Copyright law is the law of rhetoric. It defines the constraints in which we negotiate our rhetorical agency, it shapes the very cultural texts from which we can cull fragments for our own persuasion. It is by definition the meta rhetorical situation in which we as rhetoric scholars and educators exist. Moreover, like other legal regimes, copyright law is anything but race neutral. Rather, it is deeply protective of norms of whiteness and white creativity, often through discursive moves that make invisible its racial investments. This paper theorizes copyright thuggery, a strategic rhetoric of whiteness which naturalizes white norms of creatorship at the expense of imagining the creatorship of people of color. Situating the story of modern copyright in the post-Civil Rights Era, it demonstrates how connections between Former Motion Picture Association of America President Jack Valenti and multiple US presidents, including Lyndon B. Johnson and Ronald Reagan, coalesced to create a narrative of copyright law that criminalizes black creatorship and exceptionalizes its imaginativeness. Using the examples of Biz Markie’s “Alone Again,” 2 Live Crew’s “Pretty Woman,” and Alice Randall’s The Wind Done Gone, it contends that sampling cases became a discourse through which courts writ large deemed Black creators deficient, criminal, thugs, while parody cases became the exceptions that proved the “rule” of black copyright thuggery. The paper ends by calling for additional study of copyright law, both because of its profound implications for rhetoric scholars but also as an increasingly important site for interrogation using critical rhetorics of race, particularly anti-Blackness around notions of black creatorship.