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THE
BLACK
GIRL
PROJECT

Original artwork by BGP Youth Researcher Jamai Williams

THE
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PROJECT



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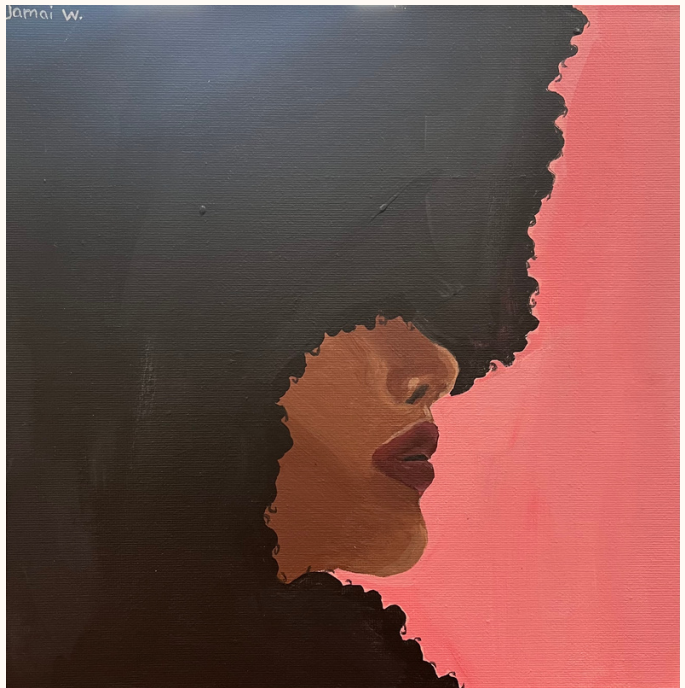
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DARK SKINNED GIRLS & *COLORISM*

The purpose of the Summer 2022 BlackGIRL Project was to examine and document how Black girls **experience**, **resist**, and **cope** with colorism. Our zine is composed of our findings (qualitative themes, statistics, and artwork). We hope you enjoy!



Original artwork by BGP Youth Researcher Jamai Williams

In the summer of 2022, BGP Researchers administered over 100 surveys, interviewed 9 Black adolescent girls, conducted a PhotoVoice project, and curated artwork to document experiences, impact, and resistance to colorism. This Zine includes research findings based on data from 59 survey respondents, 9 interviewees, and 10 BGP Youth Researchers.

colorism



discrimination based on dark skin tone



*Research
Findings*

interview

themes



Exclusion: dark skinned girls are typically ignored and excluded in social situations. They are made to feel that their presence is a nuisance.



Mistreatment in Schools: Dark skinned girls are often mistreated in school, from being overly punished by faculty and staff to being bullied by their peers.



Segregation in Friendships: inside and outside of their social circles, dark-skinned girls are often excluded and treated as outliers.



interview themes

Mistreatment in Friendships: in their friend groups/social circles, dark skinned girls are more likely to be treated harshly (i.e. being cutoff/shunned for simple mistakes or being talked about behind their back by other friends).



Boys as the Main Perpetrators of Colorism: In all of our interviews, participants reported black boys/men as the main perpetrators of their experiences with colorism.



Mocking: In various contexts (social media, school, etc.), dark skinned girls are mocked, often turned into jokes, and made into caricatures.



Colorism in Dating: When it comes to dating and relationships men tend to gravitate towards women of a lighter skin complexion rather than their darker skinned counterparts.

interview themes

Assumption of Aggressiveness: Dark skin black girls are often viewed as “ghetto.” People automatically make assumptions of criminality, lower-class status, and being problematic. In our focus group, many girls mentioned being followed around stores, and that employees assumed that they were stealing when they weren’t.



Devaluation from family: Family members tend to criticize and ridicule darker-skinned girls the most because of the societal norm that dark skin is inferior to light skin, leading to feelings of resentment and self hatred.

Having a support system

Having support and people in their corner allows dark-skinned girls to be resilient when facing colorism; it hurts in the moment, but they don't let it stick with them.

Resilience

Most participants expressed that they don't do anything to cope with colorism because of they are inherently resilient. They have described themselves as self-assured, self-affirmed, thick-skinned.

Feelings of betrayal by own kind

We found that dark-skinned black girls often feel betrayed by other black people who are the main perpetrators of colorism. In our focus group, one participant said "it be your own people" who cause division and strife with colorism.



