

# *DRAFT*      **Quick Thoughts on Minstrelry**      *DRAFT*

This should include a quick overview of the era and characteristics of blackface minstrelry.

US culture contains a huge dose of nostalgic denial around race and racism. One can *assume* that racism pervades the culture and that its existence will be denied or minimized.

Culture is very mutable. Context and perception are important in the way songs are presented.

## **Minstrel Song Evaluator** (This is tricky because of different lyric sets)

Title	Author Assumed False Racial Persona	Racist Terminology Used	Generally sung with Dialect Lyrics	Contains Racist Stereotypes
Keemo Kimo 1854	Yes George Christy	"Darkies"	yes	yes
Ten Little Injuns	no (Septimus Winner)	"Injun" "Squaw" in lyrics soon became "Nigger"	"injun"	yes (pretty mild)
Your Feet Too Big	??Ada benson		Yes	Yes
Turkey In The Straw	Zip Coon			
Old Dan Tucker				
Dixie	? Dan Emmett		Yes	Yes
Camptown Races				
Oh Susannah	no (Stephen Foster)	3rd verse casual racism	no	no
Buffalo Gals	Cool White		no	Big Feet, Clumsy,
Shortning Bread	<i>James Whitcomb Riley 1900</i>	original lyrics	somewhat	somewhat (obsession with food)
Jump Jim Joe(Crow)	Original Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice (1808-60).	yes?	original	
Blue Tail Fly				
Pickin Up Paw Paws				
Jump Down Turn Around Etc.	This <u>is</u> in the repertoire of Fannie Lou Hamer!	Yes, originally		yes
That's Why They Call Me Shine	No, Cecil Mack Lew Brown Ford Dabney	Yes but rejected them in lyrics		
Darktown Strutters Ball	No , Shelton Brooks 1917			

These songs need to be seen in the context of pervasive racism but also compared with the general tendency of folk and popular music to infantilize and indulge simplistic stereotypes. Southerners, rural people and various ethnic groups are offensively or stereotypically depicted in lyrics. The intersectionality of these depictions can help to understand the appropriateness of lyrics.

As a start, we see if the subject of the lyric had control over their depiction or whether this was a depiction imposed by an outside agent or coerced by market forces. Secondly we consider whether the lyrical depiction is objectively demeaning. Thirdly we consider whether the performance is appropriate given the status of the singer. The final consideration is whether a reformed lyric set is sufficiently distanced from an

earlier offensive set of lyrics and associations. This involves the perception and behavior and intentions of the performer as well as the perception and associations of the audience.

Details.

Baa Baa Black Sheep has not been linked to racism or racial oppression in any meaningful way,