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Column: Judith Sheppard

### Can the Obvious Be Invisible

“I try to teach you all not to see color, but to see a human being like you and me.”

That’s what my mom says to my brother and me whenever we mention someone’s complexion during a conversation.

But is my mom correct? Is it possible to not think of, see or discuss color during a conversation?

From what I’ve observed, it seems impossible because the world is surrounded by colorful word and ignorant stereotypes. For instance, summer brings the idea of tanning into everyone’s mind. I’ve heard white people talk about being too pale, and black people discuss how they don’t want to “get black from the sun.” However emphasis on skin tone isn’t the only part of the English language that mentions color.

Certain words emphasize a positive or negative meaning. For instance a lot of words associated with whiter are considered pure or superior. Wearing a white wedding dress is a symbol of being pure and wholesome for your husband on a traditional, American wedding day. White diamonds are considered expensive or more precious

than a ruby stone. Even the luxurious White House displays superiority with its entire outside painted white.

But with every negative there is a positive. Most words associated with the color black are harmful or awful. Black Magic is a sign of witch craft. Black Friday is the disastrous day after Thanksgiving when shoppers go mad hunting for Christmas gifts.

Speaking of shopping, let's not forget about Black Markets, where buyers and sellers do business at a price higher than the legally imposed price ceiling.

But of course you can always *blackmail* someone if this happens to you.

Of course there are some minor appearance words that emphasize white as being negative too. For instance, having ashy skin means that your skin may have white, dry marks. Dry skin is a sign of unhealthy skin that needs moisture.

Even sickness has its colorful language. If you're sick someone may mention that you look like "death run over." This means that you look horrible and often discolored or pale.

All words are not often blunt with colorful language. If you are not fond of homosexuals, you may be considered homophobic. Something that's not expensive or a person who chooses to watch the amount of money they spend may be called cheap. The word midget may be used to make fun of a short person, instead of a simple acknowledgement of a handicap.

Although insults may be the fuel that ignites our colorful choices in language, our actions are what start the prejudice fire.

Have you ever noticed how someone may scoot over if a person of a bigger size or different race sits next to them? Or how about the individual that is crossing the street and decides to wave thank you to the person of their same complexion without acknowledging the people of a different skin tone that allowed them to cross as well?

I'm sure many individuals think that this doesn't describe them, or they would never do that. There are also others who may believe there is nothing wrong with acknowledging color, and if God allows us to see in color then we should notice it.

I understand completely, but in a society where minorities are becoming the majority, you may want to reconsider your thinking habits. Minorities should remember that just because we are rising in number does not mean that white people are just going to fade away.

According to "The Heart of Whiteness" by Robert Jensen, "The fear of being seen, and seen-through, has haunted white people for centuries...in our heads we can pretend to eliminate it, but most of us know it is there." I'm sure this applies to minorities as well.

Let's not forget the Christians that believe strongly in Jesus. I have seen pictures of Jesus with a dark face and curly hair, and then I've seen people worship a man that

has blonde hair and blue eyes. But if God so loved the world that he gave his only son, do you think he did it without considering the color of the sinful person that was being saved? Besides, in the Bible, it mentions that Jesus was made up of all the children of The House of David, and that his hair was made of lamb's wool. Does this mean that Jesus was mixed?

My goal is not to transform your beliefs or criticize, but rather to just ask yourself why. Why do you have to describe someone as a little black boy or white girl? Why can't that child just be a girl or a boy? Does color emphasize the point of the story you're trying to tell, or does it just reveal your mind set and how you feel on the inside?

As you wake up and perform a normal task, think about whether you see color or do you think twice and re-ask?