his routine would later become the symbol of segregation in the South.

SLOAN: The Jim Crow was a dance that started on the plantation as a result of dancing being outlawed in 1690. Dancing was said to be crossing your feet by the church. And so the slaves created a way of shuffling and sliding to safely glide around the laws without crossing their feet.

NARR: The slaves had a saying for their cunning in skirting the law.

SLOAN: "Wheel about, and turn about, and jump just so, every time I wheel about, I jump Jim Crow."

NARR: According to legend, T. D. Rice saw a crippled black man dancing an exaggerated Jim Crow dance. Rice took the man's tattered clothes and that night imitated him on stage.

SLOAN: It was an instant success. And America loved it. And a bevy of imitators came about, uh literally hundreds of men tore up their clothes, discarded their their perfect dialects of the black man, and began to do this exaggerated character dance which became known as the Jim Crow character.

And so here we have Jim Crow, T. D. Rice, taking a dance which was altered by a law, from a man who was crippled, and exaggerating it again. And he had no intention of presenting truth.

SLOAN: But what was bought by the majority of the people in Ohio, and the Louisiana Territory, and in, along the Erie Canal, was that this was a true image. And it was a devastating image.

People in small towns who had never seen blacks, you know, and suddenly saw Rice, bought that as a black image.

NARR: In 1843, a group of blackface performers joined together to form a single troupe. Instead of delineators, they called themselves minstrels.

The minstrel show captivated broad audiences, mostly in the North, and emerged as America's first form of national popular entertainment.

Like movies today, successful minstrels played to the tastes and values of their audiences.

Jim Crow, reflecting popular demand, evolved into the singing dancing Sambo. This light-hearted figure became one of the most potent forces in the politics...of slavery.

TURNER: The minstrelry era really took off at the same time as the abolitionist movement took off.

And you could almost sort of chart the two. As there were people working to end slavery, people working to eradicate slavery, there were also people increasing the exaggerated portrayals that we find in the, in the minstrel material.

NARR: Minstrel caricatures mirrored the prevailing belief that slavery was good for the slave since it drew upon his "natural" inferiority and willingness to serve. Slaves were content. The proof was offered in the image of the happy Sambo.

FREDRICKSON: The old plantation was presented as a kind of paradise. White Americans were being constantly being bombarded by the image of happy slaves is what it amounted to. So slavery must be a good institution if if the slaves were happy and the masters were kindly. The, that whole cultural image of the benign, the benificent institution was projected constantly in the period immediately before the Civil War.

VOICE-OVER:

"So blessed with moderate work, with ample fare,
With all the good the starving pauper needs,
The happier slave on each plantation leads..."

"I am quite sure they never could become a happier people than I find them here... No tribe of people have ever passed from barbarism to civilization whose progress has been more secure from harm, more genial to their character, or better adapted to their intellectual feebleness, than the negroes..."

"So hand de Banjo down to play
We'll make it ring both night and day
And we care not what de white folks say,
Dey can't get us to run away."

NARR: Time and again these sentiments were expressed in popular songs and novels before the Civil War. For many Americans North and South, the myth of Sambo resovled both the moral and political conflict of allowing slavery in a free society.

LEVINE: On the one hand, whites like to think of their blacks as sambos in the, in the antebellum period, but they could never have operated plantations with sambos and they knew that.

NARR: The slavery debate grew more heated as the Civil War approached. Minstrels, playing to conservative sentiment, turned their attention to free blacks in the North, and a new character appeared beside the Southern Sambo: Zip Coon.

VOICE-OVER: TRANSCENDENTALISM:

Transcendentalism is dat spiritual cognoscence ob psychological irrefragibility, connected wid conscientient ademtion ob incolumbient spirituality and etherialized connection -- which is deribed ob ... inwisible atoms dat become ana-tom-ically tattable ....

NARR: A dandy, and a buffoon, Zip Coon's attemtps to imitate whites mocked the notion of racial equality.

Together Zip Coon and Sambo provided a double-edged defense of slavery: Zip Coon, proof of blacks' ludicrous failure to adapt to freedom; and Sambo, the fantasy of happy darkies in their proper place.

