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Deviant Monstrosity and Raced Prostitution

Prostitution in the United States symbolizes a threatening anomaly to traditional sexuality, bypassing stereotypes of monogamy, heterosexuality, and socioeconomic distinctions that separate raced classes. Patriarchal society, threatened the sex industry's ability to defy social norms that maintain conventional hierarchies, strives to criminalize prostitution both legally and psychologically. Above all, patriarchy oppresses the agency¹ of prostitutes to protect the wealth and racial purity of white upper classes by claiming individuals of non-normative sexuality and non-European descent to be irreconcilably egregious. As a result, the racing of prostitution in the United States reinforces scientific racism based on disease, dehumanizes native² individuals through hypersexualization, and impedes native populations in possible career paths to ultimately uphold society's belief in the innate monstrosity of non-white populations.

First, the elevated presence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among prostitute populations combined with the disproportionate level of non-whites participating in prostitution reinforces the association forged by scientific racism between native populations and disease. During the 19th and 20th centuries, science attempted to define "sexuality,...the paradigm [that] had to be rooted in some type of unique and observable physical difference. Such a criterion was found in the distinction drawn between the pathological and the healthy in the medical model" (Gilman 83). That is to say, cultural divisions became largely based on medical markers separating male from female, black from white, and, namely, healthy from unhealthy. Thus, the focus on data describing disease among populations intensified, noting the prevalence of illness

¹ Agency: one's capacity to act or exert power

² Native: individuals of lineage stemming from previously colonized areas of the global South and/or the global East

among impoverished populations already believed to be deviant. With native individuals representing the majority of the lower classes, disease appeared unnaturally common in non-white individuals, creating the medical association between the predetermined abnormality of native individuals and sickness as the physical manifestation of deviance. As a result, scientific racism utilized medicinal research into illnesses in impoverished sects of society as justification for patriarchy's ingrained convictions regarding the perceived monstrosity of individuals of native origin. Within the sex industry, high percentages of STD infections contributed to scientific racism's assumption of innate monstrosity of non-white communities as epitomized by research into prostitute populations in Chicago, Illinois.

In essence, data compiled from the Chicago Police Department in 1999 details the arrest of "5437 women and girls for prostitution...seventy-five percent [of which] were black women," despite demographics which illustrate the city's comprehensive population as "seventy-one percent white" (Hughes 2). Despite being an overall minority, black populations heavily dominate poorly paid and dangerous positions such as those in the sex industry due to traditional beliefs in the inner monstrosity. Symptomized by dark skin color, the predetermined deviance of native communities prevents their entrance into respectable careers. Fundamentally, this information demonstrates the oppression of non-white populations to low-class and sometimes illegal service industry jobs based on stereotypes criminalizing dark-skinned populations as abhorrent aberrations. Even further, "about half of the women [arrested by the Chicago Police Department] reported having sexually transmitted infections [and] close to twenty-two percent...reported being HIV positive," portraying the unusually widespread presence of disease among prostitutes (Hughes 5). Without adequate access to healthcare or means of ensuring hygiene, the susceptibility of prostitutes to STDs breeds high levels of disease amongst the

native populations that hold the majority of jobs in the sex industry. This correlation between raced prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases reinforces the assumptions of scientific racism regarding illness as a symptom of the innate deviance of non-white individuals.

Consequently, society uses these claims of monstrosity as it relates to disease to demean raced low-class and illegal service jobs in order to oppress native populations. At the crux, upper socioeconomic classes view diseases as indicators of inner monstrosity and, resultingly, criminalize impoverished workers, such as prostitutes, who are unusually at risk for STDs for the purpose of maintaining pre-existing social norms that delineate non-white individuals as deviant.

Second, hypersexualization dehumanizes prostitutes, associating the bodies of prostitutes with monstrosity and adversely affecting native populations which dominate the demographics of individuals engaging in the sex industry. During the 19th and 20th centuries, “comparative anatomists repeatedly located racial difference through the sexual characteristics of the female body, [specifically citing] African American and white” genitalia (Somerville 41). In other words, the hypersexualization of the black body lead scientists to associate the seemingly enlarged sexual organs of natives with excessive libido and stunted evolutionary progress. Scientific racism focusing on reproductive structures utilized Darwinism to associate European societies with advanced evolution and, by contrast, black populations with a failure to properly evolve, thus portraying native individuals as closer in genealogy to animals. In a sense, despite vastly different evolutionary histories, the enlarged genitalia of native individuals appeared comparable to that of animals by European measures thus leading European communities to view natives as more animalistic than Godly. By these standards of genital analysis, races not only became the focus of sexual research, but also experienced racial ranking based on evolutionary proximity to animals and, therefore, endured devaluing dehumanization. In essence,

scientific research's targeting of the sexual organs of non-white bodies both hypersexualized and debased native individuals, associating enlarged genitalia with beastliness and, therefore, uncivilized deviance. Fundamentally, the focus on non-white sexuality dehumanizes individuals in order to uphold society's justification of inherent native monstrosity. In this fashion, society illustrates individuals of native origin engaged in deviant forms of sex such as prostitutes as doubly adulterous due to both ancestral and sexual divergence.

