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### Colorism Amongst African Americans

Colorism occurs frequently amongst African Americans. It occurs openly and too often. It happens so often that many individuals do not even realize that colorist actions have occurred. Colorism has been occurring for years.

Colorism may sound remarkably similar to racism, but it is not the same. Although some people including myself, believe skin complexion should not matter, skin color is a huge signifier of identity and value. In the article, “The Difference Between Racism and Colorism”, Lori Tharps states, “In the U.S. in particular, where we have an extremely diverse population, race still matters, but color matters, too.” Colorism is differential treatment rooted on skin color, specifically, preference towards individuals with lighter skin tones and ill-treatment of darker skin tones and vice versa. As a young African American woman with a lighter skin tone, I have felt victim to colorism more than once. My first-time experiencing colorism was in elementary school. A young man of darker skin used to pick on me and say that I was white. His comments “stripped me of my black card”, which is a common phrase used in today’s time to say an individual does not deserve to be claimed by the black community.

It is often people of the same race acting as colorists towards each other, but it did not start that way. Colorism started during slavery when there were field and house slaves. Field slaves were the darker-skinned blacks and house slaves were the lighter-skinned blacks. House slaves were often given more privileges than field slaves. As time progressed, the division created by European slave owners stuck around until now. Now, African American women and men act as colorists towards each other on social platforms and in real life. In my opinion, the continued pattern of colorism is a result of the insecurity and anger of history. In Matthew 12:25,

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the Bible states, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”

Colorism occurs every day. It occurs in movies, videos, schools, work environments, and social media. It happens in the school systems because there are misunderstood social practices put in place. An African American journalist named Kaitlyn Greenidge stated the following, “There was a slight troubling when I would watch TV shows such as *Martin* or movies like *Coming to America*, and the love interest was always light and the girls my color were shrews – too fast, too forward, too sarcastic to be loved.” Greenidge is a darker-skinned black woman. You can tell by her statement that what she felt may have tied into the previous history of female house slaves and female field slaves. On social media, there are also videos where African American men rate black of different skin complexions and say things such as they are not attracted to darker complexioned women but whatever light-skinned women are in the videos as well, the men are attracted to the lighter women. Lighter skin tones are generally accepted more than darker skin tones. For example, the media has been known to choose the lighter skin tones because they are closer to what the “white” public sees fit to advocate/promote.

In conclusion, we as African Americans should be self-aware of when committing colorism against our people. Our goal should be to build each other up and to no longer allow division. Although colorism is rampant, we should want to know how, when, and why it is occurring. As a solution, we should imagine ourselves in the shoes of the people who have been affected by colorism to understand the gravity of the stereotypes. Polarization within any race will never lead to success for anyone. And understanding the paradigms structured around colorism is only the first step. Also, colorism not only affects the black community but any

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community where there are different tones. Remember that all shades of black are beautiful,

specifically, biracial, light-skinned, medium skin, and dark skin. I hope you all have gained

awareness of colorism and have enjoyed my speech. Thank you for participating.

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Sources:

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