VIDEO/SYNC: Judge Priest (film)

Mammy sings: "I got to take down de judge's clothes. Got to take 'em in de house, yes Lord! Got to get out that ol' ironin' board--fix 'em up for de judge to wear. Hmmmmm, yes Lord!....

NARR: When this film was released in 1934, the black Mammy had become such a staple figure in portraits of the Old South, it was hard to imagine a Southern home without her.

VIDEO/SYNC: JUDGE PRIEST

Mammy: Praise de Lord! Mr. Loom! Is you heah or is you ain't?"

Man: Hi, Aunt Dillsie!

Mammy: "How come you heah?"

NARR: Like the happy Sambo, the Mammy emerged as a defense of slavery. Plantation novels and minstrel shows presented her as fat, pitch-black, and happily obedient to her master and mistress.

VIDEO/SYNC: JUDGE PRIEST

Mammy: You stay here. Us is gon kill de high-steppinest rooster in de yard 'n fix a great big bowl of milk gravy 'n grits--

Man: With waffles, too!

Mammy: Don't you worry now, honey, you'se home now! Mr. Loom's home! Mr. Loom's home!..."

CHRISTIAN: She was always presented as docile, loyal, uh protective of the white house an, the big house, an indication that um, that she understood, um the value of the society.

She's presented almost as an antithesis of the white lady, the person who does not have the qualities of fragility and beauty which would make her valued in the society.

NARR: With her hair hidden beneath a bandanna, her ample weight, dark skin and coarse manners, the Mammy was stripped of sexual allure.

Faithfully she served the the master's household -- in popular fiction and theater --but here her presence never evoked sexual tension.

CHRISTIAN: If the mammy were to be a sexual being, which of course in reality she was, but if she was, were to be that in myth, and in fiction and so on, she would become a threat to the mistress of the house, she would become a threat to the entire system. Uh she, because she would then be capable of being desired by the master of the house.

We know from reading the diaries and the letters of slave mistresses that this was very often the case, and created much disruption, much friction in this supposedly happy plantation system the planners wanted to project.

SONG: MAMMY JINNY'S JUBILEE

"A brand new bandanna around mammy's head
You couldn't miss the color cause it
surely am red!
Come on 'n shake your feet
Oh honey, shake your feet
To ol' Mammy Jinny's jig
Hee ha haaa!..."

NARR: While happy in her subservience to whites, the mammy was portrayed quite differently in relations with her own family.

CHRISTIAN: In your usual set up, in American society, the person who controls is the male. The mammy is presented as the controller. What we have indicating quote unquote how inferior we are. That men are weak and women are strong, the very opposite of the way it's supposed to be according to the societal norms.

CHRISTIAN: So the mammy strikes at two important concepts of gender in in um antebellum society. She is strong, asexual, and ugly when a woman is supposed to be beautiful, fragile, dependent. She is a controller of her own people, of the males in her own um society, uh, when the female should be dependent and subordinate. An indication clearly that black people can't make it.

NARR: Freedom brought hope to black Americans. Millions of emancipated slaves were inspired by the promise of equality.

But this promise was betrayed.

FREDERICKSON: Those who wanted to re-establish firm white control, who wanted to maintain white supremacy by any means possible, used the argument that what had happened, was that blacks no longer under the benign or beneficent or kindly guidance of whites were reverting to savagery.

NARR: Political debate manipulated public fears about the so-called "black menace".

Old stereotypes were adapted to the new politics. Increasingly blacks were identified as brutes.

VOICE-OVER:

The states and people that favor this equality and amalgamation of the white and black races God will exterminate. A man cannot commit so great an offense against his race, against his country, against his God, as to give his daughter in marriage to a Negro, a beast.

NARR: This climate of racial hysteria was seen in every aspect of popular culture.

FREDRICKSON: The best example of this was the writings of Thomas Dixon, in his novel The Clansman, which then later became a hit Broadway play, and finally was adapted as the most successful of early American pictures in "Birth of a Nation."

NARR: Described by President Woodrow Wilson as "history writ in lightning" ... Birth of a Nation captured on film the classic caricature of blacks following Reconstruction.

Here Emancipation was viewed as a tragic mistake: it had ended slavery and let loose blacks' wildest passions.

Brute Negroes, played by whites in blackface, purused white virgins.

