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Review of *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life*, by William L. Van Deburg

Robert Washington

Bryn Mawr College, rwashing@brynmawr.edu

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defendants, but not greater leniency (this perhaps reflects earlier excusals of potential jurors who oppose the death penalty). Voices of black jurors were significantly underrepresented and marginalized in these cases, however, and they proved largely ineffective in countering the sometimes hostile tide of dominant juror discourse.

Fleury-Steiner argues that death sentencing is not simply morally or legally objectionable on these procedural grounds, but that the very process of death deliberation reproduces social conflict. Because the construction of “insider” and “outsider” identities is fundamental to jurors’ deliberations and interactions, he argues, the routine of capital sentencing reifies race and class stratification, thwarting our progress toward the desired multicultural society. I, too, oppose capital punishment, but the multiculturalism argument was unsatisfying. Death sentencing clearly threatens societal interests by reinscribing dominant-subordinate group relations, but every institution tends to reflect and reinforce societal organization. One might also question (before and with these findings) whether genuine multiculturalism is more than a mythical American ideal. If so, multiculturalism seems to anticipate and even require clashing narratives. In this sense a stronger case emerges in these data for promoting substantive diversity among the arbiters of justice (including jurors), than for abolishing their contested terrain.

This use of narrative to examine how identity politics operate in jurors’ interactions with defendants, the law, and each other is an intelligent and original decoupling of processes at work in racialized social control. Readers will appreciate the sociological perspective the author brings to the study of inequality in justice administration, as researchers too often engage these as problems internal to closed systems (i.e., police organizations) or as aberrations from normal and rational functioning caused by deviant (i.e., biased) individuals. This book illustrates how courts, and particularly their juries, provide stages for the social interaction of “normal people” routinely engaged in the negotiation of multiple identities, very often in conflict with each other, the accused, and broader societal interests.

Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life. By William L. Van Deburg. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pp. xi+283. \$29.00.

Robert E. Washington
Bryn Mawr College

It seems only yesterday that the O. J. Simpson verdict jolted American race relations as the jubilant celebration by black Americans were seen by the mainstream (mostly white) media commentators as puzzling. Why, many asked, did blacks not feel as outraged as whites when Simpson, the apparent killer of two white people, was declared innocent? The answer

to this and related questions about black America's seeming defense of black criminals is the focus of William L. Van Deburg's *Hoodlums*. A work in the field of cultural studies with much relevance to sociology, the book's primary aim is to examine throughout the history of American race relations the contested meanings of black villainy.

In four chapters—(1) a historical overview on the concept of black villainy extending from the Greco-Roman era to the Atlantic slave trade, (2) an overview of white popular culture images of black villainy during slavery, (3) an account of black America's reaction to those white cultural images, and (4) an examination of late 20th-century images of black villains—the book presents a comprehensive review of conceptions of black villainy and ends with a brief conclusion that delineates its implications for contemporary American society. The book's methodology, which uses varied sources of data (autobiographies, personal correspondence, period newspapers, travel accounts, Hollywood films, music lyrics, folklore studies, and novels) is illustrative and discursive rather than systematic. In defense of this methodology, the author tells us that “(the book) is not meant to be definitive,” which apparently means its argument is hypothetical and speculative.

Setting forth that argument, the author suggests that the racially contested meanings of black criminality, or villainy, resulted from white America's racialization of good and evil as the primary basis for categorizing deviance early in the nation's history. “By placing a far higher value on white lives than on black, America's governing elite institutionalized the belief that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ were color coded values” (p. 38). These inherited images of black Americans as a race of villains provided ego enhancement for whites and helped shape white supremacist beliefs. Hardly passive in response to this hegemonic white supremacist culture's stigmatization of their moral character, black Americans developed an oppositional culture that blunted and inverted that racial stigma. As the author puts it: “Most recognized that what whites considered to be villainy more accurately could be conceptualized as social banditry—the act of being bad for good reason. . . . Black social bandits typically were depicted as tough, self-reliant subversives steeped in the warrior tradition and grounded in communal mores. As agents of change, they might kill or maim, but they would do so in order to improve the lives of beleaguered kinsmen” (p. 68). In the eyes of ordinary black Americans, these black social bandits were heroic symbols of defiance.

Moving to the conception of black villainy in contemporary America, much of the book's subsequent discussion encircles this crucial question: Have the 1960s and subsequent civil rights reforms rendered the alternative black normative view of black villainy obsolete? The author's answer is ambivalent. Arguing, on the one hand, that black distrust of whites is still warranted by the persisting problems of racial inequity and discrimination and, on the other hand, that many blacks, in the wake of expanded opportunities and the threats posed by sociopathic black inner-

city crimes, are less hesitant to acknowledge that there are villains in their midst, he shifts to exhortation: "Celebrating the social bandit's idiosyncratic code of honor and giving racial kinsmen benefit of doubt in interracial disputes may still be warranted, but uncritical acceptance of bad behavior is not. . . . A willingness to ask hard questions without fear of self-incrimination will be needed if community leaders hope to solve problems created by both black villains in their midst and by mythic beliefs about racial villainy that continue to circulate in middle America" (p. 219). In short, new attitudes and a new will are required of all Americans. If we are to bridge the chasm over black criminality, we must build an interracial coalition to solve the problems of the urban black underclass.

A few comments about the book's shortcomings should be noted. Though it addresses a phenomenon pertaining to deviance, the book betrays an unfortunate lack of familiarity with the sociology of deviance, whose perspectives on normative boundaries, labeling, subcultural development, secondary deviance, cultural conflict, and social control would have given the study greater analytical depth. The book's methodological reliance on literary works as reflections of earlier black public opinion is dubious. In reference to a 19th-century black community with high levels of illiteracy, that influence should be demonstrated rather than assumed. And, finally, the book should have been more coherently organized, as it tends often to veer into tangential discussions of black popular culture that do little to illuminate its argument about black villainy.

Those shortcomings notwithstanding, this book addresses a fascinating topic. It should interest sociologists working in the fields of social deviance, race relations, or cultural sociology.

God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies. By Dawne Moon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pp. xi+281. \$25.00

Thomas J. Linneman
College of William and Mary

Conflicts involving religion and homosexuality have intensified in recent years. Hardly a week goes by without a new development involving gay marriage, antidiscrimination policies, or hate-crimes legislation. While religious authority often achieves a voice in these developments, it is the figureheads of the religious right who are heard from most often. Receiving far less attention is what goes on within actual churches, especially those of the mainline denominations. Dawne Moon's *God, Sex, and Politics* goes a long way toward filling this void, and it does so with an enviable level of sophisticated theoretical analysis.

Moon uses a critical ethnographic approach to study how members of two Methodist churches have handled homosexuality. She spent 14