I didn't mean to do this in separate comments, but also: "The comments on this article describing problems with auto-colour, auto-focus, etc really bother me. A decent Interesting. When I used to shoot with film, if I was shooting people, I shot with Fuji film. Kodak Royal Gold was photographer NEVER uses auto-anything because it removes all contrast and dumbs everything down to a middling good for very colorful objects, like hot air balloons, but it was too "hot" for skin tones. It tended to make all skin tones extremely red. I was told by a lab tech that Fuji was a film that was created and balanced for Japanese/Asian

Not everyone is, or needs to be, a "decent photographer." It's okay for people to just go to the store, buy a camera, and take pictures of their kids birthday party without having to take a photography class or spend hours researching. It's okay for people to buy cheap point-and-shoot cameras that really only have auto. And it should be possible for these people to still get halfways decent pictures by doing so. If white people can get pretty good pictures from disposable cameras and \$50 digital cameras made for kids (which they can—some of the pictures I took with disle cameras as a kid in the '90s are quite nice), why can't non-white people get decent pictures with a higher nera on auto? That's the point of auto settings.

n era where practically everyone takes pictures on a regular basis. This is absolutely something worth

Thank you for opening up my eyes to something I'd never considered before. FYI, you're beautiful:) RESPOND 0 0 SHARE AutochromeLumire

RESPOND 10 SHARE

heatheratto

about a year ag

about a y

It's a shame really that so much time and energy has gone into this very minor and inconsequential topic. It's just nipping at the corners of racism and frankly, it's a diversion. If we really wanted to be using our time wisely we would be talking about the completely racist justice system where one third of black men will go to prison in their lifetime. But I understand the point of view of the author. We do in fact live in a white supremacist society and many RESPOND 3 0 SHARE examples of this that are not hard to find. But in this case Syreeta McFadden's conclusions are not born out by any facts, at least as presented here. This article is an assortment of anecdotes, cherry picked factoids and tacit implications built specifically to confirm a notion. It's akin to shooting at the side of a barn and then drawing a target around the bullit hole and calling it target practice.

Here are the facts as I understand them as a photographer. Consumer color photographic technology from the 50's and implications of racism where none exists? and on was developed by white men and not surprisingly reflects their world view and simultaneously, possibly through indifference to people of color, they perpetuated a technical deficiency in the product. There doesn't appear RESPOND 4 0 SHARE to be any intentionality in the way that the technology developed as a means to justify the subjection of people of color. At worst, there was an indifference. But even that is not proven.

All capture mediums have what is called a latitude, what f-stop range a capture medium can represent from lights to darks. The best and newest cameras have a very wide range and camera companies are always trying to extend that dynamic range as they always have. But it's still not enough. So when I photograph a light skinned white person and ladyvino a dark skinned black person (or white chocolate and dark chocolate) in the same frame, I would chose to fix this latitude problem in one of two ways. I would give the dark skinned person a little extra light, like the polaroid camera from the example in the article, or I would set a "flag" effectively blocking or shadowing the light skin person. In this sense the camera's latitude technical deficiency is not "racist" it's just physics.

RESPOND 0 1 SHARE edgarzunigaj

I'd never thought about photos in this regard, but I remember Oprah saying that in her early years she looked gray on TV, until Harpo Studios really grew and she was able to get proper lighting for her skin tone.. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE joyceisellessentialbodyoilsh

simply assumed the deficiencies of film emulsion performance reflected our inadequacies as photographers. Perhaps looking desperate, whipped, animalistic. Our skin blown out in contrast from film technologies that overemphasize we didn't understand the principles of photography. It is science, after all. Through experience we adapted to film technology — analog and digital —that hadn't adapted to us. We circumvented the inherent flaws of film emulsion by ensuring that our subjects were well placed in light; invested more in costly lenses that permitted a wider variety of aperture ranges so we could imbue our work with all the light we could; we purchased professional-grade films at faster speeds, or specialty films with emulsions designed for shooting conditions strictly indoor under fluorescent or tungsten light. We accepted poor advice from white photo instructors to add Vaseline to teeth and skin or apply photosensitive makeup that barely matched our skin's under-The Guardian notes that filmmaker Jean Luc Godard was quite vocal, famously refusing to use Kodak film stock

based artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin explored the question of racism in film photography. Using Polaroid's vintage ID2 camera and nearly 40-year-old film originally that they say was designed for white skin, the pair spent a month in South Africa photographing the countryside in an attempt to reveal the camera and film's true The ID2 camera was used to photograph black people for the infamous passbooks, a tool of racial segregation and enforcement during the apartheid era. The ID2 has a flash boost button engineered to add 42% more light on its

in 1977 while on assignment in Mozambique because the product was "racist." And a 2013 exhibition by London-

subjects. Its effect would result in a deliberate darkening of dark-skinned subjects. Broomberg told The Guardian that "if you exposed film for a white kid, the black kid sitting next to him would be rendered invisible except for the whites of his eyes and teeth." What extraordinary witchcraft that 20th century photography managed to erase or distort us in its gaze! The absence of our likeness accurately rendered in photographs is one more piece of the construct of white supremacy. Film stocks that can't show us accurately help to control the narrative around appearance, and shapes our reality

and the value of our lives in American society. If we are invisible, we are unvalued and inhuman. Beasts. Black bodies accepted as menacing, lit in ways that cloak our features in shadows. Yet these tricks we tried, using shutter speed, grain, noise, high ISOs to push film to recognize the full light spectrum, often meant sacrificing a smoothness to our portraits. In the analog universe, we're talking about grain. In the I did understand that the underrepresentation of images of brown and black people in television, magazines, and digital universe, this effect is noise. The images therefore couldn't offer the same glossy polish that photos of white In his 1997 book, White, British film studies professor Richard Dyer observed the following: "In the history of photography and film, getting the right image meant getting the one which conformed to prevalent ideas of humanity This included ideas of whiteness, of what colour — what range of hue — white people wanted white people to be."

Today, the science of digital photography is very much based on the same principles of technology that shaped film photography. In 2010, one user mockingly called her Nikon Coolpix camera racist. The camera's sensor failed to recognize the particular contours of her face, a message popped on the screen inquiring whether or not the subject blinked, to which she posted a photo online replying, "No, I'm just Asian." Even today, in low light, the sensors search for something that is lightly colored or light skinned before the shutter is released. Focus it on a dark spot, and the camera is inactive. It only knows how to calibrate itself against lightness to define the image. If you're modeling light settings and defining the meter readings about a balanced image against white skin, the contours and shape of a white face, you've immediately erased 70% of the world's population. It wasn't until the mid-1990s that the calibration model for color reference models fully shifted away from Shirley to be inclusive of full range of skin tones. Still, there is behavior in image-making that still needs to be unlearned as noted by filmmaker Ava Duvernay last October in her critique of the production team's lighting of Boardwalk Empire's Chalky White. She told BuzzFeed: "I do not appreciate the way that Chalky White is not lit properly. And that doesn't mean that he has to be over-lit. It means that's a dark brother, and if he's in a frame with a lighter-skinned person, you have to — you don't automatically light for the lighter-skinned person and leave him in shadow." Then there is Lupita Nyong'o. There's a meme circulating online that reminds me of the Shirley cards. It is of Lupita wearing every color perceived or imagined arranged by shade like a color wheel. Her shades of brown, dark and visible, a new frame of reference. A new frame allowing her specific beauty.

I don't know when the first time was I learned that I was ugly. Or the part where I was taught to despise my dark skin, or the part where my mother's friends or old aunts yelled at us to stay out of the sun and not get so dark. I hear this from dark girls all the time. I don't know how we were taught to see a flattened blackness, to fear our own shades of dark. I do know how we accepted the narratives of white society to say that dark skin must be pitied, feared, or overcome. There are overwhelming images of dark-skinned peoples in Western imagination that show us

dozens of filters & lenses & takes a single photo with ALL of the different layers! The images were just.... exquisitely

I'm sorry but as a retired Navy Photographer and commercial photographer. Anyone who doesn't understand the

difference between professional and consumer films as well as color balance problems in the printing process are

not "photographers". kodak Gold is a consumer film that is designed with higher contrast which means lighter and

darker colors will not resolve as well. The fact that the overall color balance is so far off you either had someone who

did a very poor job printing, the film was old or you left it in a hot car. Any pro knows that the color balance shifts

with age and heat. They also know the difference between a film problem and a printing problem. And real pros

