Chapter 4

Animating Racism

In February 1940, cartoon gurus William Hanna and Joseph Barbera introduced one of the most famous duos in animation history. In "Puss Gets the Boot," the world met Tom Cat and Jerry Mouse for the first time.[1] Known as Jasper and Jinx in the premiere episode, generations of children subsequently grew to know these characters as Tom and Jerry. The *Tom and Jerry* series became a national, and global, phenomenon, with hundreds of shorts, myriad series spinoffs, and nearly a dozen full-length feature films produced in the half century after its premiere. In that very first short in 1940, audiences also saw for the first time an unnamed character. She was a large, dark-skinned black woman who spoke in a vernacular dialect that was overlaid with a thick southern accent. That unnamed character also wore brightly colored clothing and was usually only visible from the waist down. This unnamed character became known as "Mammy Two Shoes," a "galumphing black domestic."[2] Mammy Two Shoes was typically seen only from the waist down, was buffoonish in nature, and was, in essence, an animated version of a black-blackface representation of the popular Mammy archetype.[3]

It has become cliché to note that the "golden age" of cartoon production between the 1920s and late 1960s, so characterized because of the addition of sound to animation, also produced the most racist and sexist depictions of people of color in cartoon history. Mammy Two Shoes was a product of this golden age. She was joined by a host of other racialized and racist characters, some of whom existed during the silent era and received new life with the advent of sound. Cartoonists, their production companies and studios, and the prominent directors and producers between the 1920s and 1960s brought their racial–ethnic biases to their animated creations, in addition to mirroring societal attitudes and cultural assumptions about race. Prominent figures in the world of animation, such as William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, Otto Messmer, Max Fleischer, Walt Disney, Friz Freleng, and Tex Avery, created cartoons that portrayed communities of color

not only in stereotypical ways but in a negative and racist light.[4] Such depictions did not simply constitute harmless forms of children's entertainment; rather, the cartoons that these men helped to create and popularize became part of a racist understanding of American society and culture in which racism became a casually accepted and internalized part of a person's life from a very young age.[5]

Cartoons frequently portrayed explicit forms of racism, utilizing stock motifs and images such as the lazy Latino, the cannibalistic native, the rotund and dutiful Mammy, and the wily "Oriental." From the silent era to the early years of animation's golden age, cartoons produced for either adults or children both reaffirmed and taught American audiences how to think and speak about race. Significantly, animation has from its earliest years targeted children, making the racist messages and representations in cartoons a critical component of a child's socialization into U.S. racial culture. Through characters like Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse, Speedy Gonzalez, and Tom and Jerry, American children learned about race in the United States. This exposure to racialized language and images was all the more powerful given the seemingly innocent ways in which cartoons reinforced racism as a normative aspect of American cultural life during the twentieth century.

In this chapter we take a closer look at how popular forms of animation communicated racism to American audiences. In so doing, we demonstrate how racist cartoons became a didactic form of entertainment that taught viewers, particularly children, about racial "others." The humor and slapstick antics of cartoon characters thus masked the racism that became institutionalized in the animation industry during the twentieth century. Moreover, the racism woven into the story lines of cartoons prepared children for adult life and provided them with a vocabulary and understanding of the different forms of racism embedded in American writing, cinema, and advertising. To highlight these cultural processes, we begin this chapter by examining the racism prevalent during the silent era of cartoon production, transition to animation during the early golden age of cartoons, and conclude with an overview of mid- and late twentieth-century cartoons—some of which were banned by American censors—that exposed viewers to different forms of racism at a young age.

Animated Racism in the Silent Era and Early Golden Age

Racist or stereotypical depictions of people of color go back to the silent era of American cartoon production between the 1910s and the 1930s. Early

cartoon production relied on hand drawing and rotoscoping (animation traced using live-action footage), techniques that meant early black and white cartoon depictions lent themselves to the production of blackface characters. For these reasons, early cartoons often featured black-and-white anthropomorphic animals, such as Felix the Cat and Mickey Mouse. Cultural critic Jeet Heer recently observed the racialized qualities imposed on many of these cartoon characters, explaining that "Felix the cat is a feckless, happy-go-lucky trickster. Culturally, he's the missing link between Br'er Rabbit and Bugs Bunny: admirable in some ways but lacking in the 'white' qualities of respectability and responsibility."[6] Heer's analysis reminds us of how animated characters like Felix and Mickey represented animalistic blackface depictions, their coloration conveniently approximating blackface performers such as Al Jolson's *Jazz Singer*. Political scientist Michael Rogin has made a similar observation, arguing that "the most ubiquitous cartoon character of all, Walt Disney's white-gloved and black-faced Mickey Mouse, was copied from the *Jazz Singer*. "[7] Indeed, the creators of animated characters were quite explicit in acknowledging the racial inspiration for their creations. For example, Otto Messmer, the creator of Felix the Cat, stated that this character "was a pickaninny."[8] Other popular silent-era cartoons, such as *The Alice Comedies*, featured a black and white cat, Julius, while *Koko the Clown* featured a black and white human clown, cleverly approximated blackface minstrel performers.

Otto Messmer's Felix the Cat was arguably the first animated powerhouse of the silent era. The inaugural Felix episodes were fairly innocuous. But in "Felix Saves the Day" (1922) we see many of the common racist stereotypes of the day, including the pickaninny and an interracial baseball game. The short begins with a depiction of the "Tar Heels," a black baseball team whose members are all black-blackface pickaninnies.[9] Felix and his friend Willie practice their game so that they can beat the Tar Heels. In one scene, Felix bats a ball that hits a police officer and lands in the mouth of another blackface individual, who appears to be a trash collector. Willie ends up in jail for Felix's transgression against the police officer. While in jail, the Tar Heels begin to easily defeat Willie's team, the "Nifty Nine." Felix, however, saves the day. Critical to this early cartoon was the cultural understandings about race and racism that it conveyed. The black characters featured in the episode represented white perceptions of black inferiority, complete with nappy hair, bright white eyes and lips, and long apelike arms.[10]

In other Felix episodes, black characters provide comic relief, much like the blackface trash collector who swallows Willie's ball. In "Tee Time," for

example, Felix's antics result in the fire department being called out to a golf course. They spray Felix with a fire hose, the force of which is enough to knock him out into an ocean and eventually to an island. While tom-tom drums bang, a group of monkey-like black, "cannibal," "savage" islanders chase after Felix. He hides in a tree and uses coconuts to hammer one black islander into the sand. Like other silent-era shorts, "Tee Time" presented the supposed savagery of African-looking peoples in a particularly violent manner, lampooning their twentieth-century American counterparts in the process.

Such depictions of Felix the Cat continued into the early golden age of animation. One short, "The Non-Stop Fright" (1927) featured Felix participating in a flying contest. As in "Tee Time" Felix encountered a group of "cannibal" black natives. The "cannibals" chase Felix, all the while shouting an undecipherable "native" gibberish. Felix escapes this mob, although one of the blacks continues to yell at him. "The Non-Stop Fright" made explicit how the islanders were meant to not only appear as savage cannibals but also sound like racialized savages.

By the late 1920s, Felix episodes had begun to caricature other people of color. In 1929, for instance, the short "False Vases" mocked Asian people. The episode opened with stereotypical Asian-sounding music. As the music plays, Felix breaks a lamp and goes to a merchant to buy a new one. The merchant, a stereotypically depicted Chinese individual with narrowly drawn epicanthic fold "slanted" eyes, long robes, and an evil grin, attempts to cheat Felix. This Chinese individual also speaks in an odd Chinese-sounding gibberish. This encounter results in Felix traveling to China to replace the vase, where he encounters numerous similarly caricatured Chinese people. The episode was thus a good example of "yellowface."

In numerous ways, Felix the Cat set the stage for later racist animation. As the first cartoon superstar whose fame extended from the silent era to the golden era, Felix undoubtedly touched many generations of Americans. While later cartoons, such as Tom and Jerry, offered the public riffs on common ethnic stereotypes, especially the Mammy archetype via Mammy Two Shoes, Felix the Cat's stereotypes were more basic and limited. In many of the early episodes, the silent quality of the cartoon reduced the presence of people of color to more limited visual portrayals of buffoonary and savagery. In later golden age sound cartoons, the "natives" and Asians whom Felix encountered were accompanied by stereotypical background music and racialized dialect that amounted to little more than undecipherable gibberish. These aural qualities magnified the racial caricature at work. If,

for instance, the black trash collector in "Tee Time," who appeared as the stereotypical pickaninny, spoke with a sophisticated English accent, the foreignness of his racial representation may well have been significantly diluted.

One of the most prolific and influential cartoonists to use racialized imagery was Walt Disney. While Mickey Mouse remains Disney's best-known creation, his first cartoon, *The Alice Comedies*, foreshadowed how Disney would incorporate racial depictions into his subsequent creations. These shorts combined live-action scenes and real people with animation. Alice, a live-action little girl played Virginia Davis (1923–1925, 1926), Margie Gay (1926–1927), and Louis Hardwick (1927), routinely interacted with the cartoon cat, Julius. In the first short, "Alice's Wonderland" (1923), Alice asks to see how cartoons are created. In response, an animator takes her on a tour of his production studio. The first thing Alice sees on this tour is a group of blackface cats playing jazz. Later, when she goes to sleep, Alice dreams of riding an animated train into Julius's animated world. Upon her arrival, a monkey porter helps her from the train. Considering numerous black men worked as porters, the cartoon monkey porter was designed to reinforce the popular notion that black people typically worked in jobs that served white people. The denizens of the animated city subsequently welcome Alice with a parade, during which a number of blackface characters appear.

