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## Oppression Against African Americans

Oppression, corruption, prejudice, and abuse are deeply embedded in the history of America. From slavery to Jim Crow to mass incarceration and to the many injustices that still flood our society after slavery, are still prevalent, even more so now that Trump is president. In this day and age, what I, a young black woman, can do to be productive in this society is to choose relationships (boyfriend/girlfriend wise) that build me up and not break me down. I would be a partner with someone who mostly shares my ideals and takes note of the patterns of their behavior, choices, activities, etc. I personally feel like, regardless of race, I should be with a person who doesn't hold any anti-black beliefs/notions since I am a black woman who is aware of the power dynamics of America and the unfair and unconscious preferences people hold due to colonization and white supremacy. Living in America as a black woman has made me hyper aware of the aftereffects of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, etc. and when it comes to having a significant other, they would have to be aware and understand why I live the life the way I do as a female minority.

Having a significant other, for me, would mean that they will have to embrace the texture of my hair, especially since having 4 type hair is unique to us African Americans/Africans, my skin, and my own independence. Being with that person would mean that they will have to embrace my blackness along with the kinkiness of my hair, freedom, and dark skin. Prosecuting me for the way I naturally look just goes to prove how anti-black and eurocentric their vision of beauty is. Gabby Douglas, a young black female olympian who had won multiple gold medals for gymnastics, was criticized for how unkempt her hair was, her skin, and that she wasn't smiling enough, which then made her unpatriotic according to some as stated, "She's had to deal with people criticizing her hair, or people accusing her of bleaching her skin. They said she had breast enhancements, they said she wasn't smiling enough, she's unpatriotic." (1) This would constitute as blatant sexism since no one sheds light on the fact that Douglas is an athlete, not a model who has to look feminine and perfect all the time. Also, since she's a black woman, she's accused of bleaching her skin and getting breast enhancements which contribute to the negative image black women have in America. Quite unlike a white male athlete who will actually get criticized for their actual work instead of looks and sex. When choosing relationships, I would have to recognize "misogynoiristic" behavior in my partner and in everyday situations that many would deem a 'non-issue'.

In this day and age, looks mean everything, especially with the neverending use and advancement of social media. I have taken personal note of this and had noticed a trend amongst the black population specifically. Besides, white people preferring their own beauty standard, Black people, who have colonized minds, embrace the eurocentric beauty standard, a beauty standard that is the complete opposite of their natural looks generally. This is a common behavior I see in not just Black people, but also in other minorities. Focusing on Black people specifically, stemming from racism, colorism still runs rampant in our community. Colorism is a branch of racism in which lighter skin is viewed as innocent, intelligent, beautiful, and attractive while dark skin is seen as evil, ugly, criminal, and revolting, according to the Wheel of Oppression and Privilege worksheet(2). The eurocentric beauty standard affects everywhere in the world, especially in America. To black women who are dark skinned, they are looked over and told to bleach their skin to become lighter in hopes of attracting a partner. Personally, in

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romantic relationships, black women generally, should get with people that can see their beauty in its raw form. When seeking out my own relationships, I will seek out someone who doesn't hold any centuries old anti-black biases against me.

Speaking of centuries old biases, I would be partners with someone who is aware of the power dynamics of this country we call America. Since the start and founding of this country, America had gone through time with blood staining its flag and hands with the genocide of one race and the many deaths from the enslavement of another. I would resist oppression, abuses of power, and prejudice by being with someone who is also aware of the history of America or someone who is willing to be open minded to understand more about it, regardless of race. Specifically, when it comes to white people, they would need to be aware of the privilege they have here in America. As stated from *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack*, "White privilege is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks... I want to, then, distinguish between earned strength and unearned power conferred systematically. Power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is, in fact, permission to escape or to dominate." A partner who recognizes this would be an ideal person to be with when trying to cut out oppression, prejudice, and abuses of power etc.

To resist and correct prejudice, corruption, abuses of power, and oppression, one must know how they came to be, functions, and how to dismantle it. In America, as of 2017 with Trump as President and hate crimes on a specific rise, it is important that a young black woman such as myself be vigilant and hyper aware of the microaggressions and blatant acts of oppression from the privileged, especially my partner in the future. I can point out the injustices that happen in our fast changing world and infer about ways to make the world a more peaceful place for all. Recognizing these unjust ways of the world and choosing a partner who is awake and aware of how America really works will be a way I would fight back against corruption, oppression, and prejudice in my life.