These images were guaranteed to incite racial violence. But more: they justified it.

PETERS: Earlier we wouldn't have gotten an image of a brute Negro... because this wouldn't have helped in the defense of slavery. Uh to suggest earlier too much that there were people who were very rebellious would've suggested that the blacks wanted to be free. The image that they needed was that blacks were docile in antebellum times.

During Reconstruction the black is a challenge to the political system and they have to not only then try to justify uh maybe a reason for going back to slavery, but they are also justifying their reasons for killing the blacks. Because they are saying that the blacks are an offense to civilization.

CHRISTIAN: These beings must be controlled is what the mythology is telling us. And at the same time in a very clever way because the planters also wanted to soothe people, wanted to make sure that they believed that their society could continue. They harken back to the good ol' days, and the good ol' days when everybody's happy, the happy darkey. Um, a way of saying let's go back to those times, remember those good ol' times when--

SONG: "POOR OLD NED"

"Oh there was an old darkie
And they called him Uncle Ned
But he died long ago, long ago.

And he had no wool
On the top of his head
In the place where the wool ought to grow.

So lay down de shovel and de hoe
And hang up de fiddle and de bow.
No more hard work for Poor Old Ned.
He's gone where the good darkies go..."

FREDERICKSON: The older generation were still the faithful retainers of the slave era, and the newer generation, however, was out of control -- the blacks who had grown up in the period since the Civil War and had never known the domesticating influence of slavery.

CHRISTIAN: So you have this two pronged-attack on blacks. On one hand they're reduced to servile, harmless singing darkeys of the good ol' times before the Civil War, what we really want to go back to. And you have an attack on supposedly what they've become now, viscious, brutal, um aggressive, violent.

NARR: America at the turn of the century experienced unprecedented race-hatred.

Violence, Jim Crow segregation, mob terror became acceptable methods of social control. And always, to justify such atrocity, was the excuse of the animalistic, black brute.

Brute caricatures of black children -- or "pickaninnies" as they were once called -- showed them as victims.

Victims who evoked -- not sympathy -- but the feeling that blacks were subhuman.

TURNER: They're always on the river, in the uh, on the ground, in a tree, partially clad, dirty, their hair unkempt, This suggests that there was a need to imagine black children as animal-like, as savage. If you do that, if you make that step and say that these children are really like little furry animals then it's much easier to rationalize and justify the threat that's embodied in having an alligator pursuing the child.

VOICE-OVER: "SEVEN LITTLE NIGGERS" POEM

Seven little niggers playing with bricks,
one was it most all de time,
den dey was but six.

Six little niggers fooling 'round de hive...,

NARR: One by one black children disappeared, targets of comic violence. The symbolism in these images was revealing.

VOICE-OVER: POEM

Five little niggers playing dere was war...
Boom went de cannon
Den dey was four...

TURNER: The material objects tell us that there was still a segment of the population at large that was very uncomfortable with the black presence in the New World and needed to express its need to get rid of them. Artistically rendering away, of removing blacks from the New World , so that there's nothing left.

VOICE-OVER: "SEVEN LITTLE NIGGERS"

One little nigger in the scorchin' sun,
soon dey was de smell of smoke,
and den dey was none.

NARR: As America crossed into the twentieth century, these images were inherited by vaudeville and motion pictures.

The forms were new, but the content was unchanged.

NARR: In the minstrel tradition, black roles in film were still played by whites in blackface.

When blacks finally began to play themselves, they faced a tragic dilemma.

SLOAN: By the time blacks came to the minstrel stage, they had to perform in blackface. And so you had black men darkening their already dark skin, with soot. And widening their mouths and and protraying themselves.

Rubin Crowder was a black man from the Mid-West, who by the time he came to the minstrel stage had to take an Irish name. Because most minstrels were Irishmen performing black characters. Uh what you have here is a weird warping of the American fabric. You know, when a black man takes an Irish name, then impersonates the impersonator impersonating himself.

MOSS: So anybody who wanted to, who was black and wanted to get in the theater would do it like Pick and Pat, or Molasses and January... do what they do. Don't come telling me you can do Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poetry, or James Weldon Johnson's poetry, or Georgia Dougla Johnson's poetry, no, nobody wants that. Give me a coon song. And one of these jokes.

