

Coloring America

I don't remember the short-lived 1962 comedy series, "I'm Dickens; he's Fenster," but I'm told that that's where the phrase, 'color me' comes from. Wherever or whenever it originated you can 'color me' damned angry at all the colorizing of America. As if we didn't have enough social problems to deal with, we now have to contend with the new-woke Left's insistence on naming us by virtue of our skin colors with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s holiday right around the corner, too. I get the fact that it's easier to call certain folks 'White' and others 'Black' instead of Caucasian or Negroid, but now we have to add 'Brown' Americans to the palette of pigments as a third major group.

I was reminded of this this morning when I saw the new economic advisor to Joe Biden, Brian Deese, on one of the Sunday morning shows. Deese spoke of the crises facing the American economy and he mentioned "'Black and Brown" Americans, specifically. That sent me to the Internet to investigate what a 'Brown American' was because I didn't think I knew any. This is what I found...

The first result was that a 'Brown American' was a derogatory term or insult that referred to Filipino Americans. Wikipedia describes Brown Americans thusly, "In the late 18th century, German anthropologist Johann Blumenbach extended (the) four-color race model by adding the brown race, "Malay race", which included both the Malay division of Austronesian (Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Pattani, Sumatra, Madagascar, Formosans, etc.) and Polynesians and Melanesians of Pacific Islands, as well as Papuans and Aborigines of Australia."

"In 1915, Donald Mackenzie conceived a "Mediterranean or Brown race, the eastern branch of which reaches to India and the western to the British Isles... [and includes] predynastic Egyptians... [and some populations of] Neolithic man." They go on to say, "Brown" has been used as a term in popular culture for some South Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, Hispanic and Luso Latinos either as a pejorative term or sometimes for self-identification, as with *Brown* identity. Judith Ortiz Cofer notes that appellation varies according to geographical location, observing that in Puerto Rico she is considered to be a White person, but in the United States mainland, she is considered to be a "Brown person."

That only made things more confusing to me, so I searched on the term 'skin color chart' and this opened up a whole new world of information to me. For instance, "The actual skin color of different humans is affected by many substances, although the single most important substance is the pigment melanin. Melanin is produced within the skin in cells called melanocytes and it is the main determinant of the skin color of darker-skin humans. The skin color of people with light skin is determined mainly by the bluish-white connective tissue under the dermis and by the hemoglobin circulating in the veins of the dermis. Differences in skin color among individuals is caused by variation in pigmentation, which is the result of genetics (inherited from one's biological parents), the exposure to the sun, or both.

(You may have heard comments from Biden DOJ Civil Rights Division and Assistant Attorney General appointee, Kristen Clarke, who stated that "Melanin endows blacks with greater mental, physical and spiritual abilities.") Hmmm. I wonder isn't that just a tad racist? But I digress.

But what IS controversial is how we identify ourselves according to the various color gradients and nuances. Ah, ha, you say. Check out the skin color or pigmentation chart. THAT should answer the question. Unfortunately, it does give us any guidance on what we should call ourselves (White, Black, Brown, Yellow, Red or in between). THAT is left up to us, and when it comes to the U.S. Census it is something we, ourselves, can decide. That decision can be totally irrespective of our actual genetic makeup or real skin pigmentation. So how, then, are we to identify our brethren? If I am 100% Caucasian (with ancestors that were 100% Caucasian) do I call myself a *White* or maybe an *Off-White* or a *Beige* or as the Indians used to call us, 'palefaces'?

And what about mixed race persons? Barack Obama was one of those. His father was 100% Black and his mother was 100% White, yet he chose to call himself 'Black.' Was this for expediency's sake, because he could get access to money earmarked for 'minorities' or was it a culturally-motivated choice? I haven't read his autobiography, but maybe he explains it there.

Actually, I could care less what he calls himself, except that he is now referred to as 'America's first Black President' when in actuality he is 'America's first half-Black President.' See how ridiculous this whole colorizing thing is? And what about the poor Indian (or Native American if you prefer), can we refer to them as 'Reds'? Is that politically incorrect? After all, the Washington Redskins football team was forced by political expediency to change their name (I seem to recall that a poll revealed that most Indians didn't object to the continued use of the name). And then there are our Asian brothers and sisters. Should we start calling them, 'Yellows'?

Ellen Wu, history professor at Indiana University says "NO... The word (she says), is too fraught. Using it would be like painting our skin with a sickly, mustard sheen or writing a nasty word on our foreheads. "Yellow" has long been considered noxious. To some, it's on par with Chink, gook, nip or Chinaman." That seems to be pretty straightforward. So, if the Asians don't want to be called 'Yellows' than which group is comfortable with the appellation 'Browns'? The Biden Administration seems to know because several people in Joe's coterie have used the term, widely. One of them is the VP-elect (and President-in-waiting), Kamala Harris.

Harris who is half-Indian (her mother's from Chennai, India) and half-Black (her father is Black, born in Jamaica) has also, like Barack Obama, chosen to call herself Black AND she uses the term 'Brown people' frequently. But who is she talking about when she does? I'm unsure, but I suspect that she means Hispanics along with other ethnic (not racial) minorities, all lumped together. I'm also not sure that Hispanics want to think of themselves as 'Brown,' as many of the ones I know prefer to be associated with the White race.

This color conundrum is not going to be solved anytime soon, but if we want to become a bit wiser about all this we can look to the female cosmetics industry for guidance. Industry revenue in 2019 was \$49.2 billion. That's a lot of eyeshade/eyeliner and lipstick and a whole lot more being sold to women of all skin colors, and these companies didn't do it by accident. They know their demographics, inside and out. I just wish that the Biden people would come out with a definition of what constitutes a 'Brown' person. I, for one, would be very pleased to hear it. Take that from a Caucasian with Viking ancestors who were equal opportunity pillagers.

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