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### "Why don't you hit me?" (or men of color versus white women: anatomy of a dilemma)

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## "Why don't you hit me?" Men of Color Versus White Women: Anatomy of a Dilemma.

By Christopher D. Gallegos

*Christopher Gallegos presents CSP readers with a very personal account on heterosexual attraction, and the levels of complexity that gender and ethnicity bring to this all too human experience. The piece is portrayed by the author as a "man of color's manifesto against the marketing of the white woman as the sole example of female beauty. It is unfair to everyone: men and women of color and the white women themselves."*

### **September 2004**

My first summer of love was spent with a girl three years older than me. I was fifteen, she was eighteen. Out of everything we experienced, the only thing that truly stays with me is her question:

"Why don't you hit me?"

Why would my *baixinha*<sup>1</sup> ask me something like this?

It was not until I was older that I stopped to ponder this relationship, and all the others I had been in. I started seeing patterns. Women with low self-esteem seemed drawn to me.

And they were all white.

I will not sit here for a minute and spout politically correct drivel about "love being colorblind." I am a minority man in America, and I have been around enough other minority men to know about the unsaid "rule" governing our desire.

White women are trophies.

The theme surfaces in many Hollywood films. In Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever," Wesley Snipes plays a handsome black architect having an affair with his white secretary. The affair disgusts the society around the pair, and the suggestion is that the only reason Snipes "scored" with the white woman is because he was in an economically elevated position.

Examine "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." Sidney Poitier faces the judgment of his white fiancée's parents who admire his status as a doctor, but do not admire it enough to give him free reign with their daughter.

"Crazy/Beautiful." Rich politician's daughter Kirsten Dunst hooks up with a Mexican-American from a poor neighborhood. Her father tells the kid to stay away from his daughter, not because he doesn't like Mexicans, but because his daughter has emotional problems.

What can these examples show us? Nothing. That is, nothing other than the fact that popular culture still has to grapple with the idea of white women relating to men of color.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Portuguese-"my little short one"

We, men of color, lie in a minefield of images constantly celebrating the glory of the white female. Media has created an artificial system of desire in which we, men of color, hunger for white female flesh, because it is presented as more appetizing than that of our own women.

Conversely, all the music videos on TV and movies on the big screen now scream how cool it is to be a black or brown man today, how you have a swagger that white men can't touch, a swagger born out of years of oppression, a swagger that takes the power back from the legacies of slavery and abuse of menial workers in brown bodies.

But these images are facades. A step behind the scenes reveals tragic truths. Those who buy into what the media says find themselves in situations where comfort levels are tested and differences are realized.

Miss summer of love '97 had me at hello. Well actually, she didn't. It took a lot of work. She wanted me, I didn't want her. Even at such a young age, I knew in the back of my mind that a brownie like me was not supposed to be with a girl like her. My hair was jet black and my eyes were a patient brown. Her hair was flaxen blonde, her eyes were blue. I was skinny like a pretzel stick. She was a curvy Aryan goddess and it was hands off.

But she got me. Enough smiles and winks of the eyes gave me the confidence to step over the feared line all men of color face when wading into the waters of a relationship in which their hand is always the losing one.

And why is it a losing hand? Am I saying that men of color should never date white women?

No. What I am saying is that men of color should never date white women for the wrong reasons.

Too many of us are buying into idealized images presented to us from cradle to grave. America's history is such that anything before tales of minutemen at Lexington is placed into the file cabinet of oblivion. Where are my sultry Native American women? Someone's calling them a squaw. Where are my almond eyed beauties? Getting the fold surgically taken out of their eyes to look more "Western." Where are my Nubian princesses? Being relegated to booty shaking music videos (as if that's all they have to offer).

Where are my Aryan princesses, with fleece as white as snow?

Everywhere.

I suppose it seems wrong of me to say such things, but do I do them with anger? Hate? Malice?

I do them with a love of all women, and a sadness born of an over represented model of beauty. White women are beautiful, but so are all women. Why can't America realize the face of femininity is no longer that of the English rose, one step removed from the Anglo motherland?

\* \* \*

So you occasionally see a very "ethnic" looking woman championed. Supermodel Alex Wek, blowing up our

senses with a chocolate countenance and quasi-Asiatic eyes.

More often you see the "*cafe con leche*" effect, that is the Halle Berry's and Beyonce's all around, making the slow transition from invisibility to "high yellow" *sista*, to bottle-blonde, to the extreme Janet Jackson-esque blue or green contact lenses where the only "color" left is in the public imagination.

