

BOOKS: Iconic — Decoding Images of the Revolutionary Black Woman

By Kam Williams
Special To *The Skanner News*

“This book asks what it means to represent black womanhood and explores how these representations are connected to a long history of representational depictions and choices that communicate the role of black women in social movements.

On the one hand, *Iconic* explores how representations of strong, revolutionary black women within popular culture are used to reinforce dominant, lingering, and mostly negative stereotypes... On the other hand, *Iconic* traces the numerous ways African-American women activists, actors, writers, and musicians have negotiated, confronted, and resisted stereotypical representations of black womanhood.”

— Excerpted from Chapter 1 (pg. 1)

When Barack Obama first ran for President, a strategy employed by those seeking to torpedo his campaign was to portray his wife, Michelle, as the proverbial “angry black woman.” The

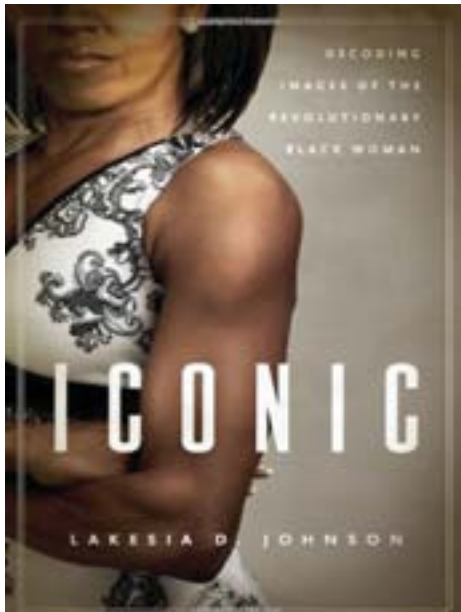
New Yorker even went so far as to put a drawing of her on the cover of the magazine wearing camouflage fatigues while sporting a huge afro and brandishing a rifle.

To counter this incessant attempt by detractors to depict her as an unstable militant, Mrs. Obama agreed to do an interview on CNN with Larry King. On the show, he repeatedly asked her if she were “angry” or “mad,” oddly ignoring her earlier responses as if they were untrue.

But she “patiently tolerated Larry King’s persistent questioning and subverted his attempts to depict her as an angry black woman... by emphasizing her role

as mother, wife, and nurturer of the nation.” Although Michelle managed to sidestep the effort to pigeonhole her as problematical, this was not the first time the media tried to marginalize an intelligent black female in this fashion.

The history of such mistreatment from Sojourner Truth in the 19th Century to Angela Davis and Kathleen Cleaver in the 20th up to the First Lady in the 21st is the subject of *Iconic*, a groundbreaking book which delineates precisely how African-American women have been plagued by belittling imagery in the media for ages. This insightful opus was written by Professor Lakesia Johnson who teaches courses on race, feminism and pop culture at Grinnell College in Iowa.



Premium Rush DVD Review

Levitt and Ramirez Co-Star in Adrenaline-Fueled Bike Thriller

by Kam Williams



Traffic is so congested in Manhattan nowadays, it’s hard to see that terminally-gridlocked terrain as a viable setting for high-octane chase scenes. Yet, that is precisely what we have in *Premium Rush*, an adrenaline-fueled adventure revolving around the derring-do of daring bike messengers who dart between cars and dodge pedestrians to make their deliveries.

At the film’s point of departure, we’re introduced to several staff members of a

bonded company called Security Courier. Employee of the Year Wilee (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) is a Columbia Law School graduate who prefers this liberating line of work to being stuck sitting behind a desk in a business suit every day.

Similarly, his gorgeous girlfriend, Vanessa (Dania Ramirez), sees it as a refreshing alternative to waiting tables in

See RUSH on page 7

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