Moreover, dehumanization severely affects prostitutes due to the already deviant sexual identity of sex workers which, in consequence, augments the association formed between non-conformative sexuality and the animalistic monstrosity of natives. At the crux, a monster "is half an animal" and "Foucault tied monstrosity to sexuality through specific analyses" such that "monsters and abnormals have always also been sexual deviants," (Puar 119). Essentially, anybody expressing non-normative sexuality, such as prostitutes, intrinsically embodies incriminating monstrosity used by society to oppress the agency of native individuals who compose the majority of persons engaged in prostitution. Non-normative forms of sexuality symbolize the physical manifestation of immorality, especially for the already-aberrant native community. By using hypersexuality and scientific racism's assertion that non-white individuals represent regressive evolution, patriarchy successfully inhibits the ability of lower, raced classes to attain personhood and humanity within white patriarchy. In a sense, the sexual non-conformity of prostitutes hinders the sex industry's ability to represent itself as above beastliness and, therefore, illustrates sex workers as animalistic deviants. Centrally, society targets raced prostitution in hypersexualizing and dehumanizing individuals in order to uphold traditional views of native individuals as monstrous by constructing links between unconventional forms of sexuality and innate foulness.

Third, the criminalization of prostitution targets minority native populations who turn to prostitution, oftentimes out of desperation, ultimately making the actualization of normative careers impossible for non-white individuals and maintaining traditional social hierarchies that benefit white males. The majority of women involved in prostitution “grew up in households with loss of life, separation from caretakers, domestic violence, substance abuse, and prostitution. One-fourth of respondents grew up without a mother in the household and 59% without a father” limiting financial resources and access to the higher education necessary for modern careers (Hughes 3). Fundamentally, society denies individuals engaging in survival sex the opportunity to secure career-oriented jobs, essentially barring the impoverished from working towards a higher socioeconomic status. Continuing, the raced nature of the prostitution industry creates a setting in which the effects of such disadvantaged situations predominantly represent and affect native populations. That is to say, the criminalization of prostitution overwhelmingly inhibits the career possibilities of dark-skinned individuals over white individuals thus maintaining white exclusivity and dominance in the upper classes of modern patriarchal societies. Essentially, the portrayal of prostitutes as villainous threats denies sex workers fair opportunities in normative career paths, especially when in competition with educated, middle class, white individuals. At the crux, the raced nature of prostitution largely victimizes persons of native origin and, consequentially, upholds societal beliefs in the natural deviance of non-white communities by associating survival sex with immorality rather than lamentable desperation.

Further, criminalizing the sex industry characterizes prostitutes as deviants threatening traditional societal hierarchies and, therefore, perpetuates socially oppressive stereotypes regarding the innate monstrosity of native populations. In the public eye, “all prostitutes are stigmatized and denied basic social services...while legal criminalization of the sex trade

promotes new views of prostitutes as irredeemably deviant women. Having ‘fallen from virtue,’ the prostitute [is] considered permanently degenerate,” and, consequently, a monstrous imitation of humanity that threatens societal stability (Lucas 51). In other words, patriarchy characterizes prostitutes as dangers to themselves, justifying the oppression of sex workers’ rights and, essentially, eliminating the agency of prostitutes in order to maintain traditional social hierarchies that the sex industry potentially threatens. Stereotyping prostitutes as deviant, ignorant, and diseased hazards blatantly neglecting the law allows society to emphasize the monstrosity innate to sex workers. Rather than acknowledge the disadvantaged situations that perpetuate survival sex, patriarchy neglects desperation in lower, raced socioeconomic classes for the purpose of protecting the wealth and status of white communities. Even further, as a consequence of the high number of non-white individuals working in the industry, society slips the criminal monstrosity associated with prostitutes as a whole with native origin, ultimately upholding views of all native individuals as deviant and monstrous threats to white society. Over time, society accepts the criminalization of non-white individuals as an inherent fact of native communities. That is to say, the existence of native individuals as in constant conflict with the law becomes normalized and, naturally, obstructs the access of those participating in raced sex industries to lawful employment. In this way, social stereotyping and criminalization of raced prostitution severely oppresses native communities to uphold patriarchal assumptions regarding the innate monstrosity of non-white populations and preserve traditional social classes that benefit white males.

In conclusion, raced prostitution represents threatening sexual non-conformity in the United States that traditional social structures endeavor to suppress. Scientific racism seeks to evidence the relationship between non-white races and disease while also dehumanizing

prostitutes through hypsersexualization. Thus associated with illness and beastliness, minority groups having turned to prostitution suffer preventative repression of their agency intended to maintain white patriarchal dominance within upper social classes. To further eliminate the sex industry's threat to monogamous, heterosexual and socioeconomic norms that benefit the perpetuation of white power, society criminalizes prostitution, ultimately inhibiting access to lawful career paths for prostitutes of native origin. At the crux, patriarchy demeans sex workers, illustrating individuals involved in prostitution as sexual deviants to maintain social stereotypes regarding the innate monstrosity of non-white populations in order to uphold traditional patriarchal structures solely benefiting individuals of white, European descent.

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