
**OVERVIEW**

High-yellow, red bone, high brown, medium brown and blue black. These are the inner languages of skin color used to describe the color complexion of black people, usually by black people. What happened to the poems and sayings of slavery days that were used to encourage and build the esteem of blacks after being degraded by non-blacks for the color of their skin: for example, "the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice?"

Is color still an issue among black Americans? While some believe that it is not as important as in the past, the answer to the question is yes. Why does color have a profound effect on position, role, and opportunities? According to the article, "There is still an advantage in a society where the standards of beauty are connected with looking Caucasian." It has been said that the people who look less African American are more likely to make white Americans more comfortable. Dr. Poussaint, professor of Psychiatry at Judge Baker Children’s Center in Boston, adds to this sentiment in that he believes that lighter skinned women are more favored in the entertainment world. And, in fact, women in videos and on sitcoms tend to be lighter skinned, with straighter hair.

It has been noted among singles that in personal ads, nine out of ten respondents asked about the other’s skin tone and hair texture. Some women believe that black men still prefer lighter skinned women. Yet, overall, the perceptions of darker skinned men—by women—has significantly changed for the better. Women cite celebrities such as Michael Jordan and Tyson Beckford as men they admire. This is very different from thirty years ago. And Dr. Poussaint suggests that black men are indeed dating and marrying women of all skin tones.

The article continues that skin color is the silent, hidden, and dangerous issue that is "shouted in letters to the editor, whispered softly in clubs and coffee bars, at poetry slams and casinos, at church fellowships and funeral repasts." It is time to abandon the secrecy and address the biases against darker skinned complexions incorporating all skin tones and hair textures in public life.
Skin color issues are dangerous because they facilitate hate. People are viewed less for their humanity, and more for their appearance. Yet, God in His Sovereignty and Creativity has made us all beautiful with different skin tones, and in His Wisdom, He has varied each family, so that we may learn how to love and appreciate inner qualities rather than dwell on one’s outer complexion.

Howard L. Tutman, Jr., Grand Polemarch of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. says, "Color differentiation is a product of insecurity, a product of slave mentality. Just as slave masters showed favor with our forebears based on the color of their epidermis, so have we also shown favor with color when it comes to each other." Mayor Marcia L. Fudge of Warrensville, Ohio and National President of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. believe that it is time for blacks and whites to abandon questions of skin color: "We are all black people, no matter what hue, and we need to start looking at ourselves as a collective body, as opposed to trying to find ways to divide us; that is being done by enough other people."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- Do you agree with Howard L. Trutman’s statement that color differentiation is a product of insecurity? On whose part?
- Why is there still an advantage in standards where appearances of white are concerned?
- Is there an underlying issue on color differentiation, as Marcia Fudge infers? If so, what is it?
- Does having less African American features—including skin color—make white America more comfortable? Explain.

IMPLIEDATIONS

- Although we live in the 21st century, color among blacks is still an issue.
- Some believe that the issue of skin color is unsubstantiated and is something we all need to "get over."

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