

CONCERNED BLACK WOMEN OF AMERICA

AN OPEN LETTER TO JEWISH WOMEN

Dear Friends:

As Black women we write to you because of your well-known compassion, empathy and activism. Ever since radio talk show host Don Imus attacked the mostly African American women of the Rutgers University basketball team as "nappy headed hoes", there has been much soul searching in the Black community about the use of foul language and negative images to describe Black women. Oprah Winfrey devoted two special programs to the subject. A number of women's conferences have centered on this issue. Black sororities are focusing serious attention on these attacks. A website has even been created entitled, "What About Our Daughters?" Furthermore, Ebony magazine included the defamation of Black women as an important part of its July 2007 special issue. One of the things that have been brought out in these discussions is the critical role that Hollywood plays in the negative depictions of Black women. This was brought home for many of us in the recent motion picture, Norbit, that featured Eddie Murphy as a "woman," and was produced, promoted and directed by Steven Spielberg's company, DreamWorks (see enclosure).

The ad for this movie was one of the most disgusting that many of us have seen in our lifetime. It reached a new low in the portrayal of Black women. As this despicable ad spread across America, we expressed our outrage among ourselves and wondered what Hollywood would do next! It was not lost on us that both the ad and the movie are the products of a well-respected Jewish producer.

At about the same time that the Norbit ad appeared, a Black woman in Los Angeles began circulating an article that was published in the Los Angeles Times on February 24, 2007, entitled "Anti-Semitic cartoons assailed". It focuses on the fact that Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, was planning to fly to Seoul, Korea to "raise concerns" about a comic book written by Lee Won-bok, a South Korean professor. The publication depicts Jews in an unflattering light similar to the stereotypical portrayals of Jewish people in Nazi Germany (see enclosure).

Of course the question that many Black women had then and have now is why do Rabbi Cooper and other Jewish leaders fly around the world to fight anti-Semitism, while ignoring the stereotyping of Blacks, often by Jewish producers, in their own back yards? How do you expect people around the world to take Jewish leaders seriously when they complain about stereotypes of Jews when the Jewish producers of Hollywood are the major culprits in this practice? No matter how many Jewish leaders deny it, everyone believes that Jewish people run Hollywood. If you don't believe us, just read some of the virulent anti-Semitism on the Internet relating to this subject.

The stereotypes of Black people that we speak of did not begin with Spielberg. They have appeared on television and in movie theatres for as long as any of us remember, and they can be seen daily in every media outlet in this country and abroad.

When prominent African Americans, such as Minister Louis Farrakhan, Dr. Leonard Jeffries and columnist Julianne Malveaux, have publicly complained about Jewish producers who stereotype Blacks, Jewish leaders have denied these accusations and labeled the Black leaders anti-Semitic.

As mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, daughters, nieces and wives, we believe that you, as our sisters, can better relate to our concerns and will take them seriously. Would you like for a gigantic, grotesque Jewish "woman" (a la Norbit) to be advertised on billboards, buses and in newspapers and magazines? There is absolutely nothing anti-Semitic about revealing the fact that, decades ago, Jewish producers set the global standard for stereotyping Black people, and that Spielberg's depiction of Black women may now open the door for even worse stereotypes.

When outsiders attack Jewish people, Jewish women are often at the vanguard of the response to such bigotry and anti-Semitism. We are simply asking you, as Jewish women, to use your influence and that of your sisters to stop the age-old stereotyping of Black people in Hollywood mainly by Jewish men.

We have anticipated some of the questions you may raise and we would like to respond to them.

First, "Why focus on Jewish producers when other people, including African Americans also stereotype Blacks in Hollywood". Answer: As we noted above, whether you accept

Black women have little clout in Hollywood, but Jewish women have vast influence. It is your husbands, sons, fathers, nephews, etc. who dominate the film industry and have produced many of the stereotypes of Black people. Since Black appeals to Jewish men to cease stereotyping African Americans have failed, we have addressed this letter to you, our sisters, hoping that you will succeed. We have declined to sign this letter, not in disrespect for you, but to avoid personalizing this plea. Over the years we have noticed that whenever a Black leader of any stature criticizes Jewish people the messenger is demonized and his message lost. Here we would like for you to get this message without focusing on who sent it.

Concerned Black Women of America

Pictures to follow after receipt of fax number

EDDIE MURPHY EDDIE MURPHY

NORBIT



"HYSTERICALLY FUNNY"

- Mick LaSalle, San Francisco Chronicle