

THE RIDICULOUSNESS PURITY OF BEING LIGHT AND WHITE

By Hama Tuma

I am an African and my defense of DOVE and NIVEA may be considered a betrayal and worse still masochistic. My position has nothing to do with some Africans' wild imagination that they are not black. Imagine the kettle calling the pot black and all that nonsense. No, that is not where I come from. Let me say out the case first hand.

DOVE goofed again by posting an ad that actually said if you are black and use Dove soap you will turn white--eventually we can presume. Nivea equated purity with whiteness and fair skin with being less black--so long as you use Nivea cream you will have a fair and non-black skin is the message. The hue and cry against these two strikes me as very hypocritical. Majority of Africans and even Asians use skin lightening creams and many in Nigeria and Kenya near us and in Indonesia and Malaysia far way do so too considering that black color is a curse at best and ugly at least. If huge number of blacks hate their own color and use skin lightening creams what is the fault of Dove and Nivea for stating the obvious that has made them tons of money ?

Consider this. The Merriam Webster dictionary gives as the synonyms of black the following:

bad, dark, evil, immoral, iniquitous, nefarious, rotten, sinful, unethical, unlawful, unrighteous, unsavory, vicious, vile, villainous, wicked, wrong, base, contemptible, despicable, dirty, disreputable, evil-minded, ignoble, ill, infernal, low, mean, snide, sordid, atrocious, cruel, infamous, nasty, blamable, blameworthy, censurable, objectionable, obscene, offensive, reprehensible, corrupt, debased, debauched, degenerate, depraved, dissolute, libertine, loose, low-minded, perverted, reprobate, scrofulous,

sick, unhealthy, cursed (also curst), cussed, defiling, noxious, pernicious, pestilential, ugly, ungodly, unwholesome, banned, barred, condemned, discouraged, forbidden, illegal, interdicted, outlawed, prohibited, proscribed, unauthorized, unclean, disallowed, execrable, lousy, miserable, wretched, errant, erring, fallen, unprincipled, unscrupulous, improper, incorrect, indecent, indecorous, naughty, unbecoming, unseemly, vulgar, dishonest, dishonorable.

I can add stinking, satanic, cannibalistic, wretched, criminal, rapist. Who wants to be identified with all these? Years of white supremacist rant have made blacks believe that they are inferior and their color ugly. "Colourism", bleaching. The multi million dollars worth of trade in skin lightening creams is there because there is a market for it. And as Western multi nationals still believe that Africans are stupid they are certain that blacks would swallow the message of the ads--use Dove soap or Nivea cream and black will be white or at least pale. Africans have been told time and again that skin lightening creams can cause skin cancer and we have even noticed so many damaged faces but no matter. The obsession to be white is supreme, And why blame them? What is the antonym of black in the same dictionary?

Near Antonyms of *black*: *elevated, high, high-minded, law-abiding, legitimate, lofty, noble, principled, reputable, scrupulous, allowed, authorized, legal, licensed, permissible, permitted, approved, endorsed (also indorsed), sanctioned, abetted, encouraged, promoted, supported, clean, correct, decent, decorous, exemplary, proper, seemly, blameless, commendable, creditable, guiltless, legitimate, chaste, immaculate, incorruptible, innocent, inoffensive, irreproachable, lily-white, perfect, pure, spotless, squeaky-clean, uncorrupted, unerring, unfallen, unobjectionable, venerable, white, wholesome, esteemed, respected, upstanding, worthy, decent, ethical, good, honest, honorable, just, moral, right, righteous, sublime, upright, virtuous.*

And pure. And most important of all WHITE. We are still the dark and savage continent, lest you have forgotten . This inferiority complex and denial of self was fought against in the revolutionary times when black was deemed

beautiful (as it was and is), the Afro exalted and blacks given their deserved place as pioneers of civilization and progress. A long long time ago? Luckily for Dove, Nivea and the skin lightening cream vendors that time has changed. Black lives hardly matter and we Africans have ourselves to blame for being victims of Dove, Nivea and so called fair skin giving creams. And what about the horrible wigs which cost an arm and a leg? Another multimillion dollar business with millions of customers--victims in Africa. At one time Uganda's first lady Janet Museveni had her natural short cropped hair and many young women emulated her, the Janet cut, and rejected the costly "human hair " wigs from the USA and Brazil. I do not know now if it is still the case. However, for Africa the "good hair" is not the kinky hair we naturally have but the one that resembles the wavy hair of the whites. And the wig vendors are rejoicing aplenty. Bleaching makes us look sexy say Caribbean girls and wavy brown-- blonde wigs make us look stunning. The war is still lost.

Purity has little to do with being white. Fair skin has little to do with being white. But try telling this to the millions of fair skin cream buying victims in Africa. Dove and Nivea are our accusing conscience, the signs of our enduring inferiority complex.. We are their victims and therefore the ones responsible for the malaise. That is why I found the ongoing cry against Dove and Nivea, etc hypocritical. That projects our weakness and failure. If we get rid of our inferiority complex and take pride in our color then the cream vendors will be out of business. If we respect our hair the same will be true for the wig sellers. Taking all this and more into consideration I am of the opinion that Dove and Nivea are no more racist than before and blacks no more wiser than the bad old days.