In the 1926 short "Alice's Mysterious Mysteries," a dog-catcher and his mouse comrade dress in Ku Klux Klan robes to catch dogs at a dog training school for the purpose of turning them into sausage. However, Alice and Julius save the day, defeating these "Klansmen." The Klan is portrayed negatively in this short, a stark contrast from the Klan's positive depiction in an earlier short, "Alice and the Dog Catcher" (1924). In that short, Alice presides over a group called the "Secret Klub of the Kook Klaks" (sometimes referred to as the "Klix Klax Klub"). Alice's KKK, reminiscent of the Little Rascals, is composed of children who wear brown paper bags, instead of white robes, as their hoods. Those bags/hoods have humorous faces drawn on them. One of the children wearing a bag is an African American boy with a blackface face drawn on his paper bag. In these outfits, the children help stop live-action dog-catchers from capturing their canine friend and KKK mascot. Upon initial examination, the depictions of the Klan seem comically odd. However, the KKK's reemergence in the 1920s was no laughing matter. As the paramount militant and racist organization in the United States, the Klan symbolized the most virulent form of white supremacist

racism of its era. Therefore, even when the group was depicted negatively, as was the case with the sausage-making dog-catchers, the racist connotations associated with those representations penetrate through the cartoon humor. Moreover, the presence of the black child KKK member is also telling. When he doffs his blackface bag, the child's expression appears as one of befuddlement, an expression that was broken by a smirk that appears on his face, a hint to the viewer that he was too stupid to understand the kind of group he had joined.

Alice's world was a place defined by racism. Numerous other Alice cartoons emphasized this point. In "Alice's Wild West Show" (1924), for example, her Klan friends stage a series of Western skits. In these skits, the one black member of the group performed only menial tasks; he cleans up a saloon in one scene, while in another he stands with a confused look on his face as he holds a sign (upside down) indicating the first act will begin. Once Alice gets into the cartoon world she is on a stagecoach pursued by several Native Americans on horseback. In stereotypical "cowboys and Indians" fashion, Alice shoots the Native Americans off their horses.[11]

Alice encounters other ethnic groups in equally stereotypical ways. In "Alice Chops the Suey" (1925), Alice and Julius enter "Chinatown," with stereotypical Asian music playing in the background. Alice and her companion encounter several Chinese-looking characters, who, on spotting Alice, take her prisoner. These characters conformed to all of the anti-Asian caricatures of the era: sharpened teeth, "slanted" eyes, and long queues. They also speak in stereotypical "Oriental" dialect. This format was repeated in scores of other Alice shorts. In "Alice Cans the Cannibals" (1925), Alice and Julius find themselves on an island. There, they encounter a group of apelike, blackface cannibals who throw spears at Alice and Julius. These cannibals also perform an odd dance and make unintelligible noises. In one of the final scenes, Alice throws a harpoon attached to a rope in the direction of the blackface characters. The harpoon pierces the large lips of four of the cannibals before striking a hippopotamus, which then drags the four cannibals—by their lips—into a lake.[12]

Numerous other instances of cartoon racism make their appearance in *The Alice Comedies*. [13] As one of the premier cartoons, like *Felix the Cat*, to transcend the silent era and thrive into the golden era of cartoons, these shorts set the stage for later cartoons. In these cartoons, Disney recycled many of the racist ideas and themes of previous Alice cartoons. For example, when Julius speaks in later episodes he sounds much like Mickey Mouse. Also, the use of animated and live-action characters persisted well

into the golden age, a technique that in fact continues today. But it was the caricaturing of people of color that served as the most enduring aspect of these shorts. Certainly the black and white coloration of the series lent itself to blackface imagery. But the depictions of other ethnic groups, including the addition of stereotypical dialects and music, fit into the broader cultural imagery of white Americans and nonwhite others.[14]

Disney followed *The Alice Comedies* with *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit* and *Mickey Mouse*. While Oswald became a popular character, it was Mickey that emerged as a fixture at Disney. Many of the shorts in the *Mickey Mouse* series contained the same racist material used in other cartoons of the silent era to early golden age period. For instance, Mickey's nemesis Pete, who also appeared in *The Alice Comedies* and *Oswald*, was first referred to as "Black Pete." He was originally a burly, dark-haired bear, whose facial features approximated blackface caricatures. Only in later episodes was his appearance softened into the form of a large cat, and he became simply "Pete." Like Felix the Cat, Mickey Mouse is a black and white faced character whose own appearance evinced the broad outlines of stereotypical blackface characters. Indeed, many *Mickey Mouse* shorts feature a visual joke involving a momentary shot of a character in blackface. In "Gulliver Mickey" (1934), for instance, two Lilliputians fight over a fountain pen. When the pen shoots its ink, one of the Lilliputians appears briefly in blackface.

In other *Mickey Mouse* shorts, such racially charged humor appeared on the screen in a more sustained fashion. "Trader Mickey" (1932) is one of the *Mickey Mouse* episodes that ventures into serious, albeit well-worn, racial tropes. The short begins with Mickey and Pluto traveling on a steamboat filled with goods, and in a river filled with hippopotamuses. The hippos and the boat have the feel of scenes out of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), as Mickey is clearly being situated in the other worldly context of Africa. Upon landing, Pluto discovers an odd black foot that turns out to belong to an indigenous African. This "savage" is represented in blackface and has bright white lips and a ring through his nose. Shortly thereafter, Mickey and Pluto find themselves surrounded by a large group of blackface spear-wielding natives, some with pulsating, evil-looking eyes. A rotund chief sits atop a pile of human skulls as he calls forth a cook to tend to a large cauldron. This scene establishes that these natives are also cannibals. Mickey attempts to speak to them, but the chief and cook respond in undecipherable gibberish. As they prepare to cook Mickey, the natives unsuccessfully attempt to use the goods on his ship. The chief, for instance, spies a cuckoo clock and attempts to eat the cuckoo. Others play musical

instruments backward or use them improperly, all of which reinforces the cultural, as well as the biological and geographical space that is imagined to exist between Africa and American "civilization." Mickey, however, finally triumphs by securing a saxophone and playing it to subdue the "savages," who all join in singing and dancing.

The 1932 short "Trader Mickey" was rife with stereotypically racist images of black people. In their African setting, black people appear as "savages" with no history, or without language and the intelligence to record their own history. Depicted as apish blackface characters, they hatch a plan to eat Mickey, reinforcing the perception of Africans as cannibals. When they begin to play the musical instruments with Mickey, they all dance and gyrate in a "Negroid" fashion. As a "musical people," they are easily distracted by Mickey's music, ultimately forgetting that they had planned to eat him. Most importantly, as cultural historian Nicholas Sammond has observed, "Mickey's capture at the hands of these animated cannibals is an instance of cultural contact between a blackface minstrel (Mickey) and the less oblique racist stereotypes that historically had charged that figure with its libidinous, animalistic, and uncivilized appeal."[15]

Betty Boop also emerged in the early golden age period of cartoon production. Created by cartoon guru Max Fleischer, who also created *Popeye* and *Koko the Clown, Betty Boop* is most frequently critiqued for its sexism, not its racism.[16] The series contained racist elements that occasionally featured Betty as a racialized character. In "Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle" (1932), a brown-skinned Betty performed her version of a Polynesian hula dance. Her version of such a dance amounted to a parody of the hula, and her darkened skin implied a forged indigeneity.[17]

Like other cartoons of this period, *Betty Boop* frequently mocked nonwhite people, especially African Americans and Native Americans. As in *Mickey Mouse* or *Felix the Cat*, black people tend to appear in *Betty Boop* shorts as a backdrop or as comic relief. Take, for instance, the aforementioned "Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle." In that short, Betty's compatriot Bimbo lands on a proverbial desert island, where he encounters Betty. After a series of misadventures, a group of tribal islanders appear, their skins blackened, their teeth bright white, and bones tied in their hair. In addition, these island natives were depicted as having overly large and protruding lips. In an effort to impersonate the natives, Bimbo darkens his face with dirt and places a bone in his hair. He then chants an island-sounding song (which is actually performed by a real group, the Royal Samoans), in an effort to lead them away from Betty. As a result of his actions, Bimbo becomes the

"chief" of this group. The islanders perform a series of odd dances, complete with whoops and grunts, to mark Bimbo's new position of authority. The natives, however, eventually discover they've been duped and chase Betty and Bimbo from the island.

"Making Stars" (1935) also contained blackface individuals, in this case a trio of pickaninnies called the Colorful Three. An Asian "star" added an additional element to the short's racism. In this episode, Betty introduces the stars of the future. The Colorful Three are exactly that: three pickaninnies with nappy hair adorned with bow ties, dark black skin, and overly large whitish/tannish lips. They crash and bang into one another until tears flow and they sing a lament in dialect called "hi de ho." The song is a riff on the classic Cab Calloway tune "Minnie the Moocher" (Calloway himself made several noteworthy appearances in *Betty Boop* shorts). To get the three pickaninnies off the stage a detached hand with a large plate of watermelon appears and successfully lures the Colorful Three away. As the crowd cheers its delight, the camera pans to the audience where a blackface "Mammy" and a pickaninny baby of her own sit clapping. The baby cries for his/her own "watermelon." Upon being "shooshed" by the "Mammy," the child begins singing its own version of "hi de ho." Finally tiring of this whining, the mother reaches into her purse and produces a large piece of watermelon, which the child devours. The next performer to appear is an Asian marksman. This Chinese-looking child has deeply "slanted" eyes and wears a queue. Stereotypical Asian-sounding music accompanies this act.

"Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle" and "Making Stars" offer rather standard stereotypical portrayals of blacks and Asians. The islanders in "Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle" were all blackface individuals with bones in their hair. They were unintelligent and easily tricked by Bimbo. They speak in grunts and were depicted solely as servants. The Colorful Three were similarly caricatured. They not only appeared as pickaninnies, but used a food item commonly associated with black people in Jim Crow America: watermelon. In this short, watermelon not only confounded the Colorful Three but also silenced the "Mammy's" crying child as all children devoured the watermelon with stereotypical gusto.[18]

Beyond blacks and Asians, the *Betty Boop* short "Rhythm on the Reservation" (1939) caricatured Native American people. This was the final short to feature *Betty Boop*, and it focused much of its attention on the Native American characters. In this episode, Betty drives down a road, her car filled with musical instruments, when she notices a sign for the "Wigwam Beauty Shoppe." On seeing the sign she remarks, "Oh, geez, real Indians." As

she approaches the "Shoppe," she spots an advertisement, declaring: "Try Our Scalp Treatment." The female shopkeeper, a big-nosed, dark-skinned woman, notices Betty and attempts to rouse a male Native American who is sleeping. They both speak in "ugs" and grunts. The female Native American informs the big-nosed, dark-skinned male Native American that "ug, customer, makem ballyhoo!" Betty approaches the two and states: "Oh, how do you do, Mr. Redskin?" She proceeds to buy a tom-tom. Meanwhile, the rest of the "tribe," who also speak in "ugs" and grunts, prepare to rob Betty's car. The Native Americans attempt to use Betty's stolen instruments, much as in the *Mickey Mouse* short "Trader Mickey," but are unable to determine their use. She shows them how to make music.

"Rhythm on the Reservation" (1939) portrayed Native Americans as buffoonish, unintelligent, and prone to criminality. The short's hackneyed plot depicted indigenous people as lazy, backward "savages" who wanted nothing more than to pilfer Betty's car. But once the "Indians" have robbed Betty, the audience was reassured by the idea that they lacked the intelligence to properly play Betty's instruments. As in numerous other shorts from this period, "Rhythm on the Reservation" mocked and ridiculed indigenous people, feeding American audiences commonly held stereotypes about uncivilized natives in the form of entertainment.[19]

Many of the other popular series during the silent era and early golden age perpetuated similarly racist tropes. Although now largely forgotten, some of the other more popular cartoons of the 1920s and 1930s included several early shorts featuring Koko the Clown mimicking African Americans. Koko the Clown, a black and white character, replicated blackface caricatures that had been popular in the United States for many decades. In one notable episode, "St. James Infirmary Blues," (1933) Koko takes on an ethnic flare and sings with the legendary Cab Calloway. He dances and scats the song in a mockery of African American jazz and dance.

From the silent era to the opening years of the golden age of cartoons, demeaning portrayals of nonwhite people, especially people of African descent, were staples of the art form. But the period was also prototypical in the sense that animators from Max Fleischer to Otto Messmer to Walt Disney all set the stage for the types of popular accepted racist depictions of ethnic minorities that became commonplace during the golden age of animation. No other cartoon better represented the racist qualities of cartoon making in the United States than *Tom and Jerry*.

Tom and Jerry

Tom and Jerry first appeared in 1940. Like Mickey Mouse, the animated shorts became wildly popular with audiences. The shorts focused on the hijinks of Tom and Jerry, weaving into the plots immediately recognizable depictions of racial and ethnic minorities. Mammy Two Shoes became one of the most important of these figures. Her large, colorful dresses, thick southern accent, and dark-skinned appearance clearly indicated her racial alterity, and audiences saw her only from the waist or ankles down. Mammy Two Shoes was also portly, had large breasts, and thick legs and ankles. In many ways she represented the classic Mammy figure of popular culture.[20]

Mammy Two Shoes, voiced by Lillian Randolph, perhaps best known for playing "Annie" in *It's a Wonderful Life*, first appears in the 1940 inaugural *Tom and Jerry* cartoon "Puss Gets the Boot" (in which Tom and Jerry are referred to as "Jasper" and "Jinx"). As was routinely the case in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, Tom terrorizes Jerry until Jerry finally escapes. When he attempts to once again catch Jerry, Tom instead crashes into a pedestal holding a potted plant, which in turn falls comically on his head. Mammy Two Shoes enters this chaotic scene wearing bright blue house shoes, red socks or panty hose, a yellow dress, with a white housekeeper's smock, and holding a broom. She tells him, "Now wood you jes look, jes look at dat mess you made … if you breaks one more thing you is going out. O W T, out." The subsequent scenes focus on Jerry attempting to break, or to cause Tom to break, household items so he will indeed be thrown "O W T, out" of the house. In the end, Tom breaks a large stack of dishes, forcing Mammy Two Shoes to evict him. She does so with her classic southern dialect, stating, "Mmmm, hmmm, and when I sez out, Jaspa, I means out. O W T, out."

"Puss Gets the Boot" typified how *Tom and Jerry* cartoons contained many of the trademark antics that came to define the series. What made this episode conform to prevailing racial stereotypes, however, was Mammy Two Shoes. Mammy Two Shoes was a racialized comedic foil, a brightly clad, broom-toting housekeeper who spoke in an uneducated dialect. Her image thus confirmed what most white people learned about the subordinate status of black women in American homes. While some episodes depicted Mammy Two Shoes in an even more grotesquely racist manner than her portrayal in "Puss Gets the Boot," this first episode set the tone for her appearances in future *Tom and Jerry* cartoons.

Mammy Two Shoes returned in the second *Tom and Jerry* short, "The Midnight Snack" (1941). In this episode, the cat and mouse fight over a

fridge full of delectable food until a wedge of cheese crashes into some dishes, breaking them in the process. Mammy Two Shoes enters the scene of commotion and warns Tom, "Cat, if yous been in dat ice box, start prayin!" Tom then places Jerry in the refrigerator, framing the mouse for eating the food. Upon discovering Jerry, Mammy Two Shoes, brightly clad with blue house shoes, red and white striped stockings, and a yellow dress with white smock, screams, jumps up on a chair, and proceeds to raise her yellow dress along with approximately 10 other dresses—one with bright yellow and blue stripes, another with light blue stars, one with green polka dots, and finally a black and white checkered dress—before calling Tom to the rescue. In the process of trying to get Jerry, Tom accidentally knocks Mammy Two Shoes off of her chair. She runs off, exclaiming, "This here's no place fo a lady!" When Tom fails to catch Jerry, Mammy Two Shoes decides to evict Tom from the home.

Many of the stock images introduced in "Puss Gets the Boot" reappeared in "The Midnight Snack." Mammy Two Shoes was once again a large, dark black, colorfully dressed woman. Added to this short are her numerous dresses, all worn inexplicably at the same time, and all garish in their colors and patterns. Thus, her attire constituted a form of humorous mockery. A gendered element of mockery was added when Mammy Two Shoes fled the kitchen, exclaiming, "This here's no place fo a lady!" According to the stereotypes of the time, black women were not afforded the title, much less the social privileges, of "lady." Such scenes therefore served as a form of comedic relief in which all the white viewers were in on the joke.

Mammy Two Shoes made perhaps her most important appearance in the 1950 short "Saturday Evening Puss." This cartoon began with Tom spying on Mammy Two Shoes as she readied herself for a night out at a bridge game. Her choice of clothes and jewelry were, as in previous versions, a source of ridicule and humor. In this instance, she wore a vibrant blue dress with bright green trim around the waist and sleeves. She donned 10 or so brightly colored bracelets, four rings, and a very large necklace with a red and green broach. The action pauses momentarily on the broach, which chimes, while the top red portion of the broach lights up with word "stop" and the bottom green portion chimes with the word "go." Here the message is simple: the broach is so garishly large that it could serve as a traffic signal. After hiking up her slip in an unladylike fashion, Mammy Two Shoes "galumphed" when she walks out the door, leaving Tom alone. Seeing his chance, Tom invites three friends for a party, and they proceed to play loud jazz music. Jerry, tortured by this music and desiring only

sleep, battles the cats until he finally calls Mammy Two Shoes at her bridge game to inform her of the party. She hurries home to expel Tom and his friends.

What makes "Saturday Evening Puss" especially important is that for the first and only time in the series, Mammy Two Shoes was shown from head to toe. As she races from the bridge game, down the street, and home, in a split second her full body is visible. Her rotundness clearly evident, her large bosoms, oversized nose, swollen cheeks, bright red lipstick, and a bright red hat all serve as indicators of her lack of physical symmetry and, thus, racial inferiority. Moreover, her hands, shown at the beginning of the episode as she dressed and later when she expels the cats, appear dark black on top but a light brown on her palms, much like the paws of an animal. Thus, her hands reminded viewers of her more animalistic nature, something that was in stark contrast to how white Americans saw themselves.