BLACKGIRL PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

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The purpose of photovoice is to promote awareness and critical dialogue about important issues through on pictures. We used PhotoVoice to document the manifestation of and resistance to colorism on social media.



Screenshot taken from Lovett Jallow's YouTube video "My Skin Bleaching Story! An African Horror Story"

"European beauty standards more than often influence how Black women view themselves. It can lead to wearing eye contacts, perming their hair, and even go as far as bleaching their beautiful dark skin. We as a whole need to stop giving into these societal standards and stay confident in our skin"

"Many dark skinned women aren't recognized by people unless it's time for us to do something or want something. Dark skin women tends to work 10 times harder than lighter skin women, which is a sign of discrimination. This affects us because it may make black people feel like we aren't good enough not to be anything or do anything."



*visit @blkgirlproject on instagram for full photovoice project

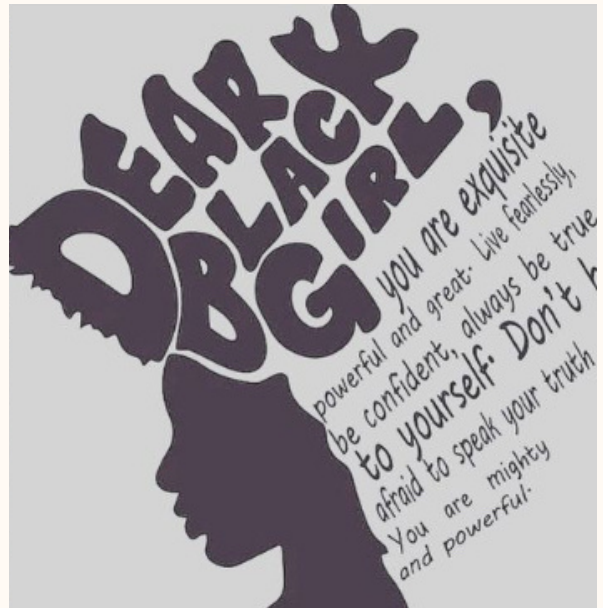
photovoice



"Black women need to be reminded that being Black is beautiful because there are so many things out in place telling us that we need to change ourselves."



"This image shows an inspirational message directed to black girls for them to be reminded that they should embrace what they have and don't be afraid or hold on back because of judgemental comments."



WHAT COLORISM IS DOING TO BLACK GIRLS



"Being seated in the most unsanitary areas & receiving the worst service in social settings."

"being ignored"

"I get dirty looks as if I don't belong"

"I was once belittled and compared to a person with lighter skinned girls"

"Throughout school life I had bullied because of my skin and in college I was seen as undesirable and viewed as the ugly friend."

"yes, I was called ugly cause of my skin tone"

"the ugly friend"

"got called"

"yes, my family believes in skin bleaching and trying to achieve a light skin tone."

"yes, I was told I wasn't black because of how light I am."

"being followed and pressured into buying so it don't look like im stealing or a general unwelcoming feeling."

THIS IS COLORISM

"I was considered too light to be a black person and too dark to be a white person"

"People prefer me less than my older sibling that is lighter, being seen as the aggressive one in my friend group where I am the darkest."

"A white lady thought I stole something cause of my color and almost got into trouble with the police."

"I have in terms of how I am treated in public and even how I am treated in public and in school environments. My needs are seen as incoherent and unimportant. My presence is seen as a bother and sometimes I am invisible to people. The ugly friend"

"Being Seated in the back of the bus and being the last to get off"

"I was walking when a white person bumped me and it slipped to the ground but they said I was no freedom of speech."

"In middle school people often found the lighter skinned girls more attractive."

"Employees following me around as if im stealing."

"I was considered to light" to be a black person and to dark to be white (even though im not white)."

"looking at me like I was going to steal."

