

# White Supremacy and White Patriarchy in Today's Poland

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The fact that racism combines with sexism to deepen the oppression faced by Black women has been emphasized by many authors, including such seminal African American intellectuals as Angela Davis, bell hooks and Audre Lorde. One of the most important Black feminist texts, the 1977 statement of the Combahee River Collective<sup>1</sup>, asserted the existence of

*racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.*

A decade later, the Black scholar Kimberle Crenshaw coined the now very popular term "intersectionality" as a way of underscoring the importance of the double burden<sup>2</sup> of oppression weighing on Black women which is more than the sum of racism and sexism they have to face. And in 2010 yet another Black scholar, Moya Bailey, introduced the term "misogynoir"<sup>3</sup> to "describe the particular brand of hatred directed at black women in American visual & popular culture."

Unsurprisingly, the analyses of the toxic combination of racism and sexism usually focus on the interlocking oppressions affecting Black women and other women of colour. White women are now often portrayed as participants and beneficiaries of the system of white supremacy alongside white men; the Nigerian scholar Emeka Aniagolu has even coined the term "co-whites"<sup>4</sup> to emphasize the complicity of white women in the system of racial oppression in the United States.

It is very frequently overlooked that white women can be affected by a kind of misogyny which is inextricably linked both to racism and to efforts to control and contain female sexuality. Poland is an example of a society where this kind of misogyny takes a very overt, virulent and obsessive form, which makes it easier to observe and analyze its manifestations. This phenomenon found a recent and very characteristic illustration in the Facebook comments left by Pawel Kukiz, a white Polish politician and rock musician who leads the party Kukiz'15 (36 MPs in the Polish parliament) and gained more than 20 percent of votes in the first round of the 2015 presidential election.

When the activist Joanna Grabarczyk from the organization HejtStop which fights against online hate speech reported some Facebook posts written by Mariusz Pudzianowski<sup>5</sup>, a well-known MMA (mixed martial arts) fighter and owner of a transport company, to a District Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw (Pudzianowski had written, among others: *I have no pity – this human trash!!! I should be there!! I'd gladly use a baseball bat, zero tolerance!!! Folks, what tolerance??? I no longer have tolerance for this human trash-and they dare to call themselves human beings!!!!* — and he meant migrants who were trying to get on trucks in Calais in order to reach the British coast), the outraged

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<sup>1</sup> <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2010/03/14/they-arent-talking-about-me/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://rowman.com/ISBN/9780761853404/Co-Whites-How-and-Why-White-Women-'Betrayed'-the-Struggle-for-Racial-Equality-in-the-United-States>

<sup>5</sup> <http://natemat.pl/170445,ktos-doniosl-na-wpis-pudziana-o-imigrantach-sprawe-zbada-teraz-prokuratura>

Pudzianowski described her in another Facebook post<sup>6</sup> as a "frustrated woman with low self-esteem who is causing harm to normal people."

As to Kukiz, he sarcastically wrote on his Facebook wall<sup>7</sup>: "If I were her, I would also be dreaming about immigrants in the context of the New Year's Eve." When his post met with disapproval from, among others, the popular journalist Monika Olejnik and the TV presenter Tomasz Kammel, Kukiz mockingly stated<sup>8</sup>:

*I did not intend to offend Joanna Grabarczyk. I assumed that racial barriers did not exist for someone as open and tolerant as her.*

It is clear that Kukiz exploited the powerful stereotypical image of the white woman rejected by white men and therefore seeking solace in real or fantasized encounters with non-white men: an image obviously based on the assumption that white men occupy the highest rank in the hierarchy of sexual attractiveness.

