

In Hollywood, we hear, it's all about the money. It's a ready explanation for why so few black films get made or broadly distributed—no crossover appeal, no promise of a big payoff. But what if the money itself is color-coded? What if the economics that govern film production are so skewed that no film by, about, or for people of color will ever look like a worthy investment unless it follows specific racial or gender patterns? This, Monica White Ndounou shows us, is precisely the case.

Hollywood's reliance on past performance as a measure of potential success virtually guarantees that historically underrepresented, underfunded, and undersold African American films devalue the future prospects of black films. Behind the scenes, the numbers are far from neutral. Analyzing the onscreen narratives and off-screen circumstances behind nearly two thousand films featuring African Americans in leading and supporting roles, including such recent productions as *Bamboozled*, *Beloved*, and *Tyler Perry's Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, Ndounou exposes the cultural and racial constraints that limit not just the production but also the creative freedom of black films.