

Domasin, A. (2011). Deconstructing denigrating representations of minorities in film, television, and the media.

#### Abstract

Problematic stereotypes of African Americans in American films started in the early years of the film industry with D. W. Griffith's 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*. The film was based on a play entitled *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr. The film was set during the Civil War period with the plot revolving around a family from the South, a family from the North, and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. The images of African Americans are stereotypes now referred to by scholars as: Toms, Coons, Mammies, Mulattoes, and Bucks. Each stereotype is based on the notion that Blacks were intellectually and culturally inferior to Whites. Although subdued, these stereotypes are still prevalent in contemporary films and television shows, and news broadcasts. Spectators must become media literate and trained to process images in all forms of media both critically and responsibly.