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Forum 3

24, April 2012

Colorism: the Downfall of the African-American Culture

Over the past twenty years, the African-American culture has become less of a family and more of an ongoing competition between those with light skin and those with dark skin.

Recently, colorism and self-hatred have become very popular and prominent in the African-American culture. Colorism and self-hatred are corrupting and African-American community, fostering generations of close-minded African-Americans, and lessening the value of blacks in America. Colorism, which is defined as "[...] a practice of discrimination by which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin" (Definition of Colorism), has caused a chain of other problems in the African-American community. Such hatred and discrimination has ripped the community apart; diluted the once rich African culture, and raised ~~and fostered~~ a generation of colorists. Other negative affects such as harmful skin-bleaching and low self-esteem are also directly affected by colorism and other forms of discrimination in the black community.

The idea of colorism isn't new to American culture. Judging people based on pigmentation and tone of skin has been done for decades. Every since slavery, African-Americans with lighter skin were favored over those with darker skin. The colorists mentality has been passed down from generation to generation. If a person had light skin, they had a connection to the white man. If a light-complected person applied for a job with an extremely over-qualified darker-skinned person, the lighter person would get the job if it were up to

ask

colorism. In the 1950s and 60s, many restaurants "[...] advertised in the tabloids for 'light colored counter help,' an example of nth-degree discrimination." (Staples). Those with lighter skin almost always got the job position, ~~even though more qualified people applied~~. "They did it to improve their chances and to reassure white employers who, even though they hired African-Americans, found dark skin unpleasant or believed that their customers would" (Staples). *would what?*

new paragraph? Colorism is also a wide-spread problem. There have been cases of colorism in the Dominican Republic and Brazil. "DR and Brazil are societies built on colorism, in which a person is classified based on the shade of their skin color and not their ancestry..." (Fuller 1). Colorism is just as painful and harsh as racism. Colorism can affect anyone of any age and it does just that. It doesn't just touch the African community; colorism can be found in almost any culture and race. *give example?*

"Even though both nations boast of mixed populations of European, Indigenous, and African descent, people of obvious African ancestry, the majority of both populations, are discriminated against based on their darker skin color" (Fuller 1).

indent → There are also instances of colorism in places such as India and even Africa. "In India, women strive to achieve the "wheat" colour much-requested on Asian dating websites. In the Caribbean, light skin is also highly desired while in African countries even seemingly minor variations in skin tone can contribute to ethnic conflict" (Walters). Instances of colorism can be found all throughout the world today. The lack of job opportunities, appreciation, admiration, and respect has caused problems for African communities all over the world, especially in America.

One of the main problems caused by colorism is all forms of hatred. According to Dictionary.com, hatred is defined as intense dislike or extreme aversion or hostility. Over the years, because of colorism, millions of African-Americans are victims of self-hatred. Because darker African-Americans are not society's image of beauty, the darker community's self-esteem

has been lowered. Also, skin color could influence things such as job opportunities and salary.

"Black is not always black. Subtle distinctions in skin tone translate into significant differences

in outcomes" (Bodenhorn). Darker African-Americans, within the African-American

community, are treated differently because of something so insignificant as skin tone. "... In the

African-American community, [colorism] traditionally played out via the paper bag test. Those

lighter than the standard paper lunch bag were allowed entry into fraternities, sororities and other

realms of black upper class life, while dark-skinned blacks were excluded" ("Definition of

Colorism"). In colorism, skin color is the only judging factor. A person with darker skin could

be more attractive than a person with lighter skin, but, looking through the eyes of a colorist, the

person with a lighter complexion is more attractive, worthy, and valuable. Lighter skin has

become less of a personal preference, and more of a stigma. "[...] slavery and a social stigma

attached to darker skin"(Kai). Colorism is real and it's ruining the black community.

Although colorism is seemingly invisible to other cultures, it's very evident for those in,

or close to, the black community. Dating, friends, and other social interactions are almost always

based upon how the person looks and how dark they are. For many, it's seen as embarrassing to

be seen with a darker person. "The Black Community has been wrestling with our own dirty,

ugly, little secret since slavery, when we were [taught] to rate and hate each other heavily

dependent on each others skin colour" ("The Ugly Dark Skin Black Girl Compromise"). Because

African-Americans are being judged by something as simple and uncontrollable as skin color,

self-esteem, especially in African-American women, has seen a drastic decrease. This in and of

itself is fatal to African-Americans of all ages. Self-hatred and self-esteem go hand-in-hand. If,

from a very young age, a person has been taught to hate oneself, that person will never have a

healthy level of self-esteem or self-worth. Low self-esteem can lead to a slue of other problems.

social life?
friends?
home/night barhood?

homereg

over
need?

along
by what?