In communicating racist stereotypes about black people, and African American women specifically, the Mammy Two Shoes character had much to say. Her exaggerated, "Negroid" features caricatured the black body in much the same way that nineteenth-century depictions of dark black, white-teeth grinning Mammies and Sambos served to ridicule black people on the minstrel stage. Her southern accent and dialect clearly communicated both a class and racial position of inferiority, while her bright, colorful clothing and jewelry all fit into prevailing stereotypes about black women's love of tacky, brightly colored clothes. The racialized imagery used in representing Mammy Two Shoes had become so ubiquitous in American popular culture by the 1940s and 1950s that whites often overlooked the offensive nature of such representations. Author Thomas Pluck gave voice to this aspect of white privilege when he remembered Mammy Two Shoes fondly, stating: "I never felt there was a cruelty in how 'Mammy Two Shoes' was portrayed." Pluck continued, noting that many groups were caricatured by the media and he lists the Irish cop or Italian gangsters as commonly stereotyped figures. Pluck's analysis simplistically creates a sense of cultural equivalence in the derogatory ways in which people of African and/or Irish descent were portrayed in cartoons during the mid-twentieth century. The racial context in which Mammy Two Shoes was portrayed made it particularly difficult for upward social and economic mobility in African American communities. In contrast, Irish immigrants, and their children and grandchildren, could bank on their "wages of whiteness" assisting them in rising up the U.S. social and economic ladder, a point Pluck appears to miss. In other words, Mammy Two Shoes reinforced perceptions of African

American people, and black women in particular, as stuck in a subordinate, servile status in American society.[21]

The racism embedded in mid-twentieth century America ran through *Tom and Jerry* episodes. One short, which was ultimately deemed so offensive that it was banned from TV, was the 1951 cartoon "His Mouse Friday." In this episode, Tom, adrift on a raft in the ocean, lands on a "deserted" island. Thinking he is alone, Tom soon discovers that Jerry is also on the island. Tom chases Jerry into an indigenous village. Jerry then darkens his face with soot from a large pot. He jumps from the forest, now totally blackened, wearing a yellow loin cloth, holding a spear, with a bone tied in his hair, and speaking a strange gibberish to Tom. He forces Tom to the large pot where he will seemingly cook the cat as his dinner. Tom discovers Jerry's trick and chases him from the village, only to run into the actual village inhabitants, who are very black "natives" (with the Mammy Two Shoes–like brightly colored jewelry, clothes, and hair), catlike in appearance—hence cannibals—one of whom exclaims "barbecued cat" while licking his lips. Tom runs while the natives, most of whom are seen only by their feet, give chase. Jerry smiles at Tom's fate, only to encounter a large, "Negroid"-like mouse, who says "barbecued mouse" while licking his lips. Jerry then flees this "cannibal."

In the case of "His Mouse Friday," *Tom and Jerry* ventured into a slightly more all-inclusive form of racism. Jerry is in blackface and uses his disguise to trick Tom. Reinforcing the image of the islanders' racial inferiority, dark-skinned natives and their bright jewels and clothing remind viewers of Mammy Two Shoes. Visually, the cartoon focuses on the islanders' feet, in much the same way the animators focused on Mammy Two Shoes feet to demarcate a subservient status, with the added joke that plays on popular perceptions of Pacific Islanders as cannibals. "His Mouse Friday" was therefore an amalgam of blackface minstrelsy and caricatures about island cannibalism, racial stereotypes that white privilege in mid-twentieth-century America rendered humorous.

There are a number of other ways in which black people were ridiculed and mocked in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons. In many episodes, an explosion or some accident with mud or paint leaves Tom, Jerry, or other characters blackened, and they turn to the audience in blackface for a brief moment before returning to their normal coloration. Take "Yankee Doodle Mouse" (1943), for example. This short, which won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film, finds Tom and Jerry in a World War II–type battle. In one scene, Tom attempts to "bomb" Jerry with firecrackers. One

firecracker lands in a tea kettle where Jerry is hiding. Tom looks inside as the firework explodes, leaving his face blackened and the remains of the teapot haloed around his head. He looks at the audience momentarily before resuming his hunt for Jerry. In another well-known episode, "Mouse in Manhattan" (1945), Jerry visits New York City and falls into an open container of shoe polish, leaving his face blackened and for unknown reasons his lips larger and bright red. In a more easily noticeable episode, "The Truce Hurts" (1947), Tom, Jerry, and their canine compatriot Spike make a truce to be friends. In one scene, a passing meat truck drenches the three in mud. Once the truck passes, Spike, Tom, and Jerry look out at the audience with their faces blackened and bows in their hair, a depiction akin to that of a pickaninny. Again, the reference to blackface minstrelsy in all of these episodes is obvious. Upon close scrutiny, these blackface portrayals in *Tom and Jerry* are so common and obvious that they can begin to seem normative. We would argue that that is because they were normative, common representations of black people, marketed mainly to white audiences.[22]

But *Tom and Jerry* did not solely mock African Americans. Indeed, the cartoon frequently lampooned Native Americans and Latinos and, on occasion, Asian Americans also. Perhaps the most extreme form of racism toward Native Americans came in the 1952 short "Two Little Indians." In this episode, two gray mice (both resembling the recurring character Nibbles, albeit wearing headbands with feathers and each sporting a small bow and arrow) approach Jerry's home, knock on his door, and hand him a note that states they are orphans from the "Bide-a-wee Mouse Home" (interestingly, Bideawee is the name of an actual animal shelter founded in 1906 in New York City, although the "Two Little Indians" writers most likely chose the name because it sounded "Indian" and evoked the many isolated boarding schools established for indigenous children by the federal government).[23] Jerry takes the two on a hike, during which they encounter Tom. One of the two attempts to "scalp" Tom with a large axe. The other attacks Tom while performing the hand-on-mouth Indian whoop cry. Tom is eventually scalped, but succeeds in capturing Jerry. The two little Native Americans then trick Tom into thinking he is surrounded by natives; he dons a coonskin cap and grabs a black powder rifle to defend himself. To scare Tom, the two little Native Americans also doll up Spike the dog to look like a Native American chief. Finally outwitted, Tom raises a white flag and the short ends with Tom, Jerry, and the two little Native Americans smoking a peace pipe. The episode's bigotry and use of racial generalizations is completed via

the Native American–sounding music and the beating of tom-tom drums that are heard throughout the short.

Like many of the blackface episodes of *Tom and Jerry*, "Two Little Indians" incorporates virtually every Native American stereotype in American popular culture. It is a classic example of redface entertainment. The two attempts at scalping Tom—one successful, one not—are good examples, as are the peace pipe, the music and drums, and the war whoop cry. When Tom dresses in the coonskin cap and grabs a gun, the cowboys and Native Americans motif is complete, if historically inaccurate.[24] As in numerous cowboy and Native American movies, the battle in "Two Little Indians" featured savage braves, mice that seemingly want to harm Tom only because he is a cat, and the cowboy figure of Tom. As in many episodes of *Tom and Jerry*, Tom loses, an important difference between many cowboy and Native American films in which the Native Americans usually lose.

Native Americans make only a handful of appearances in other episodes of *Tom and Jerry*. In many of these shorts, their appearance is akin to the brief appearances of Tom or Jerry in blackface after an explosion. In the 1945 episode "The Mouse Comes to Dinner" (which also features Mammy Two Shoes dressed as a maid), Jerry attempts to steal food from a dinner table. He grabs some onion tops to hide behind and runs inside a napkin, which is folded to look like a teepee. When Jerry pokes his head out of the napkin to see if the coast is clear, the onion tops are now on his head in an approximation of a Native American feather headdress. In another instance of redface, it is Tom who appears like a Native American. "Flirty Bird" from 1945 features Tom matching wits with a large red bird. In one scene, this bird throws Tom, who flies through a sheet on a clothesline and onto a bucket next to a feather duster. The feather duster, clothespins from the clothesline, and sheet are rearranged on Tom, who now looks like a cigar-store Indian with a feather headdress, Indian blanket, with the clothespins held like cigars. Like many of the blackface episodes, the ridiculing of Native Americans follows a standard pattern that was by the 1940s centuries old.

Latinos appear with less frequency in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, but one that does make reference to Latinos is the 1957 short "Mucho Mouse." While this episode is ostensibly located in Spain, the racial stereotypes and accents sound Mexican. The episode begins with an orange cat strumming a guitar as Jerry, a.k.a. "El Magnífico," openly steals cheese. The lady of the house, known as "Joan," demands that the cat chase the mouse. He is consistently foiled by El Magnífico. The orange cat explains, "It is no use," to which Joan responds, "It is no use? Porque usted lazy [because you are lazy]. Of all the

lazy cats I have ever seen, you are the most lazy, lazy, lazy!" "Yo lazy!" The cat responds, "Señorita you have hurt me here [he points to his heart] … nadie, absolutely no one can catch El Magnífico." Joan, therefore, calls in reinforcements: Tom. Upon his arrival, Tom battles El Magnífico for some time—at one point Jerry becomes a bull fighter and Tom a bull—until Tom finally capitulates. Joan returns home to find Tom and the orange cat both strumming on guitars. She asks, "Qué pasa aquí what's going on here," to which the orange cat responds, "Señorita, I told you, no one, but no one can catch El Magnífico." He looks toward Tom and asks, "No es verdad amigo [isn't that right friend]?" Tom replies, "Sí, es verdad amigo," and the two go on playing their guitars while Jerry steals several pieces of fruit.

A similar caricaturing of Latinos appears in other *Tom and Jerry* episodes. In "Baby Puss" (1943), a little girl, "Nancy," forces Tom to act like a baby. Several of Tom's alley cat friends, Butch/Dreamboy, Topsy, and Meathead, witness his baby-like behavior and begin to make fun of Tom. They do so by dancing and playing makeshift musical instruments, while Topsy dons a red skirt, bright red lipstick, purplish eye shadow, and a large fruit hat and does a rendition of Carmen Miranda singing "Mamãe eu quero" (mama I want). The song itself is sung in a silly, mocking manner, but it is Topsy's appropriation of Miranda that strikes a racist chord. This Latinoface depiction appropriates the most stereotypical aspects of a prominent Latina.