"yes im treated poorly compared to my friends (being ignored, skin tone, general teasing, people automatic only assume aggressive"

"yes if I go to the store depending on the people or person they keep staring at if I was cheating"

"Being seated before other people yet being the last to be served or not served at all"

Quotes selected from the interviews and focus group conducted by the BGP youth researchers.

findings

we administered the BlackGIRL survey to 59 Black adolescent girls between the ages of 14 - 24 and these were our findings:



70%

of Black girls believed that dark-skinned girls are less likely to be believed about physical pain



81%

of Black girls believed that dark-skinned girls are less likely to be believed when they report abuse

86%

of Blackgirls believed that dark-skinned girls are more likely to be treated unfairly in school



COLORISM AGAINST BLACKGIRLS



Colorism is discrimination based on dark skin tone

We asked Blackgirls where and how they experience colorism.

This is what they said:

Exclusion
 Segregation in School
 Mocking
 Mistreatment in school and friendships
 "Preference for Light Skin"
 "You're 'problematic'"
 Devaluation from family
 Boys as the main perpetrators of colorism

We also asked about responses to colorism:

Get yourself a support system

Feelings of betrayal from own kind

Resilience

we're thick skinned

we're self-assured

we're self-affirmed

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DATA BASED ON BGP SURVEY BY SISSOKO ET AL 2022

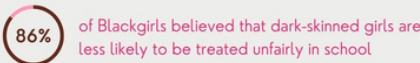
COLORISM AGAINST BLACKGIRLS



Colorism is discrimination based on dark skin tone



of Blackgirls report experiencing **colorism**



COLORISM MAKES YOU FEEL...

being gaslit attacked inferior
 insecure devalued
 misunderstood unattractive
 isolated ashamed

Colorism is everywhere...

family social settings entertainment
school peers dating institutions **social media!**



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DATA BASED ON BGP SURVEY BY SISSOKO ET AL 2022

survey findings

19% of Blackgirls reported engaging in risky sexual behaviors



31% of Blackgirls reported abuse of substances

37% of Blackgirls reported staying in unhappy romantic relationships



54% of Blackgirls reported academic failure

but why?

in this sample, skin tone and experiences of colorism were not associated with mental health symptoms and risky behaviors.

why?

BUT WHY?

Are the stats lying?

Maybe Blackgirls aren't believed

*Maybe it's too normalized and they can't point out
experiences*

They may not recognize; it just occurs so much

*Maybe it's not colorism, but racism - or maybe there's no
distinguishing*

*Maybe dark-skin people think of themselves as medium. Fake
compliments.*

People telling them

"Oh you're not dark skin, you're medium."

Either way, it's subjective; we have poor faith in assessment.

Or maybe there's just no colorism. Hahaha.



HOW WE FIGHT BACK

If Colorism Says:

- Assigned to be the aggressor
- "I've never dated a dark skin lecture"
- "stay out of the sun"
- "Bleach your skin"
- "Are you stealing?"
- "don't turn off the lights"
- "you're stupid"
- "you act ghetto"
- "oh you gettin smart mouth"
- "not attractive enough because too dark"
- "red lipstick is not for you"
- "you're dumb"
- "you blend in with the darkness"
- "oh you're pretty for a dark skin girl"
- "you look poor"
- "why do you talk so proper"
- "you're unattractive"
- "you're too light"
- "you are too dark to be wearing blonde hair"

WE SAY:

- YOU DESERVE IT ALL
- My black is beautiful
- You're Insecure
- Brown Sugar Bate !!
- We Are Black Queens
- I Am Majestic
- My Hair Is Versatile
- Most powerful piece in the game!
- It's dope to be black!
- Fuck Colorism!
- We Are The Blueprint
- My Skin Gives Me Power
- I AM DOPE
- We Are Black Women
- LOVE YOURSELF
- LOVE
- LOVE
- LOVE

Handwritten notes and stickers include: "Why didn't you protect yourself?", "It's dope to be black until it's hard to be black", "I Love Myself", "My Black is Beautiful", "My Hair is Versatile", "We are Black Queens", "I Am Majestic", "My Skin Gives Me Power", "I AM DOPE", "We Are Black Women", "LOVE YOURSELF", "LOVE", "LOVE", "LOVE".

Original artwork by BGP youth researchers



ABOUT BGP

The BlackGIRL Project is a research collective dedicated to the study of Blackgirl issues. Throughout the summer of 2022, BGP worked with adolescent blackgirls to explore ways in which blackgirls experience and are impacted by colorism.

It is our hope that our findings will inform researchers, practitioners, educators, policymakers, and others in building interventions and support systems for adolescent blackgirls who are negatively impacted by the effects of colorism.

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