

A Girl Like Me

Stephanie: Every black female has a big butt and big boobs.

Glenda: Loud, obnoxious, ghetto.

Jennifer: Light skin being more attractive than dark skin.

Wahida: We're not smart, we're this way; we're that way and a lot of times we have to prove ourselves and not being true

Kiri Davis (voice-over): At a young age, I already knew the standards for a girl like me. As I become older, they become more obvious.

Stephanie: You have to have permed hair, relaxed hair.

Wahida: Or you know, like straight hair, or like, blond hair, or like little weaves or something.

Stephanie: And if it's natural, that's even... that's good hair. Like bad hair is hair that you have to relax because it's kinky.

Wahida: And it's not, like, appealing to have, like, natural hairstyles. Or like, if they are natural, they have to be like the curly-haired light black girl. Something that looks mixed or something.

Stephanie: I remember when I first started wearing my hair natural. At first, my mom was okay with it and she thought it looked nice and then after like the second day, she was all like, "Stop that, you're starting look African." I was like, "Well, I am African" and that really pissed me off.

Glenda: There are standards that are imposed upon us like, um, you know, you're pretty... you're *prettier* if you're light skinned.

Wahida: I knew people in the past that, like, just like wanted to be light-skinned, not for any particular reason, you know, because they love themselves. I mean, they love themselves, except maybe the color of their skin.

Jennifer: And my siblings are all lighter than me and my mom, uh, she's dark-skinned, but she's lighter than me. So like, I notice, hey, how come I'm the darkest? And everybody else is so light. I don't know. And since I was younger I also considered being lighter as a form of beauty or you know, beautiful-- Or more beautiful than being dark-skinned. So I used to think of myself as being ugly. 'Cause I was dark-skinned.

Wahida: I knew people who, like, actually went out there to get bleaching cream and everything. And actually, like, laid in the tub, and like, poured, like capfuls of bleach in. It just so they could see if their skin would get lighter.

Stephanie: But yeah, my aunt that lives in Honduras, she basically started using skin bleaching cream when she was about 25 and she started her oldest daughter on it when she was about 11 and she has an even younger daughter that was about six when she started using the skin bleaching cream on her.

Glenda: I've seen people who say I would never marry a dark-skinned man because, you know, because I don't want that in my gene pool.

Wahida: On the other hand, light-skinned girls have their issues too. We've been called high yella, conceited, house nigga. I feel like both sides have their issues.

Jennifer: I guess I sort of felt that there wouldn't be any attention towards me because of my skin color or because my hair was kinky or you know... just basically that.

Or even when, also when I was younger, say there was, there was, I don't know, a doll. I used to have a lot of dolls, but most of them were just white dolls with long straight hair that I would comb and I would be like, I wish I was just like this Barbie Doll.

Kiri Davis (voice-over): In Brown vs the Board of Education, the famous case that desegregated schools in the 1950s, Doctor Kenneth Clarke conducted a doll test with black children. He asked them to choose between a black doll and a white doll. In most instances, the majority of the children preferred the white doll. I decided to re-conduct this test as Doctor Clark did And see how we've progressed since then.

Can you show me the doll that you like best or that you like to play with?

Child A: [whispers] This one

Child B: This one!

Child C: I like that one.

Child D: Yes, this one.

Kiri Davis (voice-over): Can you show me the doll that is the nice doll?

(**Child B** holds up the white doll)

And why is that the nice doll?

Child B: He's white.

Kiri Davis (voice-over): And can you show me the doll that looks bad? Okay?

(**Child A** holds up the white doll)

And can you give... and why does that look bad?

Child A: Because he's black.

Kiri Davis (voice-over): and why do you think that's the nice doll?

Child A: Because she's white

Kiri Davis (voice-over): Can you give me the doll that looks like you?

(**Child A** gives her the black doll.)

Kiri Davis (voice-over): Fifteen out of the twenty-one children preferred the white doll.

Glenda: Our ancestors came to this country and they were pretty much ripped, ripped out of their culture. You know, they couldn't speak their language. They couldn't, you know, they couldn't be themselves. They had to be what everybody else told them to be.

Illiana: When you don't know where you're from and you don't know what country you're from, all you know is basically, you're from Africa and that's all you're given, I feel like it brings on, like, a lot of ignorance and it builds a lot of anger. I've seen, like, I've seen it build a lot of anger in a lot of black young females. Like, I don't know, they feel like, they have the right to disown any kind of, you know, African roots.

Jennifer: I think for a black girl in general, it's like you're missing a piece of you, you know, and for me, it's like I don't have any actual heritage? Not heritage, but culture. Like, I know I'm from Africa but you know, different—the different countries in Africa have different cultures and different morals and different values and not knowing that just... sort of keeps us at a loss.

And we just...I feel like we're busy searching for it while everybody else in society is throwing their ideas and what they believe we should be at us, but you know. Personally we know that's not where we should be but we're gonna take it because we don't know exactly what it is that we should be 'cause we don't really know where we came from.

[Theme Music]