The bigotry in "Mucho Mouse" and "Baby Puss" may have escaped critical viewers since one episode was centered in Spain and the other was a rather brief appearance of Latinoface, but all of the stereotypes evident in the cartoon were clearly those applied for generations to Mexican-origin people and other Latinos. The two most important stereotypes in "Mucho Mouse" were the broken, Spanglish dialog of the orange cat and Joan and the repeated references/allusions to laziness. As numerous Latino scholars have shown, one of the most incomprehensible stereotypes directed at Latinos in general, and Mexican Americans specifically, was laziness.[25] Here the orange cat has clearly given up trying to catch El Magnífico, so Joan calls him lazy not once but several times. So pervasive is this laziness that Tom is ultimately corrupted by it after failing to catch Jerry/El Magnífico. The additional elements of the bull fight and the Latin music that plays throughout (usually the famous piece España Cañi by Pascual Marquina Narro) all add to the stereotypical feel of the episode. In "Baby Puss" we have the appearance of brownface minstrelsy. Much like the other blackface depictions in *Tom and Jerry*, Topsy adopts the most over-the-top,

exaggerated features of Carmen Miranda (and other famous Latinas) in order to make their appearance comical.

Stereotypical depictions of Asian Americans appear even less frequently than those of Latinos in *Tom and Jerry*. Yellowface representations almost always showcased the conical Asian hat, a Fu Manchu mustache, and occasionally "slanted" epicanthic fold eyes. In one of the original episodes, "Puss n' Toots" (1942), Tom and Jerry fight on a large automatic record player. Jerry is able to trap Tom on the turntable and then change records. A large swing arm brings a record crashing upon Tom's head, at which point a gong sounds. The scene cuts to Tom, now spinning on the turntable, Buddha-like, with the record as his Asian hat, a Fu Manchu mustache, and "slanted" eyes. The scene is completed with "Oriental"-sounding music and Jerry dancing about before bowing to the audience. In comparison, "Little Runaway" (1952) features an escaped seal who tosses Tom into a bird feeder, which crashes down upon him. The bowl of the bird feeder lands on Tom's head, once again with a gong, as Asian-sounding music plays. Tom is left with the bowl on his head, which approximate the Asian conical hat, his yellowface appearance completed by a Fu Manchu mustache and epicanthic fold eyes.

No other cartoon of the golden age quite matched the level of importance, popularity, and longevity as *Tom and Jerry*. The series both replicated the most common racist stereotypes of previous media forms, while also educating generations of children on the racial etiquette of mid-twentieth-century racism. However, while racist depictions featured heavily in the series, nothing in *Tom and Jerry* came close to touching the racism that was so evident in the banned cartoons of the era.

The Censored Eleven and Other Banned Cartoons

At about the same time that *Tom and Jerry* became popular, *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes*, both originally produced by Warner Brothers and later by Associated Artists Productions (AAP), released cartoons that contained explicitly racist content.[26] Many of these shorts were later banned by United Artists (the parent company that acquired *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes*); they have come to be known as the Censored Eleven.[27]

One of the earliest of the Censored Eleven was "Hittin' the Trail for Hallelujah Land" (1931). This short featured a Mickey Mouse knockoff named "Piggy," who, like the original "Steamboat Willie," piloted a paddlewheel steamboat. The short begins with a group of blackface individuals singing about "Hittin' the Trail for Hallelujah Land." This is a clear riff on popular

black jazz at the time. The short then cuts to a wagon driven by an older African American gentleman. His passenger is Fluffy, Piggy's girlfriend. At one point, the paddlewheel's whistle blows, and Fluffy states, "Oh there's the boat, hurry Uncle Tom." Uncle Tom's white beard, large lips, and speech that is almost indecipherable represent a racialized character so often seen in other blackface depictions. To reinforce Uncle Tom's subordinate status, he is portrayed as subservient to Fluffy, obeying her with a kindness and grace befitting his name. The short proceeds with Uncle Tom successfully delivering Fluffy to Piggy's boat. But then Uncle Tom runs into trouble when he encounters a group of clearly "Negro" skeletons at a cemetery. They too sing that they will help Uncle Tom get to "Hallelujah Land." He escapes and ends up nearly drowning in a river, his life saved by Piggy.[28]

As in several of the cartoons discussed earlier, the stereotypical depictions of African Americans in "Hittin' the Trail for Hallelujah Land" followed a familiar racialized format. The jazz band and its music, as well as Uncle Tom and the skeletons, all represent black people as easy going, foolhardy, big lipped, and slow speaking. Tom's reaction to the skeletons implies the superstitious nature of black people. He also cannot swim. The racism is thus explicit.

Friz Freleng directed two of the better-known Censored Eleven cartoons. Freleng actually developed several of the most famous prejudicial cartoon characters, especially Speedy Gonzales, discussed later. In 1936 he directed the second of the Censored Eleven, a racist cartoon titled "Sunday Go to Meetin' Time." In this short, church bells sound as a very large, white-lipped, dark-skinned minister welcomes congregants to church with what sounds like an old-style spiritual. Several black people venture into the church, including a large woman who resembles a Mammy-type character. The scene's racialized context is enhanced by an elderly black man with large lips and bulging eyes as he sits in a rocking chair ringing the church bells. The focus of the scene then shifts to a black couple on their way to the church. They modify the preacher's song with a more upbeat, jazzy tune. They are also dressed in stereotypical fashion, she in a bright green dress and he in a zoot suit; both have the same dark skin, bulging lips, and bright eyes; and they saunter in a kind of walking dance.

"Sunday Go to Meetin' Time" also represented other members of the community readying themselves for church. In one scene, a larger, Mammy-like black woman inspects her pickaninny children. She applies shoe polish to their bald heads so that a man, presumably her husband, can polish them to a shine as though performing a shoeshine. All of these

figures once again have dark skin, overly large white lips, and exaggerated facial features. Another large black woman with even larger lips and wearing a green dress and a hat with a large feather emerges from her home calling to a "Nicodemus." She finds him shooting dice and commands that he accompany her to church, calls him "lazy" and "shiftless," and drags him by the ear when he does not want to go. "Dat church be dere next week," he says, while Gospel-sounding music plays. He is able to sneak out of church, but is knocked unconscious chasing a chicken. He ends up in the Hades Court of Justice, where a Sambo-looking judge finds Nicodemus guilty of sin and sends him to hell. A group of big-lipped demons then escort him to the devil. "Oh you got to give the devil his due," the devil sings, and the demons begin poking Nicodemus with pitchforks as his punishment. He awakes and rushes to church having learned his lesson.

"Sunday Go to Meetin' Time" represented African American Christianity in bufoonish terms, Nicodemus serving to highlight the questionable nature of black religiosity as white Americans perceived it. Almost every single character in the short appears as a blackface pickaninny, Sambo, or Mammy. As in other shorts, they all wear brightly colored, somewhat outlandish clothing that clearly appears to be beyond the class position of the individuals in the cartoon and indicates to viewers how black people try too hard to ape the styles of wealthy white people. In this short, the characters all have dark skin with light brown palms, which makes their hands appear more paw or animal-like than human. The protagonist is named "Nicodemus," perhaps a name as stereotypical in its origins as "Uncle Tom" or "Sambo." He, like "Tex's Coon" (discussed later), is a slow-witted, lower-class "Negro" who would rather toss dice than go to church.

Friz Freleng directed four of the Censored Eleven, giving him the record of having directed the most of these banned films. His other works followed many of the same racist patterns established in "Sunday Go to Meetin' Time." For example, "Clean Pastures" (1937) mocks Depression-era Harlem. In a similarly mocking tone, "Jungle Jitters" (1938) depicts the fate of a traveling salesman who encounters a group of "African" tribespeople. And lastly, Freleng directed the 1944 short "Goldilocks and the Jivin' Bears," which featured a group of musical, blackface bears who cannot stop playing their instruments and are always on the lookout for a party. This short combined the nursery rhymes associated with the Goldilocks story, Little Red Riding Hood, and Freleng's racist depiction of African American jazz culture. Of Freleng's banned shorts, "Clean Pastures" merits further attention.

"Clean Pastures" mimics 1930s' Harlem, a moment when the city "was en vogue" and jazz music and speakeasies brought the city to life at night. For Freleng, this festive atmosphere was something to be parodied. The film opens with a group of scantily clad black women dancing in a chorus line. They all have big lips coated with dark red lipstick. The jazz playing in the background moves to a fast tempo, although in later scenes it will transition to Gospel music. There are also shots of black hands rolling dice and shaking a martini; all of these hands are dark but for their palms, which are light, again approximating the paws of animals and not the hands of human beings. The opening scenes also depict a couple dancing; both speak outlandishly; their dancing is exaggerated and "exotic"; and they both have big lips and broad and toothy grins and wear brightly colored clothes—she in a red dress, he in a purplish zoot suit with a pink hat. These opening scenes set the stage for the latter parts of the short, which like "Sunday Go to Meetin' Time" focuses on a kind of parodied Christian morality.

The film pans into outer space and gives the audience a glimpse of heaven, which also gets lampooned. Above the pearly gates a sign reads "Pair-o-Dice." An older, large, Uncle Tom–like black angel, with Freleng's now well-established Negro accoutrements—dark skin, overly large lips, and lightly brown paw-like palms—reads a newspaper that indicates that the stock of heaven has been losing ground to "Hades, Inc." This Uncle Tom or black Saint Peter telephones another taller angel, who seems to be practicing playing the trumpet. This individual also has very large lips and a sloping forehead, and he seems incapable of closing his mouth, giving him a lethargic appearance that is clearly designed to show that he is unintelligent. He is the cartoon version of Stepin Fetchit, the pseudonym of African American actor Lincoln Perry, who, as we noted in Chapter 3, often played roles as a slow-witted, lazy, barely intelligible black man. This cartoon Stepin Fetchit finally answers the phone with a slow, southern drawl; "Yaaaasssuuuuh, Haaarwuhm? Uh right now? Yaaaasssuuuuh, okey dokey bawss." He then returns to practicing the trumpet as the phone rings again, this time more insistently. The tall angel jumps to his feet and begins running, only to slow down after just a few moments.