So, you obviously missed a lot of what the author (a successful freelance photographer for many national newspa-

pers) wrote. Things like how, yes, some of her early experience was due to her own inexperience, and that shooting

other well-known photographers who've made similar statements. In any case, there is a good point hidden in there

Samantha Howe So your argument is that if you know nothing about how film really works and if you take your film

It's called learning your craft. Any "photographer" can point and shoot and make a living doesn't make them knowl-

This was an interesting read, thanks so much for telling us your experience! Instead of judging and saying you're

wrong just because I don't understand how you feel or just because I disagree I am willing to reflect on it. I have also

felt "ugly" often as a child/teen (even now sometimes) when I am photographed with caucasian girls and very often,

people would point out and say "Wow, you look so....different". Over the years I stopped enjoying taking photos and

to this day (although now it's more just my choice) I always ask people to tell me if they'll take a photo. Every time

I saw a photo of myself, I would wonder why I have a specific tone of skin, why my eyes don't look like the "pretty

white girl" eyes, why my lashes aren't long like others. What hurt the most was pretty much growing up in a place

Similar to Brittany's comment, but perhaps more in depth to avoid the more sweeping "you don't understand disadvantage/racism/you are racist" comments.... I am baffled how the decision to develop film a certain way by a cer-

tain company was extrapolated to imply that "white society" (lol?) categorically intended (and continues to!) 'keep

the black man down.' as the phrase goes. (Also as Brittany mentions, I immediately thought of pale people having

Thanks for that. I always wondered what Kodak meant by 'exceotptional skin tone' and pastel colours. So easy to

assume 'natural' means white. A quick google will bring up stuff like this tutorial that teaches you 3 simple tips to achieve natural skin tones: 'The easiest way to make a judgement about the quality of the light is to hold your hand

out in front of your face, at arms length, and look at the skin on the palm of your hand. That soft, pinkish skin is

similar to facial skin, so the palm of your hand will tell you how someone's skin tone will look in the light you're

I'd be interested to hear a followup if there's a method to adjust the digital settings in a high end camera to com-

pensate for the failure of the lighting sensors and autofocus. For the most part I have to adjust the settings for each

subject and situation to get the best results, but it'd would be so wonderful if we could TEACH a better method for

I KNOW even the best digital cameras are NOT well balanced to capturing red. My primary experience lies in floral

photography, and the most vibrant red roses, or neon orange gladiolas are always getting washed out or blurred by

Shooting in RAW and then post-processing the RAW images rather than relying on the camera's built in JPEG pro-

cessor can help. Maybe you already do this. ---- One of the peculiar problems with red is that it is really far to one

Camera manufacturers install a physical infrared filter directly over the sensor of most cameras and this filter can

You may not be aware that even in 1900, W. E. B. DuBois (First black Harvard PhD, and founder of the NAACP),

featured hundreds of correctly balanced images of black people as beautiful and sophisticated for his exhibit at the

To achieve total control for the floral photography you do, you have to have the phy... See More

clip hot reds as well, because allowing the IR light in will give the sensor all kinds of problems. This isn't because of a

decision to sacrifice red in order to capture more non-red, but because of the unique challenges of a sensor discrimi-

that FOR MOST PEOPLE processing their own film wasn't really a choice and the way that the average store pro-

rich. Talk about drool. It was thousands of dollars of course lol.

would shoot furniture with professional chrome films not negs.

cessing person was taught to develop the film did not suit darker skin tones.

Jason Turner · Top Commenter · Washington, District of Columbia

YOUR vision. Keep up the fight brothers & sisters!

Reply · · 15 · April 3, 2014 at 8:51am

Reply · · 12 · April 3, 2014 at 2:26pm

Reply · · April 3, 2014 at 2:47pm

Reply · · 27 · April 3, 2014 at 2:57pm

edgable in anything other than the "art".

Reply \cdot · 4 · April 3, 2014 at 3:22pm

that only acknowledged ca... See More

Reply · · 11 · April 3, 2014 at 6:24am

Reply · · April 12, 2014 at 6:42am

Reply · · April 8, 2014 at 5:51am

the unbalanced sensors.

Reply · · April 6, 2014 at 4:50pm

Bryan Partington · Seattle, Washington

nating between optical and non-optical light.

