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Sexualization and Objectification of Women in the Philippines

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TODAY'S NEWS

A Look Into The Developing World

What is...?

1. Sexualization

defined as to make something sexual, to endow with a sexual character or cast

2. Objectification

defined as to treat something or someone as an object, or cause to have an objective reality

3. Colorism

defined as people with lighter skin tones having privileges over those who have darker skin tones when it comes to areas such as economic standards, educational status, housing, and even in marriage

Source: Merriam Webster, Margaret Hunter

The Two C's

Colonialism and Colorism have both played great roles in the formation of the mindset of Filipino people. Colonialism was able to form the ideology that having lighter skin tones (a.k.a. white) was more superior compared to darker tones. Colorism takes this to an advantage, for the ideological view that those with lighter skin tones are perceived to be more superior plays into social structure and giving advantages for them.

Sadly, Filipinos have become victims of the two C's. Through colonialism, the Spanish helped formed the mindset that white tones means beauty and wealth, and dark tones mean poverty. This results in Filipinos who have white, fair skin to be treated highly compared to those with darker tones. This is evident considering the Filipino Movie Industry and the overwhelming light toned actors.

Source: Margaret Hunter, Filipiknow, Sherina Ong



Sexualization and Objectification of Women in the Philippines

In every Filipino household, it is practically a norm that you are supposed to have all of the Filipino television programs. From ABS-CBN to GMA, us Filipinos center or social world with the programmings that these television companies generate. Yet can it be that the programming that Filipinos are so accustomed to be detrimental to the mindset of how we perceive genders and how we look at our own people?

Television programs coming from Filipino broadcasting networks often portray women as either domestic figures (Prieler & Centeno) or sexually alluring figures in order to gain more views (Castro). When portrayed as domestic figures, women are portrayed as passive, inferior to their own male counterparts, and only physically dependent as mothers and wives (Prieler & Centeno). On the other hand when portrayed as sexual figures women are exploited as figures representing vulgarity and to use their own bodies to physically appeal to the mental sexual desires



A Frightening Industry

The Skin Whitening Industry has become a frighteningly large industry that involves itself with the developing countries of the world. It is an industry that plays into the narrative of Colorism and benefits from the past acts of Colonialism. As a result of Colonialism and its ideology of having white skin representing power and wealth, it is becoming from developing countries that it is rather encouraged to have lighter skin.

The products that come from this industry goes into the notion that the "standards of beauty and sex appeal have created light or 'white' skin hegemonic representations based on alleged superiority" (Mendoza). This not only encourages the post-colonial thinking of white supremacy, it degrades other races that have darker skin tones and encourages behavior that advocates to gaining lighter skin no matter how detrimental it can be towards their bodies.

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The Image of a Woman

Interviews from different women in the Whitening Industry

A Whitened Perspective

The perspective of the Whitening Products Industry and what they have to say

of the viewers in the public (Castro). This results in higher ratings, to the benefit of the broadcast company, and resulting in the degradation of the image of women in Filipino society.

The sexualization of women in media is accepted, yet as a result of such sexualized images of women it correlates to how women are perceived in society. Clothing becomes a subject of symbolizing social influence, status and identity, and the sexual representation of women through clothing in the media results in women's sexualization through clothing in society (Awasthi). In addition to this Filipinos have conservative values, as well as the overwhelming influence of the Roman Catholic Church, certain ideals of how women are supposed to act and physically appear are taken to heart. Through the influence of the Church, there is double standards pertaining to the nature of women. There is also the fact that the chastity of women is valued, meaning that chastity and virginity are the only things that matter in a woman (Ruiz Austria et al). Other than the subject of chastity, women are to be modest in their clothing, and to not sexualize their bodies through such clothing. This raises the subject of objectifying the woman and how women are merely seen as a sexual object in Filipino society rather than seen as a whole being. The value of a woman is higher if they have their virginity in Filipino society, and if they do not have their virginity that they are perceived lesser than others and are degraded.

Why should I care?

First, if you are asking yourself this then please take a few minutes to rethink your moral values and who you are as a human being. Secondly, the reason why you should care is because through the sexualization and objectification of Filipino women, they are often victims of forced sexual acts intercourse. Through the sexualization of women in media, it creates a hyper sexualized image of women that plays into the gender stereotypes that trivializes the subject of violence towards women (Swift & Gould). This seen in Australia and how Filipino women are portrayed in their media. Australian media's representation of Filipino women gives negative connotations towards the perception of women and results into the emotional and physical pain that Filipino women face (Saroca). The portrayal is considered as sexist and degradative, objectifying Filipino women and dehumanize them.