

What Do Der Sturmer's Julius Streicher And David Simon Have In Common?

Richard Price was on his way to becoming a great writer. I gave him a blurb for one of his early novels, *The Wanderers*. A Rock and Roll book. Richard used to hang out with my late partner Steve Cannon and me. The last time I saw him was when he attended the book party for William Demby. Steve Cannon and I had published Demby's "Love Story Black." The party was held at Mickey Ruskin's The Lower Manhattan Ocean Club in New York.

In Aix-en-Provence, France in 2004, I was a panel member that included Richard and some other writers. I scolded Price for joining black dysfunction merchants like George Pelecanos and David Simon in writing "The Wire." "The Wire" is part of Simon's messed-up Black people series, which includes "The Corner," "The Deuce," and now "We Own This City," which, like "Power," features a white negro.

I told Richard that he was hanging out with bad company. Pelecanos and Simon. The French audience booed. Members of the New York delegation and his friends became upset. Russell Banks, whose Black characters are nuanced, reprimanded me for bringing up a local issue at an international conference. A full-page ad for "The Wire" in The International Herald Tribune was on sale at the conference. I asked Banks to take a look at "The Wire." He assessed the show as one of white men putting Amos and Andy lines in the mouths of Blacks.

"The Wire" occurs during the crack epidemic in the inner cities. In the book, *The Long Shadow*, three sociologists dispute the portrait of West Baltimore shown in "The Wire." They write West Baltimore stands out in the popular imagination as the quintessential "inner city"—gritty, run-down, and marred by drugs and gang violence. Indeed, with the collapse of manufacturing jobs in the 1970s, the area experienced a rapid onset of poverty and high unemployment, with few public resources available to alleviate economic distress. But in stark contrast to the image of a perpetual "urban underclass" depicted in television shows like "The Wire," sociologists Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle, and Linda Olson present a more nuanced portrait of Baltimore's inner-city residents that employs important new research on the significance of early-life opportunities available to low-income populations. **Even one of the lead actors of "The Wire" said that the show portrays Blacks as not caring about their neighborhoods.** While some Black academics, pundits, and public intellectuals have praised the series, a contributor to a useful book entitled *Cracking The Wire, During Black Lives Matter* by Ronda Racha Penrice reports the view of "homies" who live in the Baltimore neighborhoods covered by "The Wire."

"Yet a lot of my relatives and homies did not share my enthusiasm for 'The Wire' at all. They found its emphasis on poor, struggling Black people depressing. Our parents may have been from West Baltimore, but once segregation was outlawed and more housing opportunities opened up for Black people in other areas of the city, they left. Many of us did not have the same connection to our old neighborhoods and, these days, rarely hear positive things about them. For old-timers like my mother, aunts, and cousins, who remembered West Baltimore's heyday and were distressed by the city's skyrocketing crime rate, a fictional show depicting Black people selling drugs and murdering one another hit too close to home. 'I don't need to see "The Wire" for all that,' she told me, 'I can watch the news.' I recently found an email exchange with a journalist friend about "The Wire", and his take was more critical. To him, Simon and the cadre of celebrated White crime novelists he tapped for his writers' room—George Pelecanos, Dennis

Lehane, and Richard Price—" milked the hell outta the Negro pathology vein" while blithely inserting 'nigger' into the dialogue every step of the way." Among the praises entered in the comments section following a weekend of rapturous praise for "The Wire" in The New York Times by James Poniewozik and Jonathan Abrams, was a June 1st comment by Cindy from Baltimore:

"Why not reflect on how 20 years later, 'The Wire' continues to shape oversimplified and racist narratives about the city of Baltimore. How the white fear is stoked only further complicates efforts to develop Baltimore. Do Trump or Tucker Carlson's 'Hellscape' Comments happen without 'The Wire?' I think not. I would feel sad if all I contributed to my hometown and the city that I love were narratives of crime and corruption. We don't get Friends set in Baltimore or Insecure. If it's not about black poverty or urban blight Hollywood doesn't greenlight. As a resident of Baltimore - I've come to hate David Simon's legacy."

Maybe I agree with these views because I grew up in the inner city and have lived in the inner city since 1979. While Pelecanos and Simon have made a fortune "milking the hell outta Negro pathology," I'm still on Reagan with The Terrible Twos, Terrible Threes, and the Fours. If Black neighborhoods suffered because of crack merchandising, which caused homicide rates to soar, Reagan gave an Ok for his Contra allies to make money from crack distribution. An image of Reagan should have been included in every episode of "The Wire." Maybe HBO and Simon will ignore Reagan's role in destroying Black neighborhoods. I won't. And history won't.

I was glad to see that Price's name was missing from Simon's "The Deuce," all about black pimps beating up white women who are rescued by white men in their Indiana Jones capes.

So why did I put Simon's pimp named C.C. surrounded by pictures of Simon and Julius Streicher of the Nazi publisher Der Stürmer? The Nazis promoted the stereotype of Jewish men as pimps, which led them to near extermination. Like Simon, Streicher was a newspaperman.

The pimp was one of the stereotypes of Jewish men in Nazi propaganda.

According to the book: *Fighter, Worker, and Family Man* by Sebastian Huebel 2022 "Nazi racism was never gender-neutral: "Propaganda castigated Jewish men as cheats and traitors, depicting them as greedy bankers and *pimps*." Simon and Pelecanos's sorry disgusting series "The Deuce," includes pornographic imagery and race-mixing, in this case Black pimps exploiting white girls, another Nazi anti-Semitic theme. **"a Jew with his Gentile girlfriend are watching a pornographic movie. (August 1929) Der Stürmer was published by the Nuremberg Nazi leader Julius Streicher. It was the most vicious antisemitic newspapers among all those the Nazis published and combined racist stereotypes with pornographic material to accuse the Jews of race defilement."**

Given Simon's ethnic background, isn't it pornographic for him to apply Nazi stereotypes to Black men?

Ishmael Reed