Promiscuity, theft, and other issues are all directly caused by problems such as low self-esteem. Eating disorders ^{as} is another issue that has been shown to be caused by low self-esteem. Colorism is a generational curse and so it low self-esteem. "In some cases, evidence for this relationship is so strong that it is even thought by some researchers that chronic low self-esteem is a necessary prerequisite for disordered eating (Silverstone 1992)" (Hanlon). ~~Because~~ ^{With} all these emotions and a lack of answers and empathy ^{due} to colorism and discrimination, that person with will have to find a new way to cope. This causes a whole new problem. What is done with these emotions is different for everyone, but, for younger people, it's vital that something productive is done with these emotions. There are numerous, African-American youth groups all throughout America. One, The African American Youth Leadership Program (AAYLP), is just for high school juniors and seniors. This program gives children the skills needed to excel. "Students who participate in SOL strive to make a positive impact on the African American Community" ("African American Youth.."). Also, the committee of AAYLP makes it a point to fully prepare their participants for the "real world" experience. Topics such as racism, colorism, and emotional issues are discussed during the conference. Some more personal subjects such as self-esteem, self-hatred, and self-worth are also mentioned.

Generational low self-esteem is real and prominent. Low self-esteem is just one of the many effects that colorism has caused. In generational low self-esteem, if a mother is born into a colorist society, it's very likely that that woman's children will have the same self-esteem issues, ^{reorder} ^{reword} ~~even if they're not in a colorist situation.~~ This is true for colorists. The beliefs and ideas of a parent are passed down to the children. Through colorism and other forms of discrimination, the African-American community is fostering a generation of dark children with low self-esteem and light-complected children with over-sized ego and colorist views. "In one way, the low self-

esteem might be so ingrained in our subconscious mind that we rarely know its existence" ("The Low self-esteem..").

Having low self-esteem is very dangerous for any person of any age. When it comes to colorism, there have been numerous cases of people resorting to skin-bleaching procedures to lighten their skin. "Bleaching is a huge industry in developing countries. This legacy of slavery or colonization, where lighter-skinned or white people were given visible privileges over hundreds of years has resulted in societies where the lighter you are, the higher your status socially and economically" (Walters). It's not just an issue of morals; skin-bleaching can be extremely harmful. "Containing the active ingredients hydroquinone and/or mercury, bleaching creams have been linked with the disfiguring condition ochronosis, marked by the darkening and thickening of the skin, as well as the appearance of tiny dome-shaped bumps and greyish-brown spots, according to the US FDA [...]" (Walters). People aren't just "bleaching for beauty", success has been linked to lighter skin. "Sociological studies have shown among African-Americans and also Latinos, there's a clear connection between skin color and socioeconomic status. It's not some fantasy. There is prejudice against dark-skinned people, especially women in the so-called marriage market" (Catherine)."

There are more than just physical and emotional effects. Colorism causes psychological effects, also. According to Vanessa Walters, women can then become psychologically addicted to creams and, over years, destroy not just their complexions, but also their health and self-esteem ("Mighty White"). With addiction, there are hundreds of possible forms of psychological damage that could affect a person. Moderate to severe depression and anxiety disorders are very common with obsessive and addictive personalities.

Without colorism, there wouldn't be a troubled generation of Africans all over the world.

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If it weren't for colorism, there wouldn't be harmful skin-lightening remedies sold everyday. Colorism has more psychological, mental, emotional, and physical effects on African-Americans of all ages. "Researchers tell us that [colorism] affects how people vote; who appears in Hollywood movies and television news shows; who gets hired and promoted in corporate America; and even who gets executed for murder"(Staples). Colorism has made its way into every aspect of the African-American life. Colorism, like any other form of discrimination, has caused negative behavioral, mental, cognitive, emotional, and physical responses.

The black community of America has ruined its own reputation. Its starting to seem that the white community has more love for the black community than the black community has for itself. "A flurry of legal and cultural disputes over the past decade has revealed a new race-related controversy gaining traction: an emerging belief in anti-white prejudice. Whites believe...the pendulum has now swung beyond equality in the direction of anti-white discrimination" (Nittle). Now, whites are feeling discriminated against. Why does the African-American community have so much hate for their own people and the other communities of America? There have been many studies conducted on this subject and they all say the same thing: blacks are resentful of whites for racism, that's the basis for black on white racism. But, in a way, blacks are doing exactly what whites did to them. African-Americans are picking out the people with light skin and "good hair", the people who are more closely related to the white man, and calling them superior. Whilst doing so, those with coarser hair and darker skin are made to feel less than because they aren't as close to the white man. Why are blacks striving so hard to become a mirror image of the race that oppressed the African-American people? The African-American culture is suffering from mental slavery. The black community has been hit like never before. African-Americans are no longer oppressed by whites, blacks are oppressing their own

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people. "Within the last decade, racism has become colorism. Black vs. black racism is what we're left with. A lot of whites believe that they're discriminated against more so than blacks, now-a-days [...]" (Nittle). Now-a-days, the African-American community is raising a generation of colorists and resentful racists.

[colorism has become a large, shameful aspect of America's African-American society. The black community has gone from a place of strong, rich culture, to a mass war based on skin color and heritage. Colorism has caused many problems for all of America. African-Americans with darker skin are left with crushed self-esteem and a slue of other problems and those with lighter skin are favored for something as shallow as skin color. The African-American community is raising and fostering a generation of racist and colorist African-Americans. In today's society, this is the last thing that should be done. The topic of colorism is important because it has affected so many people. Colorism has been described as a disease that has the ability to infect anyone. Sadly, colorism is most prominent in the African-American culture. Colorism is exactly like racism, which has been a large part of American culture. People need to know more about this topic. Educating people on the topic is the only way to stop colorism.]

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need to ~~to~~ rework