

You Don't Get Whiter Than Me
By Opal Palmer Adisa

I was wanting to be somewhere that didn't exist, but I caught myself, or what people thought was my real self, flattened behind the mask I wore as the face I could show to others in the hope that they would see me --not the real me, but the me that was the mask, that I hoped I would not longer have to take off even when I was home alone.

What most folks didn't know was that until very recently, actually nine months ago when I moved to this city as an unknown, I did not date anyone who looked like me then; would not so much as give them a glance. I only dated blonde boys with blue eyes, and even though it often meant I had to suck their dicks, which I hated, and they didn't really respect or even like me, but being with me they could brag about being liberal. I dated them because I wanted to be close to those who were the ideal, whom everyone loved, who had power and privilege without even being aware. When I was seen in their company I felt the envy of those girls who thought they were the ideal. I even sometimes allowed myself to feel pretty.

I was raised by a father who had the nose of a parrot's beak with skin as pale as milk and a mother who some disparagingly called tar baby. Well that was until I was ten years old and my mother was killed. Then my father moved and married

a Japanese-Hawaiian who knew nothing about ashy skin or kinky hair, but loved me like one loves a pet or someone in need of love due to years of abuse. She said color did not exist so she never understood why after trying repeatedly and having the kids tease me, I refused to go and play with them. Instead, she pulled me outside to play, then invited all the kids in the neighborhood who grudgingly came, not so much to play with me but to observe my rainbow family who swam as good as the fishes.

What few people knew was: girls like me were never considered pretty --exotic or attractive—something to sample, to take home to test liberal parents who all the time focused on my color but were politically correct so never mentioned that social construct “race!” Beside, the intellectuals were saying, even before Obama became president, race was relative. And I dared not ask relative to whom? Not Tiara Thomas or Sandra Blade or Bettie Jones or the 102 unarmed Blacks who were shot by police in 2015. But I knew better to stay far from such topics that had nothing to do with me anyway.

What most people didn't know was: I've been bleaching my skin since I was fifteen; that these Angelina Jolie's green eyes are colored contact lenses and even if it means not eating, I wax underarms, legs and entire pubic area so not even a trace of stray kink can find its way.

When most girls were saving for or attending college I worked two jobs for four years then flew to Brazil and got lips too thin to really kiss and nose, the exact replica of Reese Witherspoon. My hair is as blonde as Scarlett Johansson, which I perm every two weeks. My hair bounces when I walk, and which I constantly toss; my valley girl accent makes me endearing and men always say nice ass when I walk down the street.

Framed pictures of dead white parents and being an only child, proves I am as white as one can get. At nineteen I volunteered for an experimental program to be sterilized so I would never have to worry about progeny or recessive genes.

Sometimes I allow myself to forget, and laugh and indulge with the girls from work who sometimes insist that I join them for drinks. I watch as they flirt with the bartender, talking about his white teeth, smooth chocolate skin, long fingers, and how they are sure he must be kinky in bed. I agree and even smile at him when he winks at me, and says *you're really soulful for a white girl*. Although I know the danger, I sometimes fantasize what it would feel like touching his skin, but then I remember: the past has been buried and I have to ensure that the lid remains securely sealed on that coffin.