

Colorism

“Acting like it doesn’t exist doesn’t heal... America as a family, this is our taboo issue that brings up so much.” This is what activist Michaela Angela Davis said about colorism. Colorism is discrimination within people in the same racial or ethnic group based on skin tone. This mostly happened to people of color with a darker skin tone. As Davis said, colorism is something that is looked at as taboo. Communities of color have experienced discrimination socially and even systematically from white people; that’s racism. Dark-skinned people have experienced not only discrimination from other people but, discrimination from their own people. Racism takes a toll on an emotional, mental, and even physical level, but communities of color don’t realize colorism does the same thing to dark-skinned people in their communities. Colorism is a plague in communities of color and must be cured.

People may claim that despite having different skin complexions, every person of color in each community goes through oppression the same way; this is false. Dark-skinned people have more negative stereotypes than light-skinned people and are looked down upon. During Barack Obama’s 2008 election, an experiment was performed with political advertisements. In the experiment, two ads were shown to people, one a light-skinned family and another a dark-skinned family. They were both black. When voters were shown both ads, it was shown that people were less inclined to support Obama with the advertisement of the dark-skinned family. This shows the bias within the black community with favoring lighter skin. You would think having a black president, no matter skin complexion would empower the black people and other

people of color. Still, colorism is a factor. Dark-skinned people are even looked down upon by their own community. In a suit at Applebee's, Dwight Burch, a worker there, was repeatedly called many racial slurs by his manager, who is lighter than him. According to the suit, his manager called him "tar baby", "black monkey" and even told him to bleach his skin. This evidence shows that dark-skinned people have negative stereotypes. Colorism should be solved because degrading your own race while being degraded by another doesn't just makes us look like hypocrites, but also makes members of your community develop self-hatred. This shows how even people in your own community can degrade you for having darker skin. The black community and other communities of color have fought to stop being called racial slurs, but colorism is making communities of color unproductive in the progression we want to achieve. Communities of color have been fighting oppression for a long time and colorism is still one factor that holds us down.

Some people claim that there's no historical evidence of colorism, it's just something new. They believe colorism is a new theory. That is not the case at all. Colorism dates back to slavery with the house slave and field slave. Light skinned slaves were treated differently than dark-skinned slaves. Light skinned slaves usually worked in the house and were known as house slaves. Many also traveled with their masters and got better treatment. Dark skinned slaves were kept on the field which means they got worse treatment. They were beaten, raped, or killed. This doesn't erase the fact that both light skinned slaves and dark-skinned slaves suffered from the effects of slavery, but this also doesn't erase the fact that dark skinned and light skinned slaves were treated differently. Colorism has been here since racism. People think it's something new

because the issue has recently been recognized. Even though the term colorism is something created in modern times, that doesn't mean it hasn't been here for centuries. Back then, slave owners used colorism to divide black people, make us more obedient, and to put us against each other. We are in a new time now, and we still let colorism divide us and other communities of color when we really need to come together. We shouldn't let the shade of our pigment be a barrier to unity. Communities of color want to destroy racism outside of our communities and we've been fighting that fight for centuries now. Why not focus on the discrimination within our communities? Historically, colorism has been here yet, people of color sweep it under the rug and let it grow. This is unhealthy because dark-skinned children will grow up hating their skin and will be confused about why their light-skinned friend wasn't experiencing some of the same issues they are facing.

High-rank actors and musicians of color usually are a lighter complexion. High-rank actors and musician of color who do have dark skinned struggle more, aren't represented positively and aren't respected. Beyonce's father, Mathew Knowles, even admits that one reason for his daughter's success is her being lighter. He mentioned that popular artists like Beyonce, Nicki Minaj, and Mariah Carey all have something in common; they are all light skinned black women. Latina musician Amara La Negra has experienced colorism in the music industry first hand. Amara is a dark-skinned Dominican woman. She advocates about colorism, the representation of dark-skinned Latinx people, and dark-skinned people in the entertainment business. She talks about how in Spanish soap operas, there are no dark skinned latinx people because of the idea of what a latinx person should look like. In an interview with Chicago

Tribune writer Gisela Orozco, Amara said, “and it is not because we are not prepared, they do not consider us because they believe that we don't look Latino enough and that bothers me” (Orozco). Colorism in the entertainment industry continues the cycle of colorism in communities of color. Dark skinned actors not being in movies and music makes the self-hatred continue in communities of color. Dark-skinned children don't see actors/people who look like them. They can't identify with them, because of their lighter skin tone. This is why representation matters.

Colorism needs to be cured in communities of color because it acts as a plague. Light skinned and dark-skinned people of color experience oppression differently. Dark skinned people go out to the world as a public enemy and then sometimes are shamed at home. Colorism has existed in communities of color for centuries and now is the time to address it. The representation of dark-skinned actors and musicians of color shows how colorism affected entertainment. All these things will make colorism grow even more than it has. As a community, we should address these issues and don't let self-hatred develop in little dark-skinned children's hearts. Like what Michaela Angela Davis said, ignoring it doesn't heal the issue, fighting against it will. Communities of color shouldn't be separated by skin tone. Every dark-skinned man, woman, and child should be embraced and encouraged by their communities.

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