SLOAN: These black actors perceived the minstrel show as a doorway, a doorway out of hunger, a doorway out of the south, a doorway to other opportunities. . . So we have an irony, or a Catch 22 as the saying goes, where we have an evolution of a people into a theatrical workforce, at the same time that we have a perpetuation of a stereotype.

SONG: "LAUGHING COON"

"I am the happy laughing coon.
Ha ha ha ha ha!
Go down in de valley
And look for the moon
Ha ha ha ha ha ha..."

NARR: Against a broad spectrum of time-worn caricatures, the reality of black life in the early 1900s was undergoing dramatic change. In growing numbers, blacks were moving from the country to the city, from the South to the North.

Emancipation had disrupted the social order of the South; now black migration and competition for jobs threatened the status quo of the North.

Racial hostilities began to brew. New caricatures of the urban Coon emerged, reflecting the perceived threat of an expanding black labor force.

SONG: DARKTOWN IS OUT TONIGHT

"Darktown is out tonight
Darktown is out tonight..."

"Yeow! Lay your money where mouth is.
Come on 'n shoot! Yeow!"

"Darktown is out tonight
Darktown is out tonight
Darktown is out -- "

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!
Where'd you get them red bones at?
What kinda dice is 'dese?"

"Don't start no argument now."

"Cop, cop. Beat it, beat it."

NARR: Dice, gambling, and a penchant for razor blades became trademarks of these urban caricatures.

SONG: DARKTOWN IS OUT TONIGHT

"So fetch out your blazers
Bring out your razors
Darktown is out tonight!"

NARR: It was a variation on the old theme: blacks could be childishly entertaining and at once vicious brutes. The difference was in the instruments of amusement and violence.

SONG: "RAZORS IN THIS WAR"

"I don't suppose for a minute that any of you coons is got a razor!"

"Oh, no, no!" (crowd)

"Heh ha ha ha. By the way, Cap'n, can I j'in the army, too?"

"Certainly, why -- report with James."

"Well if If j'in the army, can we use our razors in dis war?"

"Dat's it, dat's it, Cap'n, can we use our razors?"

"Well, I don't know. I'll have to see about it. Gidde-yap."

(Music)

"If they let us use our razors in this war,
We'd certainly cut dem Germans to de core...
-- Indeed we will --
We ain't no advertisers
But there'll be no doggone Kaisers
If they let us use our razors in dis war!"

LEVINE: I think World War I was a watershed for blacks... They they had been told for so long, that if they played the game by the rules, that if they showed the white society what they're all about... if they uh made it up the hill by their own boot straps the society would say hey, welcome, join.

NARR: But the service and self-esteem of black war veterans was undercut with caricature.

Symbolically these images reinforced white supremacy by fitting blacks within acceptable roles as servants and entertainers.

The reality of black servicemen who now bore arms and demanded the freedom and opportunity at home they'd fought for abroad -- this reality inflamed many whites.

Race riots swept the North each summer from 1919 to 1921.

It was period of overt and casual racism.

LEVINE: It was perfectly polite for whites in the North, educated college types, to write in high-toned journals like Harper's and The Atlantic and Scribner's to use words like nigger, and coon, and darky.

SONGS: "Eenee, Meenee Minee Mo
Catch a nigger by the toe
If he won't work,
Then let him go.
Goo-dum, goo-dee, goo-deedle deedle deedle"

"Ooooh, it's hard, it's hard, it's hard
To be a nigger, nigger, nigger
It's hard, it's hard
Cuz you can't get you money when it's due..."

NARR: Within these distorted molds of black behavior, black entertainers necessarily had to fit, to win acceptance from mainstream audiences.

Over time black performers brought elements of humanity to the caricatures.

Still, popular entertainment remained double-edged in its rewards, creating personal suffering and a cultural stigma as the price of success. Perhaps no more poignant example exists than in the life of Bert Williams.

SONG: "NOBODY"

"When life seems full of clouds and rain
And I am full of nothin' and pain,
Who soothes my thumpin bumpin brain?
Nobody..."

NARR: A tall dignified man who spoke precise English, Bert Williams stooped his shoulders and learned to talk in the minstrel imitation of black dialect.

