

She's Pretty For A Dark-Skinned Girl

Posted on October 23, 2019

Introduction

The key question of discussion is how society has determined beauty on the basis of the amount of melanin in an individual's skin, further shedding light on intentional and unintentional racism. Arturo Madrid highlights the struggle of living as a minority and outcast due to the concept of the ideal and true American citizen who should be a white person with European ancestry (Arrighi). On the other hand, Omi and Winant introduce the theory of racial formation, where they point out that race shouldn't be determined by biological but social factors. Bill Duke and D. Channsin Berry's direction, *Dark Girls*, portrays the stories of real women who've experienced racism and grew up with the stereotypical concept that lighter skin is the definition of beauty.

While the articles of Madrid and Michael Omi describe discrimination against minority groups, outcasts, and different-looking people for the structure of their DNA, which is out of their control, the documentary of *Dark Girls* further adds to the racism in our society since the beginning of times by bringing forth the issue of absurd and illogical beauty standards.

Discussion

The documentary *Dark Girls* commences with a young African American girl explaining her feelings about her dark-colored skin, "I don't like to be called black because I'm not black" (*Dark Girls*, 2011). Relating to the experiences shared by Madrid in *Missing People and Others*, where he describes his feelings of being ostracized for his appearance as dissimilar to the idea of white American. Bill Duke's documentary shares the stories of multiple women, not only African American but a Korean woman, who are raised with insecurity about their skin color and looks (Harris). They grow up with the feeling of being less than anyone who has lighter skin and continuously makes an effort to change who they are and how they were born due to the pressure society enforces on them.

Racism, biological factors affecting appearance, discrimination, and ostracism are the core subjects of discussion in the articles and the documentary, which share a branch of racism and how it has shaped our society and the mindset of people regarding the class of race. Michael Omi and Howard Winant challenge the conventional theory of race and categorize the human race into various groups based on the structure of their DNA. The authors discuss the origin of the traditional theory of race since the times of European colonization when lighter-skinned men invaded the lands of the "native" people who appeared to be "different" than them. Furthermore, the concept of superiority of the European race was approved by scientific research that was influenced by public fascination (Omi and Winant, 3-13).

Duke and Berry present how young girls are taught to disapprove of themselves and build insecurities about their appearance. The film shows how a four-year-old girl is asked to point out the wisest and prettiest of the different illustrations of the same girl in different skin colors, and she chooses the lightest. Similarly, when she was asked to point out the dumbest and ugliest of them all, she chose the darkest girl, who was only a shade darker than the four-year-old. This is yet another example of how minority groups degrade themselves and show racist behavior towards each other in their community based on the similar standards of beauty set by the Europeans.

The film identifies the ideas discussed in the article by Arturo Madrid about his personal experiences of being discriminated against even though he and his whole family belonged to the United States of America and were rightful citizens. *Dark Girls* constructs upon the basic foundations of the traditional theory of racism scrutinized in Michael Omi and Winant's works. It shows how self-esteem issues among people of color begin at an early age when they should be learning to love themselves, show appreciation towards others, and embrace the biological factors that influence their appearance.

On the other side, on one occasion, *Dark Girls* shows that minority groups are unappreciative of themselves, which conflicts with Arturo's acceptance of his culture and portrays how he is proud of his ethnic background but disappointed in the stereotyping of an American citizen (Madrid, 18-22). Similarly, it defends the distinctive attributes of every race, while Omi introduces a new theory of racial formation and the relation between social class and race.

Nevertheless, the documentary expands on the topic of racism, struggling with ostracism, and finally coming to the point of embracing oneself and appreciating their uniqueness. Similar to Madrid's conclusion of eliminating ethnic differences and Omi's theory of removing biological factors from the determination of class, *Dark Girls* shows the women finally achieving acceptance and appreciation from themselves or others. It teaches that certain standards can't define beauty and that young girls need to be taught to be comfortable in their skin.

Conclusion

The film expands upon the discussion of minority groups and racial discrimination in the articles *Missing People and Others* by Arturo Madrid and *Racial Formations* by Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Dark Girls* provides a sub-topic and the consequences of the racism existing in society and its impact on the mindset of people and the creation of beauty standards, which becomes a barrier for dark-skinned women who live their lives with low self-esteem.

Works Cited

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