

THE CHANGING FACE OF BEAUTY

Stylist's beauty assistant Anita Bhagwandas has spent 14 years struggling to find make-up to suit her. Finally, we're entering an age of cosmetic equality

PHOTOGRAPHY: BOOTHNATION

“Mum said I can't play with you any more because you're brown...” That moment, aged five, the frosty playground of my primary school became arctic; it was the day I became acutely aware that the colour of my skin made me different.

I was one of a handful of non-white children in my year. Unlike so many ethnic minority children who face a torrid daily existence of name-calling, I was never bullied past an obligatory 'Paki' or 'you're the colour of poo' comment. But those cursory derogatory remarks evolved in time, becoming fragments of self-hate that lodged in my subconscious. My deep-set feelings of otherness were compounded when making my first foray into the world of make-up. It should have been a fuzzy warmth of beauty exploration but sadly, that wasn't to be.

Make-up trips to the small town centre in Newport, south Wales put me on edge. While my pale-skinned friends would coo over the shades in Boots, a powder compact filled with a rectangle slab of thick, heavy powder was my sole choice – it was two shades too light, a sort of tan, biscuit shade rather than my deep chocolate. I applied it on the hour, every hour. Yet, the more I patted away, the worse I seemed to look as the powder caked into every imperfection of my face.

I longed to look like everyone else, wearing pastel Barbie pinks rather than the maroon and plum shades my mum wore. Those silvery pink glosses never suited my skintone. As

a retort, I'd use concealer to block out my darker-toned lips, or I'd slice up different lipsticks and melt them together in the microwave, like some cosmetic alchemist, to make paler versions of those plum shades – all to find the perfect pink lipstick for me. While everyone else looked like the models in *Just Seventeen* and *Shout* – all fresh-faced, with barely-there make-up and long, silky, straight hair – I couldn't foresee a world where I'd ever fit in.

My mum, sensing my growing discomfort (and not wishing for any more of her Chanel lipsticks to fall fate to my experimental beauty massacre) took me to a department store in

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nearby Cardiff for professional advice – surely my capital city would have more to offer? Colossal mistake. I was coerced into buying foundation shades too light (the girls on the counter had assured me it was the perfect colour for me). My self-esteem eroded more each time I had photos developed; I'd balk at my face which resembled a *Scream* mask, painted tragically in my too-pale foundation, and I remember, painfully, on one occasion standing outside the photo shop, tears welling, immediately ripping up the pictures I'd just paid to have developed into the nearby bin. I watched as bits of my face languished next to discarded McDonald's

wrappers and cigarette packets. That was how I felt – utterly rubbish.

CHANGE IS DUE

The next few years were pivotal. I made friends who didn't subscribe to 'normal' ideals of beauty. I discovered black make-up brand Fashion Fair, and although the foundations were too dark and thick (the consistency was like Nutella), the powder was perfect. By the time I went to university, brands like Nars and Mac were celebrating self-expression, colour and difference – but I was still angry that they were the only ones. My study into black feminist theory gave me further reason to push against my forced assimilation and I took every opportunity to rebel in a flurry of dramatic hairstyles, psychedelic make-up and more reinventions than Madonna.

I'm still incredibly passionate about beauty so it's no surprise I've ended up writing about it for a living. But I feel like my question has gone largely unanswered – why does the beauty industry think it's acceptable to ignore darker skins? Since Bobbi Brown created her own line in 1991, she's always been vocal about catering for all ethnicities. “When I started as a make-up artist, I'd have to create the colours for darker-skinned models by hand – they just weren't available,” Brown tells me. “Now the beauty industry is recognising there are many definitions of beauty, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.”

To that end, change is not only due but imperative, as beauty mirrors the current dialogue in



society with attitudes to race. And it has already started. Last year, when YSL launched its Touche Éclat shades for darker skins, with black London model Jourdan Dunn as its face, it was a milestone. In June it's launching Le Teint Touch Éclat foundation – it's taken nine years researching 7,000 global skintones to create the perfect 22 shades, which reflect the full range of skintones found in our diverse world. Similarly, Lancôme consulted the US research group Women of Color to develop their new Teint Idole Ultra 24hr foundation – one of the most inclusive ranges I've seen in 18 silky colours. As a teenager, I scoffed at the idea that creating darker shades was such a difficult process, believing instead that the beauty world assumed a handful of brands was 'enough' for us. But a conversation with Terry Barber, Mac's director of make-up artistry, set me straight on how laborious and costly the process is. "Lighter skins can get away with a mix of three colours to create their matching shades. Darker skins can look ashy or muddy if the shade isn't correctly

matched. It's not a light undertaking to cater to the world's skintone variations."

In the UK, mixed race is the fastest growing minority and according to McCann Global Research the global complexion is changing, incorporating more darker skintones than ever before. So it's no wonder that brands are



ILLAMASQUA CREAM BLUSH, £16.50, WORKS ON CHEEKS, EYES AND LIPS

taking note – it makes monetary sense. "Businesses don't have moral obligations; they're supposed to make money," Kay Montano, make-up artist and Chanel ambassador explains. "But now they see that investing in darker skins is profitable. It may not always occur to them, for example, if there isn't someone non-white on the committee. I saw a body product for 'normal to dark skin' recently. It wasn't meant maliciously but there's an element of ignorance."

Traditionally it's been the select few brands catering to the myriad skintones that fall between black and white, but now Estée Lauder, Benefit and Chanel are channelling their efforts towards ethnic skins with more shades and richer pigments.