Elizabeth Platz Peterson · Works at Writer & Novelist

have to see if he'll let me borrow it for my next shoot this summer. :)

Shasha Nounou · Human Resources at PLACEMENT AGENCY

Michelle Greene · Top Commenter · Red Land High School

The last photo, with the word mercy? Shelley Jacksons Skin?

Reply · · Edited · April 9, 2014 at 8:48am

Reply · · April 9, 2014 at 1:31pm

Reply · · April 7, 2014 at 7:37am

Reply · · April 2, 2014 at 6:55pm

World's Fair of that year.

James Walker · Works at Self-Employed

Good article.

Elizabeth Platz Peterson · Works at Writer & Novelist

capturing diverse ranges in skin tone to the next generation.

Noeul Kang · Top Commenter

William Howe · Roswell, Georgia

Patty Sroka Ferro

Samantha Howe

View 23 more

Well said!!!!!

William Howe · Roswell, Georgia

be harsher on dark skin. I'm not buying the argument that the first guys to make film thought, "This is perfect! It will make black people look terrible!" Arguments like this don't work, even for people who are sympathetic to your cause. I'm not saying that there isn't racism in our society. There is.

Brittany Green-Miner · Top Commenter · Part Time Student Employee at Salt Lake Community College

I'll share my unpopular opinion and I'm prepared for the onslaught of "You're racist!" responses:

skin tones. Tones that are somewhat mid-spectrum between Black skin and white skin.

I grew up to not care about race, so when I do hear about it it seems so unreal. I love her whole post, but can we also

lighter tones better was simply supply and demand and not racism? When they developed a new film it was probably

look at the film company as a company? How much of what they did by producing one type of film that captured

because they saw a huge market open and invested in a new product because they had a guarantee of a return on

I knew I wasn't crazy! lol I love taking pictures of nature, but myself, NOPE hate it, it never looks right. Pictures of

my mom look horrible and in person she's just beautiful with great skin tone and texture. We tend to look ashy and

Great read. I'm pretty sure this is a topic most normal people can understand, sympathize with, and be fascinated by. I'm convinced that the white people that get defensive about articles like these are the ones that actually suffer from

the elusive "white guilt" (likely because they have a reason to). Why else would a person consistently feel accusations

The author is not implying that film is racist or that there was a plot to exclude people with dark skin tones of pho-

tographs. She is highlighting the fact that even the technology designed for the production of photographic images

has been historically biased in favour of white people, and that this has had an impact in the images that have been produced of people with darker skin tones. Imagine not being able to take a nice picture of your child because the

technology available does not considers, something as basic as you skin tone? I think this says a lot about the society

white skin and denigrate black skin. Our teeth and our eyes shimmer through the image, which in its turn become

appropriated to imply this is how black people are, mimicked to fit some racialized nightmare that erases our hu-

I discovered Carrie Mae Weems' work in my late twenties after I had been searching for wider representations of

A 1988 photo series titled Peaches, Liz, Tamika, Elaine features the artist dressed in four distinct identities of black femininity. The inscription for the portraits begins, "[...] I mean the images of black women are just downright

strange. In some cases the images are so monstrously ugly that they scare me! Indeed, if I were as ugly as American

"In some cases like that pickaninny or beautiful African queen mess. These images are so unlike me, my sisters or

any other women I know — I didn't know it was supposed to be me. No really, in history, in media, in photography,

in literature. The construction of black women as the embodiment of difference is so deep, so wide, so vast, so com-

I only wonder if unbiased technologies were available to us then, could they have enabled an alternative story? If im-

that showed black women in professional settings, or just carefree girls, jumping rope, swimming, camping, with all

shades of light highlighting how light changes on our skin, that together we'd reach some accord, some comfortable

vernacular about the diversity of beauty and humanness. I wonder if the technologies available to us in those days

In high school, a white classmate drew a picture of my smile and somehow made me look like a monkey. He'd seen

drawings of black people somewhere that exaggerated my jawline, enlarged my lips. I started taking pictures to self

film seemed to reinforce perceptions of my humanity. It comes out in conversations like, "I didn't know you guys...

