

If Only Our Children Knew That They Were Created Beautiful

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As a little girl, I grew up in a world where my beauty was disallowed. My dark skin, my rounded hips, my thick lips, my curly hair – were not seen as signs of beauty. I remember that as a child my father would set apart a monthly sum from his scanty minister’s salary to purchase Ebony magazine for us. As the father of two black girls, he understood the importance of developing a healthy self-concept, particularly in the times we were growing up in. Thus, he made sure that we were exposed to identifiable and positive images of beauty.

My sister and I would spend hours captivated by the beautiful pictures of those Black and Brown-skinned Beauties like Gladys Knight, Diana Ross, Dionne Warwick, Donna Summers, Natalie Cole, to name but a few. These beautiful queens of color, were really not new to our reality. They looked like some other queens we knew well, our Mommy, our aunties, our grandmas, the ladies at church. Nevertheless, they were Women whose beauty we very rarely saw “positively” displayed on TV, in films, and in other magazines.

Decades later we are now in the 21st century when images of beauty are supposed to be more global. Yet, I find it disturbing that little girls are still experiencing the same type of beauty disallowance. While they might have more exposure to their type of beauty than I ever had, there is some unsettling distortion to that exposure. Thanks to the media and entertainment icons like Beyonce, Jennifer Lopez, Rihanna and even Oprah, Brown and Black Beauties are to a certain extent more “acceptable” and sometimes even more “popular”, in today’s world. We also cannot negate the fact that having the collective beauties of Michelle, Sasha and Malia grace the powerful White House has also made an impact on the images of beauty we now experience. Yet, there still remains this societal perception that to be considered beautiful, Brown and Black Beauty types must somehow re-arrange, and in some cases re-construct, their beauty to fit into an already pre-defined beauty box.

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Something is wrong with a world where people find the need to constantly re-create themselves to fit certain man-made and partial beauty standards. Something is wrong with a world where uniqueness is not celebrated, and instead beauty is pre-defined to fit certain arranged standards. Something is wrong with a world when a woman cannot stand to see her natural beauty so she feels the need to put on, sew on, glue on, and add on to her hair and herself to look beautiful. Something is wrong with a world where our men want us to put on, sew on, glue on, and add on so that they can view us as more desirable.

Perhaps it is time that we each take a hard look at our personal definitions of beauty. It is said that: “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder”, but what makes a person beautiful? What makes a woman beautiful? What makes a man beautiful? Is it what they carry or wear on their bodies that make them beautiful? Is it the natural physical God-created characteristics that they were born with? Is it what is in their hearts: the ability to love and do good to others? Is it their character and the way they treat themselves and others? Or is it a combination of our outer and inner selves that makes us beautiful?

How are we defining beauty for our children? The answer to this question will make a difference in the way they walk this world.

There is nothing wrong in admiring and celebrating outward appearance; it is part of the unique package our creator gave to us as humans. There is a problem, however, when we use our own sinful definitions of what beauty is to tell God, “You made a mistake with me.” When we think this way, we find it necessary to change and re-create God’s creative palette of beauty. This notion that God made a mistake with our beauty has led people to go to even dangerous lengths to lighten their skins, change their hair textures, down-size and even reconstruct body parts. Even more so this self-hatred has been passed down from one generation to another. We have spoon-fed our children with our own feelings of low self-worth and unworthiness and it has seriously hindered the way they walk through this world. When our children do not believe they are beautiful, they are devoid of confidence and self-respect not only for themselves, but also for those who look like them.

What if we were to believe God’s word? What if we were to believe that He made us “fearfully and wonderfully”, as stated in Psalms139:14? If we were to believe, then we would understand that we are already beautiful. Then and only then would we be able to straighten our crooked definition of beauty which would allow our children to walk confidently in this world.

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If our children knew that they were beautiful and that we love them and they love themselves just the way God has made them....Then perhaps we would dedicate more time to helping them build strong characters and personalities of virtue.....Then perhaps they would be able to stand in this world with their heads held high and their backs straight....Then perhaps our girls would not be giving up their hearts and bodies to men who do not deserve them....Then perhaps our boys won't hate the image of themselves in the people who look like them and seek to harm and destroy them but instead would be protecting us all.... Then perhaps our children would become more confident and stronger and wiser and they would walk this world with a sense of pride....Then perhaps our children would recognize the power that lies within them and they would seek to make this world a much better place.

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Norka Blackman-Richards is an educator, a writer and an empowerment speaker on women, education, diversity and generational issues. She is the Chief Editor of *Empowerment 4 Real Women*, the Founder and CEO of *4 Real Women International, Inc* ., and the Global Developer for *The Global Community for Change* . She teaches for CUNY at Queens College.