This tall, Stepin Fetchit angel, who never seems capable of closing his mouth, evidently plans to save the fate of Pair-o-Dice by becoming a street-corner preacher. A host of stereotypical blackface individuals walk by, ignoring the angel as he buffoonishly tries to implore them to listen. He is unable to read his own sign, which instructs people to help Pair-o-Dice (and advertises that one of heaven's benefits is watermelon). Several of the

passersby are obvious parodies of real-life performers. One individual tap dances by the angel, a clear mockery of Bill Robinson's "Bojangles" character. Another, shorter blackface individual riffs on Al Jolson's blackface from *The Jazz Singer*. The tall angel is incapable of preventing the Jolson character, and presumably all the others, from entering bars or dance houses. Back in heaven, a group of four other angels, all blackface approximations of other prominent black entertainers—Cab Calloway, Jim Lunceford, Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller—appeal to the blackface Saint Peter to allow them to help save Harlem. He consents, and the four put on a jazz show that wows audiences. Harlem, en masse, follows this jazz group to Pair-o-Dice. Saint Peter hangs a "no vacancies" sign, but there is a knock at the door. It's none other than a blackface devil, who asks to come in. Evidently Hade's Inc. had been put out of business by Pair-o-Dice.

As in Freleng's other racist shorts, "Clean Pastures" reduces all black people to big-lipped, party-loving, slow-witted Sambos, Uncle Toms, and Mammies. The Stepin Fetchit–like tall angel is the most clearly offensive, confirming for the audiences the supposed intellectual, moral, and physical inferiority of all African Americans. But this cartoon also does something different: it lampoons real-life individuals. Most other cartoons of this era that ridiculed black people did not take as their subjects actual African Americans. "Clean Pastures" differs in that it specifically references prominent stars such as Cab Calloway or Bill Robinson, in many ways confirming not only the potential threat of black Americans and their forms of entertainment but also the real-life threat posed by actual black people.

Warner Brothers and *Merrie Melodies* continued its cartoon racism with the 1941 short "All This and Rabbit Stew," featuring Bugs Bunny and a slow-witted pickaninny. The unnamed African American child, a black approximation of Elmer Fudd, has dark black skin but overly large tan-colored lips. He has an oblong head complete with a very large forehead. He wears overalls with a red bandana tied around his neck and oversized, almost clown-like shoes that he always seems on the verge of tripping over. He is oafish and clumsy, drags his gun by the barrel, walks very slowly, and speaks with a drawl. He is, in short, a young pickaninny Sambo. When the short begins, for instance, he is singing a song lazily, "I'se gonna ca-ha-ha-hach me a ra-ha-ha-habit, mmm, hmmm, ma-hahah-hmm, gonna ca-ha-ha-hach me a ra-ha-ha-habit, mmm, hmmm, ma-hahah-hmm." When he comes across Bugs's hole he stops and says, "Well, shut my mouf, rabbit twacks." Throughout most of the episode he chases Bugs with the hope of securing his dinner. When he finally seems to have cornered Bugs, the

rabbit produces a pair of dice, which mesmerize the hunter. He cannot resist a game of dice. Hidden behind a bush, they play several games; Bugs wins, and he emerges from the bush wearing the hunter's clothes and dragging his gun. The hunter is left naked, covered only by a grape leaf, and he remarks to the audience, "Wayell, call me Adam." As the cartoon closes Bugs even takes the grape leaf.

The hunter is identified as "Tex's Coon" only after the short ends. The reference here is to Tex Avery, who produced many of the racist pieces of animation discussed earlier. Like other cartoons during this period, this episode appealed to popularly held racial prejudices. First, notice the possession of Avery over the character; it is Tex's Coon, not a real character in his own right. Of course, "coon" is also a racist epithet for black people. The lazy, slow-witted aspects of the hunter ridicule black people as stereotypically indolent and unintelligent, evidenced by the way the hunter cannot come close to cornering Bugs. His slang and drawl also convey his level of intelligence. He is also prone to criminality and cannot prevent himself from gambling, the game of dice used as a cultural shorthand to reference the excessive amounts of gambling that whites perceived African Americans partaking in during the Jim Crow era.

The most notorious of the Censored Eleven shorts was "Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs" (1943), which parodied Disney's very popular *Snow White* feature film. The short begins with a large black woman rocking a child before bedtime. She asks the child, in a clearly outlandish black female voice, "Oh honey child, what story would you like to have Mammy tell you tonight?" The child asks to hear about So White and de Sebben Dwarfs. The short then cuts to the Evil or Wicked Queen's castle. The Evil Queen, it turns out, is a dark black, big-lipped, big-breasted woman, who asks the magic mirror to send her a prince. Garish-sounding jazz music plays while a car drives up to the castle carrying "Prince Chawmin." He is another large-lipped individual, who speaks in rhymes and wears a bright white zoot suit. The short cuts again to a younger black woman, who wears a very short skirt and is bent over a washtub with her backside pointed at the audience. She turns and says, "My hair is coal black but my name is So White." She also asks for a prince, and so Prince Chawmin arrives and they begin to dance. Enraged, the Evil Queen calls Murder Inc. to kill So White—their motto is that they'll kill anyone for $1, midgets for half price, and "Japs" for free. Fortunately, the Murder Inc. crew, another group of blackface individuals, release So White. They have lipstick kiss marks on their rather large lips, hinting that So White performed some type of sexual act to earn her release.

So White ventures into a dark forest, where she is befriended by "de Sebben Dwarfs," a group of military-like soldiers (who are all blackface little people). They make her their camp cook. Meanwhile, the Queen plans to poison So White with an apple, one that even contains a blackface apple worm and his family. When the barely disguised Queen gives the apple to So White, she eats it whole and faints. Prince Chawmin attempts to revive her with a kiss but fails. Instead, it is the smallest dwarf who kisses and saves her. Prince Chawmin asks him, "Man, what you got that makes So White think you so hot?" The diminutive dwarf responds, "Well dat is a military secret." The short closes with the Mammy figure still rocking the child.[29]

The racism in "Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs" is unparalleled in cartoon history. This short throws virtually every black stereotype into the mix, beginning with the Mammy character, who, while in shadow, is clearly a large black woman with a distinct "Negroid" voice. The child is a big-cheeked pickaninny with a bow in her hair. The Queen is a very large black woman, but asexual, with a deep, masculine voice, small eyes, and large lips accentuated by bright red lipstick that cannot cover all of her lips. She is dressed in lime green dress with red-and-white-striped hose. The Prince is a similarly caricatured black man: he has straightened hair, wears a white zoot suit and a monocle, and has gold teeth (his two front teeth are dominoes). So White is portrayed as a hypersexual, big-bottomed younger black woman, with perky bosoms and revealing clothing. She is less representative of blackface characters and instead represents the black Jezebel or whore, voluptuous, lascivious, and sexually available. She is the object of every character's sexual desire, except the Queen, and her sex appeal reminds the audience of the purported exoticness of some black women. Her escape from Murder Inc., also represented by four blackface darky characters, is predicated on So White having performed sexual acts to gain her freedom. The Sebben Dwarfs are also blackface representations. As in the Snow White story, the titular character can be revived only by a kiss—in Disney's version "true love's kiss." In this version, the kiss is a much more passionate and sexual embrace. Chawmin fails at this, but the smallest dwarf succeeds, his kiss being so powerful it lifts So White off the ground and she immediately falls in love with him. Thus, the ultimate seductive power—and what inspired the racial anxieties of millions of white men—of the black man, and black woman, is confirmed in this brief cartoon.

The other Censored Eleven cartoons all follow the patterns established in the episodes mentioned earlier. Of the other 11, Avery's "Uncle Tom's Bungalow" (1937) and Freleng's "Goldilocks and the Jivin' Bears" (1944)

most closely resemble the blackface darky humor of the likes of "Clean Pastures" and "Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs." Other shorts, such as the 1944 short "Angel Puss," directed by Chuck Jones, later of *Tom and Jerry* fame, offer up a big-lipped black pickaninny named "Sambo." The Censored Eleven were banned and removed from circulation in the 1960s because they were deemed by censors to be far too racist for popular consumption. While the directors of these cartoons went on to portray different forms of racism in cartoons, the banning of these shorts indicated that cultural attitudes about race and racism had shifted considerably.

Reflective of these changing times, a number of animation studios and their distributors effectively banned offensive cartoons. These shorts were never officially restricted; rather, they were unofficially banned by television networks who refused to show them. Like "All This and Rabbit Stew," numerous other *Looney Tunes* shorts featured stereotypical depictions of a variety of ethnic groups. *Looney Tunes* directors such as Bob Clampett, Friz Freleng, and Tex Avery directed many of the racist Censored Eleven, so it is perhaps unsurprising that audiences might encounter ethnic bigotry in other *Looney Tunes* shorts. Take, for instance, "Tokio Jokio" (1943) and "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips" (1944) both of which contain numerous World War II–era anti-Japanese messages.[30] "Tokio Jokio" opens with stereotypical-sounding Japanese music and a rooster about to crow. The rooster removes its skin and is instead a buzzard with Japanese yellowface features: big teeth, "slanted" eyes, and says, "uh, carkle doordle doo, preeze." The film constituted a classic piece of anti-Japanese propaganda. It features a series of vignettes mocking the Japanese; their advanced air raid siren, which is really one yellowface man poking another yellowface man in the backside with a pin; a Japanese "aircraft spotter" who is big toothed and "slanty" eyed and wearing glasses; and in "Kitchen Hints" a short, big-lipped, yellowface "Prof. Tojo," explaining how to make a Japanese club sandwich by stacking bread and meat ration cards. Throughout the short, Japanese individuals appear in yellowface and when they speak they always substitute an "R" for an "L." For example, a sportscaster named Red Toga-San offers "high-rights in the world of sports." In the next scene we see Yamamoto in "head-rine personalities." All of the characters are depicted as buffoonish, incompetent, and primitive.

