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A brown eyed girl's search for a brown eyed doll (circa 1955)

Monday, March 18, 2013

12 years before Van Morrison's song, I knew that it was blue eyes that were beautiful.

I didn't need a commercial, TV show or anyone else to tell me that blue eyed blondes hit the genetic jackpot and I didn't. All I had to do was look at my dolls.

I remember walking up and down the toy aisles looking for a doll that looked like me. There weren't any. My parents were surprised when I told them I didn't want any of them. I never told them why. They thought I had outgrown dolls at age 8

DR1939's comment on my blog Saturday sparked this long buried memory about the effect of the lack of diversity on self image.

When she wrote about the importance of variety (all races, colors, creeds, genders) in the media, I remembered when the faces we once saw were all homogeneous. Entire groups of Americans grew up never seeing anyone on TV that looked like them. Not in commercials, or programs and definitely not at the news desk.

There's nothing wrong with showing slender, fit or beautiful women in the media unless that's the ONLY women we ever get to see.

There's nothing wrong with showing women as homemakers/housewives unless that's the ONLY image we're ever shown

There's nothing wrong with showing women as teachers, secretaries etc, unless you NEVER see them on any other career path.

There's nothing wrong with blonde, blue eyed dolls either, unless that's the ONLY option you have for your child.

In an interview actress Ernestine Wade discussed the Amos and Andy TV series and her character in particular. She played "Sapphire" the shrewish wife of George "Kingfish" Stevens. She said that she knew women like Sapphire and men like George too. The problem was that "Amos and Andy" was the ONLY image people were shown of the African American community.

Today when you see a commercial with many races included, some disparage it as "politically correct." I prefer to call it "correct" PERIOD and an important step toward equality. Actually, it was more likely economic rather than political pressure that brought about this change. Companies finally realized that their favorite color was green. All kinds of people spend money.

I still have a few of my dolls. In addition to their physical features, their dress also describes the mindset

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of the day.



Yes, they were all dressed as brides.

I had baby dolls too (Tiny Tears and Betsy Wetsy), but they didn't survive the years.

There was one other career path open to girls in Brooklyn in the 1950s
At least the Catholic ones.



Edit:

I should point out that my doll experiences predated Barbie which was introduced in 1959. Although she was blonde and blue eyed too, at least I never had to deal with a doll with a physically impossible figure. None of my dolls had boobs.

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LINDAKAY228

Love the pictures of your dolls! I'm also glad now that dolls come in a wide variety of skin color and eye color. I did grow up with Barbies, since I was born in 1955. As many have said, a woman with her proportions would be so top heavy in reality!
3007 days ago



SADWHITEWOLF

I know this isn't the point of the blog but I REALLY want that nun doll! She is so cool!
3007 days ago



BOILHAM

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-o5OmjZnVW88/UJJa-LzcRzI/AAAAAAAAAcI/TVcP_8DMbcU/s1600/FACEBOOKCOVER.jpg



A little late, but here you go.



3008 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/20/2013 10:24:34 AM



DR1939

My blond, blue-eyed daughter asked for and received a black doll (she's 48 now). It's the only doll she still has.



The US is not the only country where this is prevalent. When we were in Hyderabad, India, about 8 years ago the blowup manikins that hung outside the shops were all blue-eyed blondes. Hyderabad is in the south of India where most people are very dark (as well as very attractive). I am blond and blue-eyed. One weekend our group of college professors and Indian hosts were out in the countryside at India's largest dam. One other woman was blond as well as much younger than me. The two of us drew the most attention of our group. Our group were the only non-Indians in the huge holiday crowds. My guide kept telling me they were talking about me.

When we were in Delhi where whites, or as one of my black students used to say "pinks," were more common, we did not draw so much attention.

3008 days ago



CD12494098

Great heart felt blog with wonderful heart and hits the heart strings. You are so right... I understand completely what it feels like ... the world is a bit more accepting of diversity today, but still not totally embracing the beauty of it.




3009 days ago



SOPHIEDO13

I was given one Barbie it had brunette hair around 1969 I wanted the blond since that is all you'd see my Mother wouldn't have any part of that, but it didn't make it LOL now I collect dolls and they are brown haired brown eyed except for 1 that I found that looks like my costa rican DIL olive skin and curly black hair DIL doesn't like dolls but I thought it was an ingenius find from



Precious Moments, so it's a keeper !! 

