Hypersexual Black Women in the Ecuadorian ‘Common Sense’: An Examination of Visual and Other Representations

Dr. Jean Muteba Rahier
Florida International University
Associate Professor of Anthropology
Director, African & African Diaspora Studies Program

Conference: Latin American Studies Association Meeting 2010
Session “Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Ecuador”
Toronto, Canada.
October 8, 2010
Stereotypes about blackness, black bodies, and black sexuality abound in Ecuador. They work to evoke black uncontrolled sexuality as the trope per excellence for ‘savagery’ at the same time that they suggest black female body’s availability for white-mestizo male consumption/penetration. I propose an analysis of the recurrence of these images with respect for the specificities of the recent history of the Ecuadorian national context.
An early 1980s’ advertisement for a brand of men shirts called Él. It was published in the Ecuadorian magazine Vistazo. The text says: “Get emotions putting your shirt on, get emotions taken it off. A creation by and for men. And we talk convinced that our shirts are perfect for the conquering and aggressive contemporary man.”
The Passage from Monocultural *Mestizaje* to Multiculturalism

- *Mestizaje* (race mixing) as the prototype of modern Ecuadorian citizenship
- Afro-Ecuadorians (5-10% of population) are the ultimate Other, some sort of a historical accident, a noise in the ideological system of nationality, a pollution in the Ecuadorian genetic pool
- 1998 and 2008 Constitutions
  - *el indio permitido* (literally the “allowed Indian,” or the “permitted Indian identity”)
The Passage from Monocultural *Mestizaje* to Multiculturalism

- ‘Multicultural’ and ‘Multiculturalism’
  - Creolization
  - Multicultural transruptions
  - Liberal and neo-liberal multiculturalism appears as a re-inscription of the hegemonic social and racial ordering of things which existed before its advent, and which is now formulated in a somewhat different political configuration with the help of a ‘new’ vocabulary
Visual Representations of National Identity during Monocultural Mestizaje

- Media representations provide a privileged space wherein ideological formations and mostly white and white-mestizo voices on blacks and on ‘national identity’ crystallize and are recorded

- Ideology of Ecuadorian national formation
  - Mestizaje as a white supremacist ideology grounded on 19th century racist anthropology
  - Romantic imagining of white-Indian inter-racial sex characteristic of indigenismo
  - No recognition of the indigenous women’s agency, desire or revulsion
The machoist and heteronormative image is straightforward and the marginalization of Afro-Ecuadorians obvious: the coming together of Indians and Europeans gave place to who ‘we’ are today: (white-)mestizos!
The Hypersexuality of Black Women as a Recurring Stereotype: *Señoras* versus *Mujeres*

- Power and Sexuality
- Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967)
  - Sexual desires and sexual practices or performances are highly responsive to social and historical circumstances
  - “Embodiment of blackness”
- European “otherization” during colonization: "ethnopornography”
  - 2 forms of sexuality as a trope
    - Savage, immoral, obsessive
    - White males conquering black female bodies
- 2 categories of Ecuadorian female:
  - “Lady” or *Señora*: white or white-mestizo
  - “Woman” or *Mujer*: black or dark-skinned
  - Indigenous Females as separate, non-sexual
Two advertisements for a brand of tires in the magazine *Vistazo*, in the early 1980s. Here, the play of word is between *negra*, “black woman”, and “tire.” The thick lips and thick thighs recall aspects of the stereotype of hypersexuality as do the adjectives that are applied to the tire/black woman: *rendidora* (“good performing”), *confiable* (“reliable”), and *servicial* (“Obsequious, diligent, obliging, compliant, friendly, accommodating, serviceable”).
An advertisement for a brand of rum called *Ron Negrita*. The text of the poster said *El Placer Líquido con la Cola Negra*, “The Liquid Pleasure [the rum] with the black cola [Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola].” The sexual play of words consisting in suggesting that the “black behind” (*cola negra*) does provoke “liquid pleasure” (ejaculation).