This idea, very often expressed in online comments, was reflected in an article published in 2010 in the newspaper Dziennik soon after a Nigerian street vendor, Maxwell Itoya, was shot dead by a police officer in Warsaw in still unexplained circumstances. The article, titled "The Nigerian Mafia. Ugly Wives and Drugs"<sup>9</sup>, portrayed the Nigerian diaspora in Poland in an extremely negative light: as aggressive men who "increasingly look like men in the video clips of the stars of gangsta rap," sell drugs and are able to stay in Poland thanks to the fact that they are "expertly using marriage fraud." The article quotes a Warsaw official who claims that Polish women who fall in love with Nigerians "are not attractive" and, moreover, "not well-developed intellectually." There is also a documented case of racist harassment<sup>10</sup> where the harassers – a woman's neighbors – claimed that she had decided to have a child with a Black man because she "did not have a Polish guy."

Very importantly, in the case of Joanna Grabarczyk the stereotype of the unattractive white woman who turns to non-white men because of being rejected by white men has been used in order to cruelly ridicule a woman who is fighting against hate speech. Such attacks can be an effective form of silencing women who have opportunities to publicly denounce racism and speak in defence of non-European migrants and refugees. Women's commitment to human rights, justice and equality can be thus portrayed as merely a hypocritical façade hiding their longings for love and sex. In this way, not only the idea that a woman can be sincerely committed to struggle against racism is cynically rejected, and the single (or supposedly single) female activist is depicted as a new incarnation of the despised figure of the old maid/spinster.

Not less importantly, the idea that some Polish women turn to non-white men out of desperation can be seen as an expression of the deep anxieties, fears and insecurities of Polish men faced with the multifarious consequences of late neoliberal capitalism – greatly increased job insecurity, the very limited social safety net in Poland, mass-scale economic emigration to Western Europe and a

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<sup>6</sup> <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,19599735,strongman-linczuje-w-sieci-joanna-grabarczyk-na-celowniku.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polityka/kukiz-o-dzialaczce-hejtstop-na-jej-miejscu-tez-marzylbym-o-imigrantach-kammel-pisales-trzezwy\\_776438.html](http://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polityka/kukiz-o-dzialaczce-hejtstop-na-jej-miejscu-tez-marzylbym-o-imigrantach-kammel-pisales-trzezwy_776438.html)

<sup>8</sup> <http://natemat.pl/170921,kukiz-przeprasza-joanne-grabarczyk-z-hejtstop-zakladalem-ze-jej-otwartosc-i-tolerancja-nie-znaja-granic-rasowych>

<sup>9</sup> <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/164388,nigeryjska-mafia-szpetne-zony-i-narkotyki.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nigdywiecej.org/pdf/pl/pismo/21/36\\_Katalog-wypadkow.pdf](http://www.nigdywiecej.org/pdf/pl/pismo/21/36_Katalog-wypadkow.pdf)

greatly facilitated access to holiday tourism in the countries of the global South – as well as with the increasing emancipation of women and easy access to various kinds of pornography (with its racialized codes of representation). In this context, the image of the unattractive and frustrated single white woman drawn to non-white men may be interpreted as one of the devices used by deeply insecure white men in order to cope with their own feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation and anger.

An analysis of the lyrics of two virulently racist Polish songs can provide insights into the psychological mechanisms leading to extreme racism and misogyny; it is necessary to emphasize here that the racism of white supremacists is merely an extreme form of mainstream white racism. Symptomatically, Polish women bear the brunt of the hatred expressed in both texts. In one of the songs of the neo-Nazi music band Nordica (formerly known as Agressiva 88), titled “The N...r’s White Whore<sup>11</sup>”, a beautiful Polish girl gets involved in a relationship with a Black man; the lyrics assume that she is “doing it only for money.” The song contains a direct threat of deadly violence against Polish women who are in relationships with Black men, as indicated by such lines as “You will hang, whore, such is your fate” and “When I get you, you will be among Blacks in heaven”. The lyrics make it clear that one of the most potent sources of the insecurities of many Polish men is the fact that their economic status decreases their attractiveness in the eyes of current or potential partners.

