

# How have socio-legal conceptualisations of race informed rape myths?

Frantz Fanon: "The idealized Negro is equally a construction of the white man. He represents the flip side of Enlightenment: he is constructed not as a real person with real history but an image."

Nadine El-Enany: "'Racialised people thus remain the foremost target in Britain's ongoing imperial project, their lands and their bodies ongoing sites of colonial extraction and expulsion.'"

## Core themes and scripts (Ronald L. Jackson):



# FROM THE MYTH OF THE BLACK RAPIST



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**1. GEOGRAPHICAL/SPATIAL LOCATION IS OUTDOORS AND ISOLATED**

**2. STRANGER NO PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND RAPIST**

TO 'REAL RAPE' MYTHS

**4. EXCESSIVELY VIOLENT VIOLENCE CORROBORATED WITH PHYSICAL INJURIES**

**3. OVERPOWERED USE OF WEAPONS OR VISIBLE PHYSICAL STRENGTH**



**5. IMMEDIATELY REPORTED VICTIM REPORTS TO THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY AFTER RAPE**

**6. CONSENT LACK OF CONSENT IS INDISPUTABLE**



## Origins

## Expressions

## Effects

Socio-legal conceptualisations of Blackness are reinforced through legal systems and processes which reproduce power structures. Racial hierarchies are made and remade in accordance with shifting socio-political objectives. Laws are scaffolded with intention of making these racial hierarchies a legal reality. This is most effectively materialised through the attribution of scripts to Black bodies, informed by Empire, colonialism and the Commonwealth. The 'myth of the Black rapist', a combination of the three core scripts outlined, can be located in an English context from the late 19th century - this period is known as the Black Peril.

The themes and narrative present in the 'myth of the Black rapist' arise in the 'real rape myth'. However, race has been erased. Secondly, a modern incarnation of 'the myth of the Black rapist' (which, conversely, features race very heavily) is the 'Muslim grooming gang' narrative. Colonial anxieties, racial hierarchies and scripts relating to sexuality feature very similarly here, albeit with Islamophobia as a point of departure.

Firstly, it legitimises the punishment of Black men through lynching, police brutality and imprisonment. Punishment also arises in a unique form for Muslim perpetrators through the removal of British citizenship, best understood within a British colonial context. Comparisons can also be drawn between the KKK and the Far Right's mobilisation of 'Muslim grooming gang' narratives. Secondly, through constructing white womanhood as victimhood (associating white women with virginity, chastity and purity) it legitimises the rape of Black, Brown and 'Othered' women. This is effectuated in the criminal justice system as women are 'reduced' into a state of Blackness as a way to dispute consent. Thirdly, powerful white men are, disproportionately, not held to account for rape.

### References:

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