

# OPINION

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## Fantasy Attacker as a Black Woman

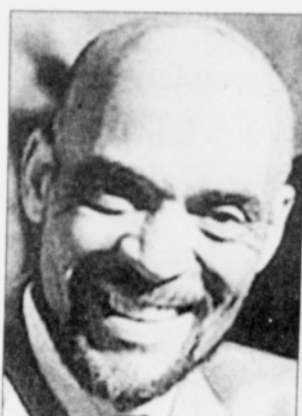
### Why Oprah and everyone else swallowed the lie

BY EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON

Oprah shouldn't feel too bad that she initially swallowed whole Bethany Storro's lying claim that a black doused her face with acid and then booked her on her show.

Oprah, The facebook crowd, the sponsors of planned fundraisers, and the thousands that sent sympathy letters and cards to the Vancouver woman and bought her lie too. Obviously they didn't remember Charles Stuart, Susan Smith, and more recently Bonnie Sweeten and Ashley Todd. Whites who screamed a black man did it to cover up murder.

There's a long sordid history of whites screaming that it was a black man that raped, assaulted, and robbed them to cover up their crimes, misdeeds, or carnal lust. The only twist in the Storro fantasy is that the alleged attacker was a black woman. But gender is incidental here. Storro didn't get a potential date on



Oprah and worldwide outpouring of sympathy because her fantasy attacker was a black woman, but an African-American. Race, again, trumps everything in the public eye.

The wishful thought was that Obama's election buried once and for all negative racial type-casting and the perennial threat of whites lying about being put upon by black marauders, and in some cases, getting away with it. It did no such thing.

Immediately after Obama's election and months before Storro's falsified attack, teams of researchers from several major universities found that many of the old stereotypes about poverty and crime and blacks remain just as frozen in time. The study found that much of the

public still perceives those most likely to commit crimes are poor, jobless and black. The study did more than affirm that race and poverty and crime are firmly rammed together in the public mind. It also showed that once the stereotype is planted, it's virtually impossible to root out. That's hardly new either.

In 2003 Penn State University researchers conducted a landmark study on the link between crime and public perceptions of who is most likely to commit crime. The study found that many whites are likely to associate pictures of blacks with violent crime. This was no surprise given the relentless media depictions of young blacks as dysfunctional, dope peddling, gang bangers and drive by shooters.

University researchers were plainly fascinated by this result. Five years later they wanted to see if that stereotype still held sway, even as Obama's political star rose, and legions of whites

said that they liked him, and would vote for him, and meant it. Researchers still found public attitudes on crime and race unchanged. The majority of whites still overwhelmingly fingered blacks as the most likely to commit crimes, even when they didn't commit them. That's especially important to say, since the fall back line on racial stereotypes is that to link race and crime is not to stereotype since blacks commit the majority of street crimes. The Penn State study found that even when blacks didn't commit a specific crime; whites still misidentified the perpetrator as an African-American.

The bulging numbers of blacks in America's jails and prisons reinforce the perception that crime and violence in America invariably comes with a young, black male and increasingly female face. And it doesn't much matter how prominent, wealthy, or celebrated the black is. That stereotype is an *idée fixe* in much of America's psyche.

The relentless, non-stop race

tinged battering of First Lady Michelle Obama by the endless pack of webbers, bloggers, and right wing talk show jocks for everything from her appearance to her trips is sad proof that black females are just as susceptible to racial mugging as black males.

The Storro debacle shows that much of the public still sees crime through narrow racial lens. But even that's not the end to this sorry story. After Storro's hoax came unraveled, she still got sympathy in some quarters.

There was the obligatory mea culpa from her, a litany of friends, acquaintances and her parents, said how teary eyed remorseful she was. And police officials and prosecutors for their part seemed genuinely stumped or at least hesitant over what if any charges they'd file against Storro.

Is it any wonder then that Oprah and everyone else swallowed Storro's lie that a black did it.

*Earl Ofari Hutchinson is an author and political analyst*

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## Slashing Food Stamps Senseless

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

Sometimes I don't know whether to laugh, cry, or go bowling. This is one of those times.

America is now in a Great Jobs Depression that has already lasted 10 years and continues to rage unabated across the land, devastating the middle class.

Yet it took two months and endless compromises this summer for Senate Democrats to woo the few Republican votes needed to pass even a weak and meek jobs bill to help deter mass firings of schoolteachers and firefighters by local governments. Pious, purse-lipped Republicans--who have eagerly backed Wall Street bailouts, needless wars, and other budget-bust-



ing expenditures--demanded that other programs be cut as the price of saving these essential public-service jobs.

So, what program did our stalwart senators choose to loot? Food stamps!

Yes, even as millions of Americans are stuck in long-term, relentless unemployment, thus increasing the urgent need for family assistance, our well-fed, big-butted Solons grabbed nearly \$12 billion from the supplemental nutrition assistance program. This puts the "dumb" in dumbfounding.

Because of the economic collapse caused by the reckless greed of Wall Street bankers, there has been a 50 percent increase in the past two years in the number of

Americans relying on food stamps. In the coming months, more and more people--including schoolteachers and firefighters--are going to lose their jobs, and many of them will need the helping hand that Congress has now so stupidly and callously withdrawn.

Instead of stealing funds from our country's essential food stamp program, Congress should get the money for its jobs bill by taxing the multibillion-dollar bonuses that Wall Street bankers are paying themselves. And if that's not enough money, cut the pay, pensions, and health-care freebies that Congress critters give to themselves--most of them need to go on a diet anyway.

*Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker.*

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