“I Don’t Have Enough Words,” one of the songs by the musician Kelthuz (his real name is Tomasz Czapla), directly alludes to the previous one: the refrain contains the words “Die, you n...s’s white whore”, so there is a deliberate continuity between the two songs. In the first part of “I Don’t Have Enough Words<sup>12</sup>” Kelthuz describes the hypocrisy of young Polish women who are seasonal economic migrants in the United States: “each one of them hangs a picture of her boyfriend over her bed/And calls him in the evening when possible,” but later “goes to a downtown disco to f.k n...s in the toilet” because every Polish woman allegedly “gets crazy when she sees a black guy”.

In the second part “mature” Polish businesswomen “on the lookout for a man” indulge in sexual adventures with local men in Egypt. Finally, the song reveals “the truth” on female nature and on Polish women: “every woman is in two-thirds a whore” and “there are three black cocks in every Polish woman.” The second image evokes the pornographic representations of “interracial” heterosexual encounters: representations which hyper-masculinize Black men and can reinforce both the sexual insecurities and the racist prejudice of many white men.

The song not only portrays female sexuality as uncontrollable and dangerous – the lyrics even claim that young Polish women are infected with HIV by Black men in America and later transmit the virus to the unsuspecting Polish boyfriends – but also suggests that the only way to contain female sexual desires is through physical violence and sexual degradation; that Polish women have to be literally terrorized into suppressing their attraction to Black men:

*If you don’t beat your woman, her liver will rot,  
So she’ll look for cock in African forests,  
The hamster in her head is getting crazy,  
Shut up, whore, and suck me slowly!*

In these lines Polish patriarchal tradition, reflected in the proverb justifying domestic violence against women (“If you don’t beat your woman, her liver will rot”), fluidly intermingles with the

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnCk0007n\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnCk0007n_o)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW1wNRi6rDY>

very recent and Western-derived metaphor of the “rationalization hamster”: this metaphor, visualised in many Internet memes<sup>13</sup>, is based on the idea that women find it easy to rationalize and justify their decisions and behaviour, no matter how unreasonable and unacceptable they can be.

As in the case of the first song, the unhidden contempt for women seems to derive from deep male insecurities and fears. The thought that Polish women can be attracted to dark-skinned and supposedly inferior men, and that they now have access to spaces of erotic freedom – whether as economic migrants in the West, or as tourists in the countries of the global South – is plainly terrifying to many Polish men. The latter’s anxieties are inseparably connected to the myth of the sexual superiority of Black men (a myth clearly believed even by some Polish artists and intellectuals, as proven by the words of the well-known artist Zbigniew Libera who has claimed in an interview that during a visit in Liège he *saw vividly that the civilization of the white man was nearing its end, and that he will be replaced by a black guy with an ‘enormous cock’, of whom the white man is afraid*<sup>14</sup>.)

The visceral connection between the sexual insecurities of many white men, sexual myths on Black men and racism was revealed with unequaled frankness, brilliance and poignancy in James Baldwin’s short story “Going to Meet the Man<sup>15</sup>.” Baldwin’s masterpiece, just like Fanon’s seminal *Black Skin, White Masks* or Eldridge Cleaver’s highly controversial book *Soul on Ice*, indicate that issues related to sexuality, masculinity and femininity are not less important than, say, economic or political issues when it comes to an analysis of the genesis and mechanisms of racism. It is also necessary to emphasize that one of the ways in which global white supremacy is upheld is through the shaming and ridiculing of white women who openly disobey its rules. It is noteworthy that white patriarchy’s efforts to discourage white women – and especially middle- and upper-class women – from transgressing the “color line” in the sexual sense, or to force them to hide such transgressions or view them as merely insignificant adventures, have not yet attracted much attention of feminist/womanist scholars, activists and movements.

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<http://www.racismreview.com/blog/2016/06/10/white-supremacy-white-patriarchy-todays-poland/>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.quickmeme.com/Rationalization-Hamster/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/1,127290,10742525,Penis\\_na\\_Dworcu\\_Srodmiescie.html](http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/1,127290,10742525,Penis_na_Dworcu_Srodmiescie.html)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.blacklivesmattersyllabus.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/going\\_to\\_meet\\_the\\_man.pdf](http://www.blacklivesmattersyllabus.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/going_to_meet_the_man.pdf)