With the final touch of blackface he became America's pre-eminent blackface artist.

SKIT: BERT WILLIAMS MONOLOGUE

"Oh I know what you're thinking, I mean I have heard all the rumors myself. It seems that this blackface makeup, my white gloves and my comic gait ain't the only thing I'm becoming famous for. Or is it...infamous?"

SLOAN: I have been trying to finish Bert's show for him. And uh, my eulogy to Bert will be to finish the finale, you know, on his life, by elevating him to the class of a folk artist, and a folk hero that I think he deserves.

SKIT: BERT WILLIAMS MONOLOGUE

Well now take last night for example. I had just finished my show and I was about to step out for my evening constitution when I came upon what appeared to be a perfectly delightful watering hole. So I stepped up to the bar and I asked the man for a bourbon.

Well, the fella didn't take to kindly to serving a Negro. And so, to impress his friends he said, that will be fifty dollars. Hell I didn't bat an eye. I just stepped up to the bar, reached down in my pocket, whipped out a five hundred dollar bill and said, 'I'll take ten.'

You know, it aint really that funny. I mean, every critic in town agrees that I'm at the height of my career. Ziegfield pays me $6,500 a week here at the Follies, and that's top pay, but do I get top billing? Hell I can play before the crown heads of Europe, but I can't even get a drink in my neighborhood pub.

Y'know, they got this rule at the press club that says a black man can't even enter without a white host who is willing to sign that he'll be responsible for the black man's actions. Aint I a responsible human being?

There aint a night that passes that somebody don't knock on that door and invite me to the press club for a drink. Well in case you didn't remember buddy, this aint exactly my regular skin tone, and it takes considerably longer to remove blackface then you could imagine. So unless somebody waits around, I wait around.

SKIT: BERT WILLIAMS MONOLOGUE (continued)

That's right. I wait around outside the press club, just shifting my weight from one foot to the next until somebody comes by and escorts me in. All the time I'm just hoping and praying that nobody comes out and mistakes me for the doorman, and tips me a quarter. You know, it's no disgrace being a black man, but it's terribly inconvenient."

SONG: I ain't never done nothin to nobody
I ain't never done nothin to nobody, no time.

NARR: Toward the end of his life, Bert Williams managed to remove the most offensively racist material from his routines. But long after his death, the blackface tradition continued, its dark mask now transferred to talking movies.

VIDEO/SYNC: TRAILER FOR "THE JAZZ SINGER"

I am priviliged to say a few words to you, in this most modern and novel manner. Priviliged, because it's the first living xylophone announcement ever made, announcing the coming of one of the years outstanding pictures. What is the picture? Well, of course, you've guessed that I'm referring to Warner Brothers' supreme triumph, Al Jolson, in "The Jazz Singer".

NARR: When Al Jolson made his film debut in the <u>The Jazz Singer</u>, Hollywood had emerged as <u>the</u> dominant force in popular entertainment.

By 1927, more than 26 million Americans were going to the movies each week. What they saw reaffirmed a tradition of blackface entertainment that had prevailed since slavery.

LEVINE: Why should hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions over the years, of white people in all parts of the country have gone to theaters and watched white men pretend they were black.

I think in part, in part what they were watching was more complicated than merely whites masking themselves as blacks. They were watching whites release themselves as blacks. Suddenly these whites, who were just like them, could dance and caper around, and sing, and tell jokes, and act openly and show emotions openly and cry and laugh and uh. . .

I think there was a kind of cathartic about this. And I think blacks have played that role in this society, they have been a kind of surrogate.

SONG: Al Jolson's "Mammy"

"Mammy, I'm comin'
Oh God! I hope I'm not late.
Mammy, don't you know me?
It's you little baby!

"I'd walk a million miles
For one of your smiles
My Mamm-- Mammy!"

NARR: From the twenties through World War II, blackface permeated motion pictures -- When this mask was abandoned, its imprint still warped film images of blacks, even when blacks played themselves.

VIDEO/SYNC: JUDGE PRIEST

"Take this dime, now, and hurry on back to town and get me that beef liver."

"All right, suh."

"Hurry up, now."

"All right, suh, I'm practically runnin now."

"You gon put your shoes on?"

"I'm a save 'em in case my feet wear out ... and den I'll have 'em."

