

## Racial Representation in Targeted Ads: A Textual Analysis of P&G Widen the Screen Commercial

**Emmanuel Nwachukwu, Ph.D.**

*School of Communication, Department of Journalism  
Texas Southern University, Houston.*

**George N. Nzekwe**

*Mass Communication Department,  
Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu Nigeria.*

**Ifeanyi E. Onyike, Ph.D.**

*Department of Mass Communication,  
Dominican University Ibadan, Nigeria.*

Advertising and the use of commercials are powerful tools within society because it both reflects and shapes cultural norms. The depiction of race and ethnicity in advertisements in particular is complex and has evolved over time, including stereotypical depictions which can give improper representation to people of color, especially and specifically African Americans. African Americans have been represented in advertising since its inception in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but the representation has been tainted and degraded by racial stereotypes that plague the African American community.

In the late 19th century, African Americans began bearing the brunt of horrific white produced advertising especially after World War II. From blackface to Uncle Ben’s Rice, white agencies produced advertisements and commercials to make profit off the looks, speech, and tribulations of the black community, primarily pulling from slavery. Black people weren’t being as dehumanized as they once were after WWII. So white agency decided to mock and portray black people in a negative light through advertisements and commercials to keep white people from falling into the social and political shifts happening in the U.S. White people would make degrading and racial images and visuals of black people to keep up the idea that black people were stupid and beneath them and did it in a way to make profit off humiliating and misrepresenting the black community. There are many examples of how whites have taken advantage of black people and misrepresented them in advertisements and commercials

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how advertisements have been used to further promote racial stereotypes and how P&G commercials have targeted the racial stereotypes of African Americans but flipped the ending thus giving black people proper representation in a better light. The commercial shows two African-American young men walking into a gas station, an African-American woman with two young children and one on the way, and an African- American male whose actions look very suspicious.



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