P.S. after reading the comments I guess I had a knock off Barbie since they were all blonde back then, and I had a Brunette doll...Who knew ??? My Mother Did !!

3009 days ago

Comment edited on: 3/19/2013 4:06:46 AM



CELIAMINER

My Barbie was a brunette (1960-ish), but she did have the blue eyes. Loved Watermellen's comment about how so many of the "stars" look alike. I honestly can't keep them straight.



3009 days ago



MERRYMARY42

good blog, enjoyed it, me, brown eyed and darker hair, was never envious of anything except curly hair,



3009 days ago



WATERMELLEN

What worries me is the swing back to the norm of the blue eyed blonde -- how many Hollywood actresses post Botox and surgery in their size 0s look pretty much identical??



3009 days ago



CD13227574

I had a "Tammy" doll and my mother made clothes for it for me. I don't know if I still have that doll any longer, I wonder what she might be worth if I did?



3010 days ago



CD8467616

A nun doll -- who knew? Not this Jewish girl. I still have my Alice in Wonderland doll - blonde & blue-eyed. When I was small I loved my storybook dolls - remember them?



This reminds me, though, of the movie stars and singers I watched when I was young, who made me very uncomfortable and I didn't know why. Doris Day, Peggy Lee (not a good example), Rosemary Clooney (who I came to love later) -- all blonde, blue-eyed, wearing tight clothes. In retrospect, I think it was about the virginal yet sexual way they were presented and how blonde and blue-eyed was considered the most desirable.

When my own kid was little I wouldn't allow Barbies in the house (now modified for my littlest grand-daughter) and she had an African-American doll whom she named "Joan" after Joan Baez.

:)

Have you seen the American Girl dolls of today? Expensive but quite wonderful in their multi-culturalism.

3010 days ago



HAYBURNER1969

Speaking of your "edit" there at the end, Barbie's figure is still unattainable for most women, but her boobs are quite a bit smaller than my Malibu or Ballerina Barbie of 1976. We can't even velcro shut current Barbie tops on them. They bust out of them! (ha ha, pun intended)

3010 days ago



CD10259955

I have a nun doll still as we'll as many other dolls tucked away! I collected the Barbies from different nations and tucked them away too!



We were definitely not the Cleavers or Donna Reed in our family!

3010 days ago



WILSONWR

As usual, another great blog with a lot of insight. I never realized that all of those Barbies were the same back then until you mentioned it. Of course, I didn't play with dolls too much -- I was busy outside exploring the "wilderness" (something I wish kids could do more of today).

3010 days ago



STRIVERONE

"I prefer to call it "correct" PERIOD and an important step toward equality."

GOOD FOR YOU!

Well said.

3010 days ago



HAYBURNER1969

That last picture of the nun doll made me laugh out loud. Great blog, Mom.

You know, when I found out I was having a baby girl, I went out and bought a brown-haired Barbie. Back in the 70's there were no brown-haired Barbies... only Barbie wannabes, which weren't as nice a quality.

So imagine my surprise when this brown-eyed, brown-haired mother gave birth to a blue-eyed blonde! She LOOKS like Barbie!!!! Anyway, when we played Barbies together, I always used the brown-haired one. She is forever to be known as "Mommy Barbie".

3010 days ago



SLIMMERJESSE

Love your blogs.

3010 days ago



CD8113065

"Actually, it was more likely economic rather than political pressure that brought about this change. Companies finally realized that their favorite color was green. All kinds of people spend money."

You nailed that one!!! The bottom line will overcome anything.

Another great blog.

3010 days ago



MISCHAKEO

You know I did not realize that little fact when I was young. All of the Barbies were blonde and blue eyed. That was an interesting insight. I loved my stuffed animals and was not in to dolls. Who know what color their eyes were. LOL.

You are so right. Keep the diversity up in media! We are all here on the planet and should be loved and respected.

3010 days ago



GINA180847

You've done a good job pointing out the differences between the options available to girls now and in the past. Have you noticed that girls now do not want anything to do with women's liberation? How soon they forget! And we are only partially liberated in a small portion of the world

3010 days ago



NANNABLACK

THANK YOU!



3010 days ago



CD12747803

Thanks for your blog. I had all of those dolls, too...brought back some fond memories.
3010 days ago



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