In "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips," Bugs floats in a box in the Pacific Ocean. He happens upon what appears to be a deserted island, but soon the island is under attack. Bugs hides in a haystack that a Japanese soldier already occupies. He has typical yellowface features: he is short, has buck teeth and

epicanthic fold eyes, and wears glasses. He speaks in a Japanese-sounding gibberish. Bugs also encounters a Japanese sumo wrestler, whom he wrestles and ultimately defeats by dressing as a geisha. Bugs then sees an invasion force and remarks: "Japs, hundreds of em." He attempts to stop these soldiers by handing them ice cream–covered grenades. The soldiers, again all yellowface caricatures of the Japanese, rush in for their ice cream. Bugs readily passes out these treats, calling many of the soldiers by ethnic slurs, "here you are, here's yours bow legs. Here, one for you, monkey face. Don't shove.… Here you are, slant eyes." The bombs explode, defeating the enemy.

The production of anti-Japanese cartoons and films was generally consistent with American wartime propaganda throughout this period. The Japanese were frequently portrayed negatively as a primitive, incompetent, and substandard enemy. The depictions were usually built on popular yellowface portrayals that mocked the appearance of the Japanese. In both "Tokio Jokio" and "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips," however, we have added elements, such as the mocking of language, either through Japanese-sounding gibberish or through the poor English language skills of the soldiers, as well as the demeaning name calling done by Bugs Bunny himself. In the end, even a rascally rabbit can defeat the Japanese.

Many of the *Looney Tunes/Merrie Melodies* directors independently produced their own racist characters and cartoon shorts. These include Clampett's "Porky Pig" and Freleng's "Speedy Gonzales." For example, in "Scalp Trouble" (1939) the object of Clampett's ire is Native Americans. Daffy Duck and Porky Pig are soldiers at a western fort. A group of stereotypical redface Native Americans are called by a large siren (that has a hand so that it can provide the hand-to-mouth war whoop Indian cry) to battle. "Injuns, the Indians are a, a, a … mohican, Redskins!" Porky shouts, trying to get the attention of other soldiers. One soldier picks off Native Americans on horseback with ease. To gain an upper hand, one Native soldier pulls out a bottle of "Four Noses Fire Water," drinks it, and then uses what appears to be his own fiery breath to burn a hole in the walls of the fort. Another soldier at the fort fires his gun while singing "Ten Little Indians" as he marks off his kills on a chalkboard. Similar stereotypes pervade "Pilgrim Porky" (1940), which features the pig on the Mayflower. He lands to find a redface version of Sitting Bull waiting for his arrival. Similarly, in "Injun Trouble" (1938), later remade in color as "Wagon Heels" (1945), Porky leads a wagon train into "Injun Joe's Territory." The character "Injun Joe" is a brawny, fierce warrior with a large red nose and eyes covered by his braided hair. He is a riff on the classic "fierce warrior" Indian motif. He finally catches Porky

and is about to scalp him when another character, "Sloppy Moe," who has happened by at several moments during the short, appears again singing "I know something I won't tell" to the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down." The Native American grabs Sloppy Moe and asks, "What you know, huh?" Moe replies, "Injun Joe is ticklish," and he tickles Injun Joe, who falls off a cliff. When he hits the ground, the earth is sucked down into the hole he creates, changing the map of the land. Before, the United States was just a sliver on the map, but with the vortex created by Injun Joe's fall, the United States is pulled across the continent.

Like Clampett, Freleng produced his own anti-Indian cartoons. In "Tom Tom Tomcat," for example, released in 1939, Tweety and Granny ride in a wagon across a desert. A Native American, really Sylvester the Cat with a feathered headband, notices the wagon and sends up smoke signals. The signals are seen by a group of Sylvester-looking Native Americans, who whoop and holler while Indian drums are played. They attack, and Granny shouts, "Heavens to Betsy, Injuns!" She and Tweety escape into an abandoned fort, and Tweety begins shooting at the Sylvester-Indians, all the while singing "Ten Little Indians," much the same as in "Scalp Trouble." Another Sylvester-Indian almost captures Tweety, who shouts "Granny, help! A Mohican got me!" Granny rescues Tweety and then they escape the fort and the Sylvester-Indians by disguising themselves as Native Americans.

The depictions of Native Americans conformed to long-established patterns. The fierce warrior and the clueless, bumbling Indian were the two most obvious archetypes. In addition, the name calling done by prominent characters such as Porky and Granny—"Injun," "Mohicans," "Redskins"—all represented common epithets for native peoples. The drinking, gullibility, and the marking off of Native American dead, as if their lives even in cartoon form were meaningless, all signaled the racist perceptions that many white Americans had of Native Americans and that these shorts exploited.

A number of other companies also attempted to censor some of their most racist cartoons. The original *Popeye* shorts, for example, frequently contained material considered offensive in the decades after World War II. *Popeye*, originally developed by Elzie Segar as a newspaper comic strip, became a cartoon character under Max Fleischer's oversight. The racism that ran through the very first *Popeye* cartoon, which was part of a *Betty Boop* short titled simply "Popeye the Sailor" (1933), involved Popeye defending Olive Oyl from Bluto, an unnaturally large character who was also known as "Brutus." In an unrelated scene, Bluto and Popeye test each other's strength in a "ball toss" game. The target of the game is a bobbing

head, which happened to be the caricatured head of a black person. The head has large bright lips, dark skin, large white eyes, and bushy hair. He is hit by balls several times but seems to experience no pain. In the next scene, a monkey-like figure, who also approximates some African features, announces a hula dancer named Betty Boop. Betty seems to be somewhat ethnicized herself, perhaps to approximate a Polynesian woman. Her skin is dark brown and she is there to do a fairly risqué hula performance.

Other *Popeye* shorts featured similar racial depictions. In "My Artistical Temperature" (1937) Popeye and Bluto are in an art studio and each turns the other's work of art into a blackface representation. Bluto splashes black paint on Popeye's statue; for Bluto's painting, a landscape with a bright sun, Popeye squirts black paint onto the sun. The blackface sun character comes to life and says "Mammy" before setting. In addition to these stereotypical portrayals, Popeye battles the Japanese. Because he depicts a sailor, many of these shorts involved the navy. In the first of these anti-Japanese episodes, "The Mighty Navy" (1941), Popeye almost singlehandedly defeats the Japanese Navy.[31] No actual Japanese sailors are depicted; instead, the animators made the ships appear Japanese-like and stereotypical-sounding music plays in the background.

The most famous wartime Popeye cartoon was "You're a Sap, Mr. Jap" (1942). In this short, Popeye discovers a Japanese ship with several highly caricatured yellowface sailors on board. The two main characters, who appear to be identical, have huge buck teeth, wear glasses, have "slanted" eyes, wear long robes and wooden geta, and speak in a Japanese-sounding gibberish. Popeye defeats them, but soon their small ship rises from the sea and is in fact a very large ship. Popeye then takes on and defeats the sailors on this larger ship, all of whom are yellowface but unlike the original two sailors they are diminutive. The Japanese commander, who has "lost face," commits suicide by drinking gasoline and swallowing firecrackers. As his boat sinks, the sound of a toilet flushing marks the ship's demise as the song "You're a sap, sap, sap Mr. Jap" is sung in the background.

Popeye's antics against the Japanese, and the Germans as well, appear in four other wartime cartoons. These shorts, "Scrap the Japs" (1942) and "Spinach fer Britain," "Seein' Red, White, 'n' Blue," and "A Jolly Good Furlough" (all from 1943), contained the same stock plotlines and racist stereotypes seen in other World War II propaganda cartoons. These include yellowface Japanese soldiers or sailors who are almost always buffoonish and incompetent and who speak broken English or a Japanese-like gibberish. These types of shorts differ slightly from blackface or redface cartoons

in that they came out of war era expediencies designed to demonize the enemy. However, the racist aspects of these cartoons do not differ markedly from others, including other forms of yellowface, and their goal, much like other racial depictions, was either to instruct audiences as to how they should regard nonwhite people or to reinforce preexisting racial prejudices.

Popeye cartoons of the 1940s also displayed grotesque depictions of African Americans. In "Wotta Knight" (1947), produced in color, Popeye and Bluto joust as a royal official keeps score. He also marks time in the joust by ringing a bell held by a pickaninny-type figure. In another scene, Bluto describes himself as the "Black Knight" shortly before getting sprayed with soot from a chimney, which renders him in blackface. Two other episodes utilize indigenous, African-looking blackface individuals reminiscent of those in "His Mouse Friday" and other shorts. In these episodes, "Pop-Pie a la Mode" (1945) and "Island Fling" (1946), the natives all speak like American blacks, rendering them both island cannibals and recognizable blackface Stepin Fetchits. In the first, Popeye is stranded on a raft as a big-lipped blackface individual paddles quickly by with an advertisement noting that one could find assistance at Joe's Inn. Popeye hightails it to Joe's, where a very large blackface individual, presumably "Joe," with big lips, a vest with no shirt, and a small black top hat with a bone through it, spies on Popeye and states in a deep, raspy voice, "Ah, dere's a man of mah tastes." Joe is next seen with a book on "how to serve your fellow man" by one "Ima Cannibal." Then a group of cannibals, playing tom-tom drums, plan to eat Popeye. He finally gets his spinach, defeats the natives, and assumes Joe's position as leader.

