

How can the 'angry black woman' stereotype be challenged?

Featured Slideshow:

Promote To Homepage

Naomi Campbell's interview with Channel 4 last week once again highlights a stereotypical view

Written By:

Mary Isokariari

 [NAOMI_CAMPBELL.jpg](#) [1]

Body Text Images:

 [Naomi_Campbell_2.jpg](#) [2]

 [NAOMI_CAMPBELL3.jpg](#) [3]

SINCE SUPERMODEL Naomi Campbell was discovered 27 years ago at the tender age of 15, she has reigned on the fashion runway – becoming the first black model to grace the cover of British Vogue in 1987.

However, she has also gained notoriety over her temperament, earning her the reputation of the 'angry black woman', a stigma that at times has overshadowed her career achievements and fight for the causes she believes in.

Last week, in an interview with Channel 4 News about her involvement in the Diversity Coalition campaign to highlight the lack of black and Asian models in fashion catwalk shows, the reporter questioned whether her outspoken stance on the subject is a form of anger.

Calmly she replied: "I'm not angry. And I don't like the thing of the 'angry black woman' either. That's not what this is about," she said. "We feel passionate. Feeling passionate about something doesn't mean you have to be angry."

MISCONCEPTION

However, as this misconception continues to exist in society, feminists and activists have argued it is a racist and negative stereotype that is used to oppress the opinions of black women.

Deborah Gabriel, the founder of Black British Academics, which was launched in April, aims to create a voice and visibility for black academics and improve race equality within higher education.

She believes that this stereotype exists in all industries, including academia.

She said: “Yes, it doesn’t help that Naomi has had issues with anger management in the past, but they shouldn’t use it as an excuse. The longstanding stereotype of the ‘angry black woman’ is a way of de-legitimising rational arguments made by black women, whether they are supermodels like Naomi Campbell or politicians like Diane Abbott. It is strategy for rendering us invisible and voiceless as anything we say that is coming from an informed perspective and supported by evidence is closed down without any effort to engage in discussion.

Gabriel also believes it is a “damaging stereotype only levelled at black women” which black men or white women are not subjected to.

She argued that “it is one of the ways that race and gender confer a double disadvantage on black women that has both social and economic consequences.”

RESEARCH

It is not only within the media that this stigma exists. Research has shown that black women are more likely to be subjected to disciplinary procedures than white women in public service, particularly within the NHS and the nursing sector.



CAUGHT ON CAMERA: Naomi Campbell's reputation for anger has plagued her career

A report carried out by the Centre of Inclusion and Diversity at the University of Bradford between June 2008 and November 2009 found that although the figures varied between public services, “there was growing evidence to suggest the overrepresentation of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in disciplinary cases.”

Zita Holbourne, a poet, trade union/community activist, and co-founder BARAC UK, told *The Voice* she has faced the stereotype of the angry black woman for most of her life.

She said: “It's also sexist because it's almost implying that as a woman you can't be like that,

you're not supposed to be, you're supposed to be submissive, quiet and humble, so there's a misconception, which has been created by men who have put that [stereotype] out there. It's gender oppression, but it's also about racism because it's a negative stereotype particularly applied to black women. If you look at the work place context I deal with so many cases regarding black women [being labelled as aggressive]. If it was a white man doing the exactly same thing they would say he is being assertive. But as soon as a black woman speaks about the exact same thing they are seen as being too aggressive or they need to calm themselves down.”

She also highlighted society’s lack of understanding about African Caribbean culture.

“We tend to be loud and very expressive, confident and assertive.”

Instead of being praised for having these qualities, she believes that the ‘angry black woman’ label is an attempt to detract from issues of discrimination and inequality in the first place.

AGGRESSIVE

Holbourne said: “You find in the work place this is used against black women time and time again in the appraisal and disciplinary system. It’s blatant racism. It comes up all the time, ‘oh you’re too aggressive, too loud or you have a chip on your shoulder.’”

Holbourne believes that to change this racist and negative stereotype, “we need to challenge the media, fight race and gender discrimination and campaign against it.”



CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: The first black model to grace the front cover of British Vogue in 1987

Charmaine Elliot, an experienced campaigner on women’s empowerment issues from Blackfeminists.org, argued that while both white and black women struggled against sexism and gender inequality in the work place, black women were also impacted by racism.

She said: “Combating a stereotype does not fall solely to those impacted negatively by that stereotype. It’s a social problem, so it needs to be tackled by everyone. These prejudices are for all of us to act against with the weight falling to people who perpetuate them and those who benefit from them. Invariably, this will be those who are not black.”

She added: “Has John Prescott’s violent outbursts reinforced negative stereotypes about white men? One method of racism is to seek out challenging behaviours in one member of that ethnic group or culture and then apply that to all other members of that group as a stereotype. White men are not asked this question about John Prescott because they do not face the same racist pressures that black women do.”

Related Articles:

[Myth of the ‘angry black woman’](#) ^[4]

[Michelle Obama: 'I'm not an angry black woman'](#) [5]

[Alesha Dixon: 'You can't use colour as an excuse'](#) [6]

[Chrisette Michele: 'Better now than never'](#) [7]

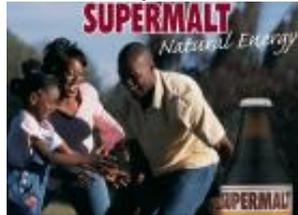
[Love blackout](#) [8]

['Black women are ugly' lecturer says sorry](#) [9]

Posted on: 28/09/2013 10:00 AM

Website built by [ENTWURE](#)

Copyright © GV Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved.



Featured
[Supermalt](#)

SUPERMALT® BRAND * Vitamins, minerals & nutrients for your vitality * Natural health &...



Featured
[MK Law Solicitors](#)

All aspects of criminal defence and representation, in PS/ Magistrates court, Crown Court and the...



[Kensington Forum Hotel](#)

www.hikensingtonforumhotel.co.uk/special-offers-events/caribbean-nights

Categories

<u>Property</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Legal</u>	<u>Charity</u>	<u>Eating Out</u>	<u>Flights</u>	<u>Hair & Beauty</u>	<u>Money</u>
<u>Automotive</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Fashion</u>	<u>Food and Drink</u>	<u>Funeral Services</u>	<u>Health</u>	
<u>Spiritual</u>	<u>Wedding Services</u>						

Footer Menu

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Advertising Guide](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Source URL: <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/how-can-angry-black-woman-stereotype-be-challenged>

Links:

- [1] http://www.voice-online.co.uk/sites/default/files/NAOMI_CAMPBELL_0.jpg
 - [2] http://www.voice-online.co.uk/sites/default/files/Naomi_Campbell_2.jpg
 - [3] http://www.voice-online.co.uk/sites/default/files/NAOMI_CAMPBELL3.jpg
 - [4] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/myth-%E2%80%98angry-black-woman%E2%80%99>
 - [5] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/michelle-obama-%E2%80%98i%E2%80%99m-not-angry-black-woman%E2%80%99>
 - [6] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/alesha-dixon-you-cant-use-colour-excuse>
 - [7] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/chrisette-michele-better-now-never>
 - [8] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/love-blackout>
 - [9] <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/black-women-are-ugly%E2%80%99-lecturer-says-sorry>
-