

Book Review: **White Women Black Men Illicit Sex in the 19th Century South** by Martha Hodes

A fish and a bird may fall in love, but the two cannot build a home together. An African Proverb.

One might ask why this book is essential to today's discourse in antiracism conversations or dialogues. One crucial aspect of African American history is the enslavement of millions of Africans. Too many refused to adequately learn or teach that history to deconstruct the current plantation environments in public institutions. Some years ago, I attended a so-called all-Black or African American meeting in North Omaha. It was somewhat a controversial or dysfunctional meeting for the media pundits, primarily white. The organizers felt that if some leaders came together, they could avoid advancing the plantation stations for many African Americans living in Omaha. Whites could not attend since Blacks were going to talk about community secrets.

Nevertheless, a few Negro opportunists and personalities were double driveled agents for friends of the system. After the meeting ended, I walked out and noted three minion-type organizers huddled talking outside near the parking lot. To my chagrin, they were either married to a white woman, and the third had a faddist for white women and might have been trying to extract himself from that interracial marriage.

Meanwhile, they are talking and acting as if they had the African American community's interest at heart. Hodges's book helped readers to understand the mentality of why Black men were (often caught) sleeping with white women and why many have problems with interracial love or sexual affairs. We need to understand the foundation of African American history or real Black Studies to see racial hypocrisy and enslavement hypnotism.

Hodes starts the book by outlining the white anxiety that illustrated that lynching was often the outcome where white men found out about those affairs. Moreover, considering the level of raw racism, this ideology was derived from the Black male sexuality myth. Things that are forbidden are often sought after in society. Even the great Frederick Douglas, the great Black 19th-century leader who was almost famous as the President, decided after his African American wife died to marry his white assistant and had a happy marriage until his death. Hodes, a white author, indicated that in some cases, interracial sex or liaisons was at times tolerant by these southern racists.

During enslavement times, interracial hookups and marriages where children were produced resulted in the enslavement of white women and their children. The case of Mary Peters, who married an enslaved person in 1680 and became a "slave of her husband master." Many questions why a white woman would risk her freedom, other white privileges, or amenities for enslaved men? There were countless examples or details. Hodes outlined the story of Nell and Charles in Maryland. William Thomas III's book "A Question of Freedom: The Families Who Challenged Slavery from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War" goes into the legal details of their ordeal and struggles to gain freedom for their clan.

These relationships occurred because the Irish were at times considered inferior to other white racists since the legal system was so blatantly capricious and arcane as similar today in race issues. The Irish left Ireland because of the potatoes famine, and many were indentured servants to wealthy racists.

According to Hodes, it depended upon the standing of the white woman in society and if there were a child produced in that fornication relationship. Those penalties, according to Hodes, were focused the reproduction.

The book offers many examples illustrating that U.S. history is replicated with social norms that do not make sense to ordinary African Americans. Some of these Negro minions fail to see the contradiction of saying "I love me some Black Folks" while sleeping with the enemy or potential Judas who can impede the movement for antiracism and racial equity. As someone once said that people couldn't help who they fall in love with, others argue that such racial bounties that fall will eliminate racism. Some pundits say that if we had more Black/White marriages, racism would disappear.

Hodes's book spells out that one can sleep with Black folks and still hate Black men. Senator Strom Thurman from South Carolina was a recent case who hated Black folks but loved Blackberry. He fathered a biracial child named Essie Mae Washington with a sixteen-year-old Carrie Butler and should have been arrested for statutory rape of a minor. Thurman hid this biracial daughter for most of his racist Klan supporting career. This girl was a domestic servant for Thurmon's parents. This is why any legitimate Black Studies Courses would have teaching that helps the victims of American democracy value ideas and discoveries must move beyond memorizing dates and dreams speeches.

The other significant aspect of the book is Hodes outlined that Becky's and Karen's often slept with Black or enslaved men and, when caught, cried rape or other behaviors despite compelling evidence there were willing partners in a sexual liaison. Some adulterous behaviors occurred with the husband having a similar relationship with enslaved women and ignoring their wives because many enjoyed rump roast. Also, Hodes shared that a woman had a terrible reputation, and often, the courts had to consider if rape or a Black male was a victim of white women's power. Some might argue that since white women were subservient to white men, they did not have the ability compared to white men. Yet, many Black men were lynched or brutally murdered because of such incidents or tragedies. We can determine that such incidents were actual, as defined by many colorists living in those communities. Malcolm X called them "house slaves" because they were given preference and benefits over those in the fields.

This book's most compelling chapters it how white southern racists use the purity of white women as the linchpin for extrajudicial murders, castrations, and burning of thousands of Black men who are still experiencing the historical trauma of those decades in the United States. In chapter 8, Hodes spells out the treacherous white woman and lynchings.

It was routine for thousand of white folks to turn out for these lynchings and take pictures and collect body parts of the victims for keepsake in their family archives.

These lynchings, according to Hodes was, to maintain "the racial hierarch that emancipation and Reconstruction had being to destroy." So, when we see racists judges or County Attorneys give an African American man extra-long hideous sentences, they only reflect these Southern Canadian American norms.

The foremost authority on lynching was Ida B. Wells, who documented only 5,000 lynchings as a contrast to the 10,000 many African American scholars like to attribute to those who died at the 'hands of those unknown,' which as often termed that coroner noted as the cause of death which was a cover-up for such murders. In chapter 8, Hodes outlines that this sexual taboo was for the white men to protect the white women's honor and racial "purity and power." Yet, many of these racist males were sleeping with their enslaved women. The recent Washington Post article demonstrates that over seven U.S. Presidents and close to over a hundred men and women in congress or judges enslaved people.

We see that African American entertainers and sports figures are often paraded out with their white wives or girlfriends as the indicators of success. They are constantly looking for love in all of the wrong places. To be clear, one does not need to be supportive or against interracial relationships to support the antiracism cause. However, it's strange that considering the binary aspects of racism, it becomes challenging to keep focus when pillow talk gets in the way of the struggle each night. One historical teacher is Frantz Fanon, who was often credited with destructing the notion of "Black Skin, and White Masks" with his writings, and that was the name of one of his books.

Moreover, Dr. Fanon, from Martinique, a former colony, married a French white woman when he was studying medicine in France. He became a famous psychiatrist in the African Revolutionary school of thought and was too akin to Frederik Douglas. Fanon said that the only thing "that all Black men wanted was a white woman because of the brainwashing in society. I would strongly recommend Hodes' book to help unwashed one brain of the beauty myth of white woman and the trophy, addle brain wife mentality that rich Negroes want to play as if they arrived.

A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon 4/2022