In "Island Fling," the animators draw on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) for inspiration to render a blackface character, "Friday," who has a bone tied in his hair, sings about serving "Robinson Crusoe" (i.e., Bluto).[32] It turns out Friday and Bluto have been trapped on a deserted island. Friday spots a raft and calls Bluto, yelling, "Hey baws, hey baws," and noting the raft, which contains Popeye and Olive Oyl. Bluto sets out to woo Olive. He and Friday get into a makeshift car; Friday wears a hat indicating he is the chauffeur. Bluto, as in just about every *Popeye* short, attempts to acquire Olive, but fails. In the end, Popeye and Olive escape on a raft. Friday has stowed away, along with a whole family of blackface, native, pickaninnies identified as "Saturday, Sunday, and Monday."

Popeye lampooned numerous other ethnic communities. Like many of the shorts from this period, many producers, distributors, and television networks stopped showing them in the 1960s. Their racist impact, however,

remained. The *Popeye* series borrowed heavily from other cartoons, especially in its depictions of black people and, later, Asians. The blackface pickaninnies, often with bones tied in their hair and wearing only loin cloths, represented a timeworn portrayal of nonwhite people as savage and uncivilized. They are either cannibals or servants, most often with dark skin and big, oversized lips. The yellowface also mocked the physical appearance as well as the intelligence and fighting acumen of Japanese people. In all these cases, racial stereotypes connected the world of animation to the very real world of racial persecution and discrimination in American society.

As with many of the *Popeye* shorts, the original *Speedy Gonzales* episodes have also been banned. Robert McKimson created the Speedy Gonzales character in the early 1950s. Later, none other than Friz Freleng redesigned Speedy as the cartoon mouse most people became familiar with. The *Speedy Gonzales* series serves as one of the only cartoon series to feature a title character who caricatured an entire ethno-national community. The series, and Speedy himself, mocked the Mexican/Mexican American community in innumerable ways, both small and large, throughout the series.

Speedy Gonzales originally appeared in a *Merrie Melodies* short entitled "Cat-Tails for Two." The purpose of this short is slightly unclear: director McKimson could have developed the short to introduce two new cat characters, Benny and George, derivative of *Of Mice and Men*'s Lennie and George, or McKimson was purposefully developing a new mouse character, Speedy Gonzales, who only appears a third of the way into "Cat-Tails for Two." Whatever McKimson's motivation, there are Mexican stereotypes that pervade this short and Speedy was the character that audiences were drawn to. The cartoon begins with Benny and George trying to find food. George notices a ship that should be full of mice, because it is a Mexican ship. So George asks, "You like Mexican food?" Benny replies, "Oh yes I do George, it gives me the heartburn and I love it!" So, the first cultural stereotyping in the series relies on an old joke about Mexican food being spicy and causing heartburn. The name of the ship itself ridicules Mexican history: *S.S. Pancho Cucaracha*. In the United States, Mexicans were often demeaned as cockroaches. The famous ditty "La Cucaracha" also came from the Mexican Revolution and may well have referred to Pancho Villa's carriage, which frequently broke down.[33] Hence, the linkage of Pancho Villa and Cucaracha in the ship's title implied a dirty, insect-filled vessel that perhaps was often broken.

George and Benny enter the ship to trap some mice. They bait a large trap before a streak of dust appears, yelling "arriba arriba, yeehaw, andele andele,

hola hola andele arriba yeehaw arriba arriba andele andele." In his usage, this phrase probably best translates as Speedy saying, "Come on come on, yeehaw, hurry hurry." Speedy's Spanish is a patois of English and Spanish, and the Spanish part, at least the "arriba" line, is essentially meaningless in Mexican Spanish. His accent is an over-the-top, exaggerated Mexican accent. When he stops long enough for us to get a good look at Speedy, the caricature of Mexicans/Latinos is complete. He appears in a long red shirt, has a greasy-looking head of black hair, and has overly large teeth, one of which is gold. He leaves behind a card that notes he is "Speedy Gonzales, fastest mouse in all Mexico." The remainder of the episode features Speedy outwitting the two cats until they finally give up.

Much of the characteristics of the original Speedy remained in the revised Freleng version of the character, and much of the stereotyping prominent in the series originated with McKimson's Speedy. This included a lampooning of Mexican cultural and historical traditions, as well as the overly exaggerated Mexican accent, his gold buck teeth, and use of Spanglish. Speedy, of course, was not a totally negative representation of Latinos as he is clever and outwits the two cats. Freleng's version changed the character in appearance. Speedy loses his gold buck teeth and red shirt but retains his exaggerated accent and Spanglish. Speedy now wears a white pantsuit combination that seems to reflect a popular style of dress in Vera Cruz. He also wears a bright yellow sombrero and has a red sash around his waist, although he retains his greasy locks. It took three years for Speedy to appear in another cartoon, this one appropriately titled "Speedy Gonzales" (1955).

"Speedy Gonzales" opens with a popular stereotype while the title and credits roll (before the cartoon actually starts). The title scene introduces "Speedy Gonzales" as a sombrero-wearing mouse wrapped in a bright serape and napping under a cactus. The short begins with a group of mice, who seem to speak a Spanish-sounding mix of Portuguese, Spanish, and English. They stand at a fence waiting for an opportunity to steal cheese from a cheese factory guarded by Sylvester the Cat. They always fail, so they call on Speedy to secure the cheese. Speedy is at that moment a kind of circus performer, dodging bullets in a game in which paying customers can attempt to "hit Speedy, win beeg prize." Of course they are never able to hit him. Speedy arrives to help the mice. Shouting his trademark "arriba, andele" line, Speedy races past Sylvester and gets the cheese. He tells the assembled mice, "Dere is plentee more where dis cheese it come from." Speedy then outwits the cat and steals much more cheese.

This type of stereotyping continues in other *Speedy Gonzales* cartoons. The next short, "Tabasco Road" (1957), opens with Speedy performing the Mexican hat dance at a bar. Most of his friends, especially Pablo and Fernando, are drunk, a classic depiction of the borracho in mouse form. After the bar closes, Speedy goes to find his friends, only to be told by another mouse that the two were "muy plenty steenko borracho." Pablo and Fernando encounter a large cat and challenge him to fight. After many back-and-forth scenes of Speedy rescuing his friends from the cat, the cat flees town, passing a "ceety leemits" sign. In "Mexicali Shmoes" (1959) the scenario is altered slightly, for in this short the cats are the drunk, sombrero-wearing Mexicans. In numerous episodes, Speedy is the hero of his mouse friends. In "Gonzales Tamales" (1957), however, Speedy has become a menace to his friends. They hire Sylvester, "the gringo pussy cat," to chase Speedy out of town. Why? According to mouse Pedro, "All de preety girls in love wid Speedy Gonzales, what's left are Chihuahuas." Sylvester, of course, fails, leaving the male mice with nothing more to do than continue lounging with their sombreros pulled down over their faces. "Tortilla Flaps" (1958) continues with this type of racism and chauvinism. A group of mice stand around discussing Speedy. One notes, "You know dis Speedy Gonzales?" to which another mouse responds, "Sí, he go stedy weeth ma seester." Another mouse chimes in, "Speedy Gonzales go stedy with everybody seester."

Speedy Gonzales is clearly replete with ethnic stereotypes. For his part, Speedy is resourceful, cunning, and always able to outwit his opponents. His speaking pattern, dress, and the scenarios he is placed in mark him as the caricature of Mexicans/Mexican Americans/Latinos that he is. But he at least has some redeeming qualities. Many of his associates do not. It is through the other mice and occasionally the Mexicanified cats that we see most clearly the stereotypical elements at work in the series. The other mice and the Mexican cats are all lazy, heavy drinking, and in many cases drunk, lounging, thieving, sombrero wearing, dirty, and stupid. They seem to care only for booze, women, and cheese. They in some episodes turn on their hero because he is taking all the women. They avoid labor of all forms, unless it involves finding alcohol, girls, or cheese. They often live in the trash, converting "el steenko sardinas" tins into shanty homes. The mice at the fence in the original "Speedy Gonzales" are really the "illegal immigrants" of American lore. The fence is in fact the border (if you watch the short you'll notice that the fence stretches off into infinity, in other words it doesn't surround the cheese factory). Thus the mice, and Speedy himself,

are unauthorized border crossers who raid the cheese factory because they are moochers who seek only to take the bounties on the other side of the fence.[34]

Conclusion

Speedy Gonzales, Tom and Jerry, Popeye, The Alice Comedies, Felix the Cat, and the Censored Eleven were the animated series titans of the early to mid-twentieth century. These cartoons, and numerous others like them, offered Americans and audiences the world over a novel, cheap form of amusing entertainment. They also offered those audiences important lessons on race. Of all these series, and numerous others like them, there were relatively few positive portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities. Instead, communities of color were lambasted as silly, inferior, odd looking, odd speaking, funny, clownish, prone to drunkenness and gambling, lazy, and stupid. One could not go to a different movie theater or flip to a different channel to find an alternate depiction of people of color because no such depiction or channel existed. These cartoons came from the people who produced them and mirrored societal and personal prejudices, and it has become almost standard to excuse the creations of a Hanna and Barbera, Freleng, Clampett, Avery, Messmer, Disney, or Fleischer because they came from a more racist period in American history. That rationale is weak considering the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the Society of American Indians to protest such racism in the popular media was anything but a secret to Hollywood's elite.[35] As the architects of racist and chauvinistic depictions, these men made racism seem natural to generations of Americans.

However, not all Americans appreciated their depictions. There is a reason why the Censored Eleven were banned, a reason why other cartoons were banished, and a reason why that censorship came in the 1960s. The reason, as our Conclusion reveals, lay in the fact that communities of color began to rebel against their portrayals in the popular media. As civil rights movements swept the nation, blacks, Mexican Americans and other Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans all struggled to curb racist depictions in cartoons, movies, advertising, and other forms of popular media.

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