Skin Bleaching: Definition And It's Role In Modern Society

Colorism is a form of prejudice or discrimination in which people are treated differently based on the social meanings attached to skin color. This social and economic construct was derived from the colonial rule of Jamaica during the 1800s. Because of rule newspapers depicted Europe's idea of beauty and what was socially acceptable or desired. Light complexion was an advertised social asset in colonial Jamaica. Skin bleaching ads in The Jamaica Gleaner between in the early to mid 1900s reveals that women were encouraged to bleach their skin because light skin is beautiful, sexy, and attractive, and that skin bleaching will create a miracle complexion that leads to success. One of the more popular ads consisted of two black kids next to a light skinned kid and the words on the picture say "We are going to use chlorinol and be like the white nigger." Showing the stigma put on darker skinned people. Because of the dominance of European rule and its lingering influence on Jamaican culture skin bleaching is prevalent because of the need to gain social acceptance and economic success.

Skin bleaching, in an attempt to change the tone of the skin, was thought to be a practice of Westerners who want to maintain the aesthetic of white superiority. Tanning the skin to achieve a deep dark rich hue did not become popular until the late 20th century in America. The notion that "white or fair skin" equates to social superiority was propagated through the labeling and advertisements of western products that were exported to the Island of Jamaica.

Skin lightning started in the Victorian era with the age of powder and paint, European women painted their faces with lead paint. In addition Queen Elizabeth was known to take arsenic complexion wafers, which were little bits of poison to give her that ghostly look. They were invested in this ideal of whiteness because it was their way of communicating purity. And at that time, race was being solidified as a concept and whiteness was being defined as pure. During this time, white women were performing this level of whiteness with products. Because Europeans already had this ideal of white being pure and thus desire able they carried this same level of thing thinking when it came to controlling the colonies and also how the development of colorism was introduced. Initially skin lightning had to do with being pure and more so innocent but as time grew it became a way of dividing people and making money off of the insecurities of oppressed races.

Beauty is a crucial factor of social acceptance especially as a women in society you are pressured more into keeping your self well maintained and looking attractive at all times. For women living in Jamaican where European influence over shadows their culture it is hard for them to be who they are and still be treated with respect and equality. white-skinned individuals as icons of beauty, as did the print and electronic media industries. Today, in an even greater way, the media plays an influential role in how people live and how they perceive themselves. Television, magazines, newspapers schoolbooks and the likes of social media platforms, such as twitter and Facebook further emphasize the importance of image and beauty and how integral they are to achieving success. These forms of marketing suggest black women are depressed, bitter which leads them to being ignored by men and they suffer from low self-esteem. Ultimately, advertisements suggest, the lighter your skin, the more likely you are to find your dream occupation or even a suitable partner. When women are exposed to, or confronted with visual representations of beauty that are much different than their own in the media, it

creates a generation of insecure young women which results in them engaging in harmful forms of body modifications like skin bleaching.

These platforms encourage the use of products where individuals with a light skin tone are portrayed as being more attractive and more likely to be successful in life. This ideology bolsters the perception that a fairer complexion is equated to material and social success. Advertisements make it seem as if your success if heavily dependent on your complexion. For example Spice which is a Jamaican female artist recently was in the magazines and blogs because she wanted to bleach her skin. But she decided to do a song instead and it stated " I was told I would reach further if the color of my skin was lighter and I was made to feel inferior cause society said brown girls prettier... I get hate from my own race yes that's a fact" In Jamaica a browin is someone who is of light or fair skin so through the song she is talking about how people have doubted her talent and talked about her because she is dark skinned. Society and media plays a role in this because no one is born disliking themselves this is what happens when you depict beauty and success to a world full of diversity but only one type of person is the symbol of the message. how you feel about your self and if that leads you to Further more, In a sense Spice is saying that the conditioning done by the media, society and people compels you to prefer lighter skin tones and thus eventually change you own. More over, Christopher A.D. Charles states "Advertisements that promote the use of skin lightening products reflect the attitudes of local African-Jamaican women who believe that light-skinned Jamaican women not only appear better than their darker-skinned co-workers, but they are [also] evaluated as better workers." This ideology, "has been passed down from generation to generation, through various media vehicles as the norm in all forms of Jamaican society, which would include: government, religion, and cultural representations," (Charles, 2009). Exemplifying the view that light skin people are more valued. As also shown through celebrities who made it big like Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Nicki minaj who are global superstars its hard not to correlate beauty and economic success with being light skin which is the ideal or desired representation of beauty especially when they have undergone bleaching as well. Whereas, Spice is darker skinned and is as talented as they are but I not as known and celebrated like the other female artist are.

Many Jamaican artist promote skin bleaching as a good thing and because of there social status people take what they say with no questions asked because all of our lives it was presented to us as such. For example, an artist named vybz kartel made two songs one being "Look pon we" in the song it states "Di gyal dem love off mi bleach out face!!" And this translates to the girls love my bleached face. These lyrics have a double meaning beacause in one instance it shows that he's continuously bleaching his skin because his fans like it supporting the notion of social acceptance and its keeping his popularity and relevance where it needs to be for him to keep making money. So he has the wealth but because he has the fame in order to stay successful he is bleaching because this is what his fans specifically the women like and respond to.

In conclusion, European values of Afrocentric values in many facets of life, specifically in the promotion of light skin as an indicator of beauty and social status. Color and class are connected and whether you are granted social and economic mobility is determined by your complexion. Through colonial impact, television commercials, magazines, billboards, and the internet, the ideal skin complexion represented in Jamaican media is fair-skin tones we have resulted with the fact that fair skin and the use of skin-bleaching products, put Jamaica at the forefront of the world consumers of skin-bleaching products.