Black Demons: The Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype (Crime, Media, and Popular Culture)

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The stereotype of the African American male as a criminal element in society continues to be a major obstacle to greater racial harmony and the elimination of discrimination and racism on all levels in the United States. Often, this criminal stereotype is internalized by African American youth, so they are made to feel as though delinquent behavior is expected from them, and many fall into this trap. *Black Demons* examines this stereotype and contends that much of the blame for its perpetuation comes from U.S. mass media's negative depictions of African American males. Rome argues that these images foster the myths that help to deepen and strengthen the stereotypes that have plagued the African American community since colonial times. By examining the origins of this criminal stereotype, how it has been used historically, and how it is presently employed, Rome reveals a dangerous current in media depictions of African Americans, one that threatens that community and taints U.S. society as it tries to overcome the legacy of racism.

The African American male criminal stereotype continues to be used to justify covert and overt racism in contemporary U.S. society. From television to cinema, music to news coverage, mass media continue to depict African American males running from the law, committing crimes, victimizing women, and generally engaging in illegal behavior. Here, Rome examines those images and offers an explanation for this phenomenon. He discusses the impact of these images on both the African American community and on U.S. society in general. He considers the notion that there is a black pathology, a fundamental weakness in African American families that can be traced back to their experiences as slaves. Finally, he concludes that both the news media and entertainment outlets must discontinue their practice of equating young African American males with aggressiveness, lawlessness, and violence if racism is every to be truly abolished in the United States.

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