

A Week of Black Feminism and Colourism – In Pictures

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This week, we saw black feminist icon Beyoncé release *Lemonade*, in which she wore “European features”, highlighting how the femininity of black women is persistently under scrutiny at the hands of white beauty standards. This visual album also featured cameos from feminist and anti-racist icons such as Amandla Stenberg and Zendaya Coleman, and tributes to black women who lost the men in their lives, such as the mothers of Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner.



Source: Google Images

This quickly became iconic in pop culture, after her *Formation* performance at the American Superbowl back in February, where she and her back-up dancers sported Black Panther clothing.



Source: Google Images

Unfortunately, the limelight was soon seemingly snatched, when Piers Morgan, a middle-aged, white British man *wrote an article for the Daily Mail* about this, accusing Beyoncé of exploiting the mothers featured who lost their children to police brutality, and writing that he ‘preferred the less inflammatory, agitating Beyoncé’. Rather than discussing the real issues, i.e. the fact that colourism exists, and that beauty standards are Eurocentric, debate was circulating about Piers Morgan, who was soon *taken on by British singer Jamelia*, who said ‘newsflash honey, it wasn’t for you’.

This colourism, has been revealed, however, within *the transformation of rapper Lil’ Kim*. Known for always altering her appearance, Lil’ Kim’s photos were circulating on social media websites – she was unrecognisable.



Source: lilkimthequeenbee- Instagram

These images were met with comments such as 'wow, she's white'. Here's the sociological part- *why should we care?*

Because we should seek to understand *why* Kim has altered herself to this extent, having frequently discussed her self-esteem issues relating to her skin colour and features in the 1990s. Kim relates to women of colour everywhere, constantly shown that they aren't worthy to meet white beauty standards.

I should know. Here I am as a little girl, dressed up as Snow White:



Queen Bey has once again cast light on a real sociological and social issue in popular culture for women of colour, as well as casting light on loved ones that have been lost such as Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner.

Jha (2016) discusses how whiteness is portrayed as associated with respectability, employment, success and attractiveness. *What/who is to blame for this?* When discussing this, we can take an historical outlook, delving into origins such as scientific racism (whilst this required a specific set of knowledge, science was steadily gaining influence in the Enlightenment Period), and commodity racism (advertisement was and is everywhere, and is thus more readily accessible). We can see how this is relevant to contemporary society, such as the media, and the nation-state. Both categorise and stratify people into groups; whilst the media does this *discursively*, the state *officialates* this. Scholars and anti-racists should continue to take this structural outlook- but

remember that race is also *individual*– it has a profound impact on people’s lives. Just look at Lil’ Kim. Look at the mothers who have lost their children to brutality. Look into *yourself*, and *your own perceptions*.

Wider reading:

Jha, M. R. (2016) *The Global Beauty Industry: Colorism, Racism and The National Body*. London: Routledge

A. Brah (1996) ‘Difference, Diversity, Differentiation’ in *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.

H. Carby (2009) ‘White woman Listen!’ in L. Back & J. Solomos (eds.) *Theories of Race and Racism*. London: Routledge.



Cosmopolitan Gets Dragged on Twitter For ‘Racist’ Beauty Guide

If you’ve ever wondered who Cosmopolitan’s magazine’s main demographics were, a recent beauty article may answer that question. Cosmo decided the best way to capture what’s out and what’s in – when it comes to beauty- was to do side-by-side pictures of celebrities and models. ... Continue reading



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