So you see, women of color are hardly being given the coverage they should. Ditto for us men of color. An occasional Benjamin Bratt sprinkled with a side of Taye Diggs and you have it made. They're both "safe" choices...Bratt being half white (and therefore "softened") and Diggs having played an "exotic" Jamaican foil to Angela Basset's forty-something "Stella."

I had been talking about miss summer of love '97. What about her?

She had certain expectations. I was the first brownie she had been with, and as such, the differences were quick to reveal themselves. She never asked racist questions, stupid questions...but she used me as a pleasure toy then left me for the guy who dealt drugs on the corner.

And I was left with a *corazón roto*<sup>2</sup>.

I tried again a year later. This girl lived out in the country. Had a short haircut and a devious backwoods smile. She, like the last, swathed self-esteem issues in a mask of social activity. When one has a billion friends and a smile on the

face, you would never view the hurt within.

It was that hurt which drove her out of my arms into the arms of her crazy white suitor, a guy who threatened to kill me various times because I rained my only defense- profanity (how brown of me), onto her head after her betrayal.

Well...she left me.

Tic number two on the chart. Low self-esteem white girl leaves brownie for a whitey. Check.

The pattern was thrown into chaos with girl number three, this one a shapely blonde little temptress whose innocent hips swiveled a bit too long, her glances holding too much of a flirtatious air.

I was smitten. I dreamt of the day I could taste her, all of her, never mind that society didn't want a brown boy like me getting any part of my soil on her pure white flesh.

And I didn't. *Ela foi um mulher fresca*<sup>3</sup>.

So I was pushed into the arms of her (gasp!) non-white best friend. Being with a non-white girl for the first time was an interesting experience. I had often found the *Mexicanas* in this area alluring, but being brown didn't guarantee a connection with them. I was (and am) a whitewashed New Mexico *Hispano* who by virtue of some tough early years growing up in California developed into a strange hybrid creature.

A brown shell with perfect English diction, but no solid tie to the originators

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<sup>2</sup> Spanish-"broken heart"

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<sup>3</sup> Brazilian Portuguese-lit. "She was a cool woman" i.e.-She was a tease.

of the language. A brown shell, not wanting to be grouped with the only other brown people in the area, because *I'm not of their stock*. A brown shell, who like my other New Mexican brethren, wants to claim that my roots are more Spaniard than not.

But it's all a lie. Living a lie pushed upon me. Feeling for some reason like being around a white woman too much is a guilty pleasure I shouldn't be allowed.

I think back to the many times I have bad mouthed a man of color for choosing a white woman.

I have done the same thing...many times.

And what is it? I tell myself that being articulate in English makes me better suited to those who speak English, as if having white skin means your English is superior.

I tell myself that somehow I have proven to the world that I'm not brown. That I am better than that, better than brown. Brown is one step from black, and black is one step from oblivion.

Isn't that how its always been taught?

Am I wrong to try and transcend the shackles of brownness? After all, choosing to embrace your brownness seems one step from becoming a militant.

Sometimes militancy seems the only hope for those with no hope left. By forcing the ideologies of difference on the white world, change will be made...

What change? Change toward more equal treatment? Equal treatment means

nothing. It means a blind eye is turned to the fabric of the nation. What the nation is today is what it has always been: the victory of light over dark.

By presenting a maelstrom of images to us colored men, the hope is to hypnotize us, weaken us, *and castrate us*.

But then is the solution one of separatism? One of dating, marrying, loving and mating with only those women who look like you? That cannot work either. By adopting a policy of racial separatism, the true problem is avoided: *people of color in this society have been de-sexed from day one*.

We all speak English because the conquerors spoke it. We all turn a blind eye to prejudice because one day it stopped being cool to throw around terms like "nigger," "wetback", "tonto", "jap", "raghead", "chink." We devalue our women because the society devalues them like they devalue us and being with them would make us realize where we stand.

And we don't want to do that. So what is the solution? To love someone because you're in love with their humanity. Because you love their spirit of life. Not because you saw a model of desire being handed to you by those who want only your money and your ruin.

Love from the heart, not from the ego. Don't love a single color, love the palette. And most importantly...love yourself.

And to answer miss summer of love '97's question...

I don't hit you...because if I did, I would be hitting myself.