NARR: Of all media, cartoons provided the best form for racial caricature. In this fantasy world, physical distortion and violence were comic.

VIDEO/SYNC: BUGS BUNNY

Elmer Fud: Before you die, you can make one last wish.

Bugs Bunny: Yeah. Well let's see now, I wish uh, I wish uh, I wish I was in Dixie. (starts singing)

Bugs Bunny: Fantastic! Isn't it.

NARR: Together songs, books like <u>Little Black Sambo</u>, and moving pictures captivated the young. But more: they shaped impressionable minds to view stereotypes as not only acceptable, but funny.

SKIT: LITTLE BLACK SAMBO

And when Big Black Jumbo coming home from work with a brass kettle under his arm for Black Mumbo, saw what was left of the tigers and said, "What elegant melted butter."

And when Black Mumbo saw the melted butter she said, "Now we'll all have pancakes for supper."

"I'm Little Black Sambo 'n it's my birthday 'n I'm gonna eat a-hundert and sixty-nine pancakes."

NARR: Businesses, too, profitted from the public's affection for these images.

Pancakes, beans, syrup, tobacco, oysters: blacks appeared on these and more in product labels and household knick-knacks.

CHRISTIAN: The cumulative effect of these images, produced over and over again, seen over and over again, images that are notions of the home, merely amusing notions, become really destructive stereotypes, notions of the mind.

NARR: How did these images shape enduring attitudes toward black culture, behavior, appearence?

V/O: Her cheek, her chin,
her neck, her nose
This was a lillie, that was a rose;
Her bosom, sleek as Paris plaster,
Her up two bowls of Alabaster.

NARR: This was the standard of beauty once heralded in America -- a standard inherited from Europe. Against <u>this</u> image of perfection, Africans and African-Americans were compared.

FAULKNER: Historically, these images reinforce the psychology that black is ugly. To be natural, or to be yourself, or to be the way you were presented in this world is ugly.

My lips don't look like large pieces of liver. My eyes aren't snow white, or bulging in a frightening apperance. I wear my hair natural, but it isn't standing all over my head, as though I'm wearing a fright wig. . . the total distortion of the black image.

CHRISTIAN: In these images a subliminal message is clear: we can see how the portrayal of distinctive features of blacks become not only laughable but grotesque.

NARR: Cartoons like this popularized the belief that black Americans had descended from savages.

FREDRICKSON: To use the 19th century cliche which prevailed almost up to our own time, Africa was the dark continent, it was the place where civilization had made the least progress, indeed it was the center of anti-civilization, or primitivism of all kinds.

NARR: According to myth, slavery, then segregation had managed to "domesticate" black Americans. But without white control, blacks reverted to savagery.

NARR: In the 1920's and 30's the savage stereotype acquired a new dimension.

VIDEO/SYNC: **"THE EMPEROR JONES" (film)**

Brutus Jones: Looka here white man. I comes and I goes. And that's my business.

White Man: Oh, ho, ho. Not afraid to stand up to your betters and tell them what's what.

FREDRICKSON: It was a lot of talk about the New Negro, during the 1920's, of blacks being able to assert their manhood, their independence. But at the same time, there was a strain of the older ideas that persisted...the idea of ... reversion to savagery, except that savagery was now redefined.

VIDEO/SYNC: **"The Emperor Jones"**

Brutus Jones: Ha, ha, ha, go ahead, fire again. Empty your guns. Ha, ha, ha. Don't you knows I'se got a charm. Takes a silver bullet to kill Brutus Jones.

FREDRICKSON: A very good example of this would be Emperor Jones, the sort of notion if blacks were true to themselves, they would be noble savages perhaps, but still savages... So again you're dealing with the stereotype, except you're taking the stereotype of the black savage and you're giving it a more positive evaluation.

VIDEO/SYNC: **"The Emperor Jones"**

Brutus Jones: Oh lord, lord, lord, yeaah!

NARR: The more comforting images of the Mammy, Sambo, and Uncle posed no threat. Happily they entertained and served.

Through this romantic fantasy generations of Americans from the Civil War to this day escaped concern or reponsibility for racism.

VIDEO/SYNC: "From way down south in dixie, where dancing is a natural heritage of the Negroes."