Make-up isn't the only beauty

"IT'S TIME THAT BEAUTY BRANDS JOIN THE REVOLUTION AND HELP PAVE THE WAY TO A FUTURE OF EQUALITY AND ACCEPTANCE"

sector upping its game. Mizani, a L'Oréal-owned Afro haircare brand, has expanded its distribution by 71% since 2009, and it's set to increase a further 30% by the end of this year. The recent influx of thinning hair ranges from brands like Aveda, Nioxin and LA Science cater to anyone concerned about hair loss, but are especially useful for Afro and southern Asian hair types which tend to suffer more. The increasing popularity of hair oils from L'Oréal, MoroccanOil and Kérastase are ideal to nourish ethnic hair that's been over-processed by extensions, straightening and bleach.

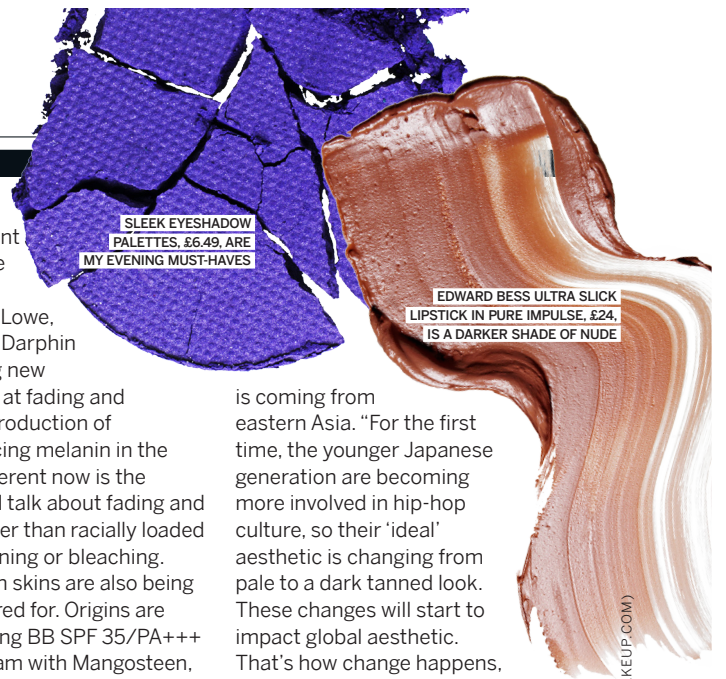
Skincare seems to be wising up too. Women of colour are predisposed to hyper-pigmentation, sun spots and uneven skintone because of the

increased amount of melanin in the skin and brands such as Dr Nick Lowe, Kiehl's, N°7 and Darphin are all launching new products aimed at fading and regulating the production of pigment-producing melanin in the skin. What's different now is the language; they'll talk about fading and brightening rather than racially loaded terms like whitening or bleaching.

Eastern Asian skins are also being exclusively catered for. Origins are launching VitaZing BB SPF 35/PA+++ Revitalizing Cream with Mangosteen, to meet the needs of paler skintones, while Creme De La Mer launched its new Brightening collection, designed to prevent discolouration – a key

ageing concern for eastern Asian skin.

David Horne, Illamasqua's director of product development, explains why the key to evolving the beauty industry is how we represent skintones. "It comes down to how we stereotype race. For example, darker skins often get 'the rainbow' or the bronzed Beyoncé treatment editorially, when they look just as beautiful with natural shades." But it's also the case that within certain cultures, ideals of 'beauty' are so woven into the fabric of society that pulling away is a mammoth task. "Indian beauty is so heavily influenced by the perfect pale-skinned Bollywood look and Middle Eastern beauty idealises a Disney-style, Kim Kardashian perfection – it's been the same for decades," says Horne. But the most radical change



SLEEK EYESHADOW PALETTES, £6.49, ARE MY EVENING MUST-HAVES

EDWARD BESS ULTRA SLICK LIPSTICK IN PURE IMPULSE, £24, IS A DARKER SHADE OF NUDE

is coming from eastern Asia. "For the first time, the younger Japanese generation are becoming more involved in hip-hop culture, so their 'ideal' aesthetic is changing from pale to a dark tanned look. These changes will start to impact global aesthetic. That's how change happens, it's grassroots."

NEW ATTITUDE

This paradigm shift is crucial; especially as powerful documentaries such as Chris Rock's *Good Hair* (2009), *Miss Representation* (2011) and *Dark Girls* (2011) have brought the issues of beauty and race to the forefront. If you're looking for a reason to try something new, to embrace your skin colour, your curly hair or just buck against the norm, then I implore you to watch the scene from *Dark Girls** that led me to write this feature. A young black girl is asked to pick out 'the cleverest' and 'the prettiest' from a line-up of identical cartoon girls with different skintones from white to black. Instead of picking the one that's her own colour, or even the one in the middle, she chooses the white one.

That shocking scene is reason enough to demand change in all areas of how race is represented in beauty – from editorial images to make-up and skincare products. It's time that beauty brands join the revolution and help pave the way to a future of equality and acceptance – it's not a moment too soon.

MY UNIVERSAL BEAUTY KIT STAPLES

I'm stringent about the products I lug about every day – these are just a few that make the grade



Edward Bess Ultra Slick Lipstick in Pure Impulse, £24
This grey-pink shade suits most skintones.



Illamasqua Cream Blusher in Ravish, £16.50
Use as a blush, an eye colour or lip stain – it's dramatic evening chic in a flash.



Kérastase Elixir Ultime Versatile Beautifying Oil, £34.50
I use this as an intensive mask and to soften my frazzled hair.



Sleek Original I-Divine Palette, £6.49
The highly pigmented shades of these eye palettes rival more expensive brands.



Darphin Melaperfect Anti-Dark Spots Perfecting Treatment, £57
Reduces pigmentation and prevents reoccurrence.

EMAIL ANITA WITH YOUR BEAUTY QUESTIONS AT ASKANITA@STYLIST.CO.UK