NARR: From the beginning, popular entertainment was dominated by dancing, singing, darkies.

SONG: "Take your partners to the cake walk! First couple -- promenade!"

NARR: From the Cake Walk to the jitterbug, an image was forged that blacks, with in-born rhythm and musical talent, were indifferent to poverty, subservience, segregation --- as slaves they danced even at their own auction block.

Black's greatest joy, however, came in providing service to whites. Even their clothing revealed delight in their inferiority.

TURNER: They are only portrayed in full clothing that's neat and attractive to look at, if they wear a uniform of some type... a part of the uniform is a big smile.

TURNER: The smile says to the person looking at the object, this man's happy to carry my bags. This woman is happy to make my pancakes. These people are happy to spend their lives serving the white population....

They're happy to be confined in this way, and never devote any energy to thinking about themselves as oppressed.

VIDEO/SYNC: "DARKIES NEVER DREAM" sung by Ethyl Waters

"Darkies never dream
They must laugh and sing all day ..."

NARR: The Civil Rights movment brought deep contradictions in America to a head. Restrictive molds cast before the Civil War finally began to crumble ... 100 years later.

VIDEO/SYNC: DARKIES NEVER DREAM

"Darkies never dream.
Who would ever hear our sad lament?..."

NARR: In the end Ethyl Waters' melancholy song yielded to a more triumphant call.

VOICE-OVER: Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream"

"...So this afternoon I have a dream, it is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream, I have a dream..."

"...The sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to live together as brothers. I have a dream..."

VOICE-OVER: Martin Luther King (continued)

"They will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not the color of their skin. I have a dream this afternoon..."

"I have a dream this evening that one day we will recognize the words of Jefferson that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator..."

NARR: By the mid-sixties, world attention was focused on the brutal reality of American racism. In this climate of national embarassment and gradual reform, happy images of the past rang hollow.

Slowly popular culture adapted to the new tide in politics and attitudes.

SONG: "Aint Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around"

"Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around
Keep on a walkin
Keep on a alkin
Marchin on the freedom trail
Freedom, freedom, freedom...."

NARR: By the late sixties, the more extreme caricatures had begun a slow death. But did this mean an end to the more subtle forms of racial stereotyping?

FREDRIKCSON: The images of the past I think are still, are still with us. They may be altered in some ways and used in different ways. One example of this would be the figure that might be called the black Rambo.

FREDRIKCSON: This is the black cop, or the black detective, or the black sidekick of the white detective, whatever it might be, who is engaged in fighting the forces of evil. Uh the reason I say that this goes back to the old stereotype is that there's an emphasis on violence and brutality, it's as if these characters, as opposed to at least some of the white characters, are given a licence to be even more violent, uh than the, the white, the white heroes. That there's, that the filmmaker, or the maker of the TV program is sort of capitalizing on the stereotype of blacks as being violent or brutal even though now they're on the right side.

TURNER: When I look at the material from the 1970's and 1980's, I basically see the same thing I saw, I see in the earlier material. I see greeting cards with big, happy mammies on them. I see TV programs with a mammy figure in the household. I see black comedians playing the role of the minstrel or the buffoon in movies and so forth.

CHRSTIAN: I have students, both black and white, who believe these images, huh, because it has become a thread throughout the major fiction, film, popular culture, the songs, even the jokes black people make about themselves. It has become a part of our psyche. It's a real indication that one of the best ways of maintaining a system of oppression has to do with the psychological control of people.

NARR: Mammy ... Sambo ... Pickaninny ... Coon... Uncle: the great-grand parents of many modern images of blacks, these caricatures did as much harm as any lynch mob. True their hurt was often indirect, yet because of this they left wounds that have proved far more difficult to heal.

NARR: These are their descendants.

As we turn to contemporary culture, how we will judge? What do these images reveal -- about our innermost fears, our hopes, our most enduring fantasies?

SLOAN: There is nothing wrong with singing and dancing, you know. That there is nothing wrong with tap dancing, there is nothing wrong with using your voice and your body as a musical instrument...

It is the laughter, and the music, and the dancing at the exclusion of dramatic images, of realistic images, which is at fault. And it's this exclusion which we hope to dissolve.

(CREDITS)