I began shooting color film again in 2000. The Fuji film I use now still struggles with a bias toward lightness in its

color standard. But it does seem to be more forgiving to darker skin. More satisfying are my experiments with cross-

processing slide film. It's a process where you develop e6 film, which gives you a positive image, then mix with c41

to get a negative image. Double processing the film stock skews colors, and leaves me with a more vivid range to play

I shoot primarily in color now. I've developed skills to subvert the blinkered design of tools that were never imagined

I hate that you try to argue that film or a camera are racist. They're inanimate objects and it's obviously impossible for

You could argue that the creators are racist. Maybe they are. Or maybe they're from the United States and Western

Europe where the population is predominantly white and they just chose the cheapest method that just happened to

protect. I just couldn't bear seeing anymore shitty pictures of me. I didn't want know what I wanted these images to

ages produced by Western culture represented a wider variety of black and brown identities, images in stock agencies

pletely absolved of reality that I didn't know it was me being made fun of. Somebody had to tell me."

black women and femininity in photography. Weems' work is a powerful interrogation of black bodies in our culture,

Carrie Mae Weem's work is on display at the Whitney Museum of Art here in NYC!!

I loved this article. I especially loved the photographs, they're so beautiful.

producing this technology and who this society considers relevant subjects.

culture has made me out to be I'd hide my head like an ostrich in the sand."

Looking at Weems' photos, I felt the relief of being known.

say, but I knew I could make something beautiful.

I hate posts like this.

This is an interesting article & is showing a slice of the eternal artistic struggle: getting your medium to really show I think I speak for a vast majority of other people of all races in saying I have never been involved in the photography

the ... See More

would have taught me early how to love the richness of my brown skin.

for my hands, my face. What the camera obscures is my work to retrieve.

often casting herself as an actor in the images.

I always knew cameras were racist! Don't even get me started on refrigerators...

prefer black and white shots most of the time. Good read.

RESPOND 0 0 SHARE

RESPOND 0 3 SHARE

ItCouldBeWorste

Freckledlips

about a year ago

their investment.

about a year ago

EllysaE

frostapillar

PunkyMeowGrl85

about a year ago

RESPOND 1 0 SHARE

RESPOND 4 0 SHARE

about a year ago

Sirena

RESPOND 0 1 SHARE

I'm saying that there isn't some grand evil racist plot in the photography business and your post implying that just makes me annoyed.

a pretty significant issue in multi-racial or even tanned-vs-ginger photography as counter-example to this being a

industry, and had no idea that the basic chemical composition of him intentionally or indirectly has an impact on

Reply · · 11 · April 3, 2014 at 3:26am Randhal Mackenzie · Top Commenter Wow! I'm sorry you felt the need to induce white guilt from this article but your commentary seems to be stemming from the same problem Brittany has--you're assuming that the author is somehow out to get white people or is somehow trying to portray some "evil" white conspiracy to make poor black people feel bad about their photographs.

The author never once invoked blame on every. single. white. person. ever. for the faulties found in the photography industry. What she did do was recognize that the technology was never created with darker skinned peoples in mind and that despite years of progress in other avenues, the photography industry has yet to take full account for darker skinned peoples. This is not YOUR "fault" as a white person--but it is the fault of the cultural and social mindset that white skin seems to be the "defa... See More Reply · · 114 · Edited · April 3, 2014 at 8:06am Jason Turner · Top Commenter · Washington, District of Columbia

acy" that tied a larger racial sense to the piece than just "film sucks for us." The drift off the topic of "specific people designed it this way" to "white society" in several lines is unnecessary in greyscale taught her a lot about handling light. She even notes that she's overcome a lot of these initial problems as "The absence of our likeness accurately rendered in photographs is one more piece of the construct of white supremshe's gotten better equipment and learned how to frame her subjects better. Additionally, she references a number of acy." -- That sentence is the one most worth noting, because there's really no other way to interpret that other than as

> in a more negative light than might have otherwise been implied. "...shapes our reality and the value of our lives in American society. If we are invisib... See More

harsher on darker colors, but that it is somehow a means of exhibiting "white supremacy" on minorities. It's a subject I hadn't considered before and I was intrigued, but phrases about white society just tainted it for me. Reply \cdot 4 · April 3, 2014 at 10:58am

Alexander L. Harris · Top Commenter · Port Colborne, Ontario This is coming mostly from a dabbling layman, but it seems to me most films and many digital systems simply don't have the dynamic range to deal with a person with light skin and a person with dark skin at the same time until recently, if you don't believe me, watch one of the early episodes of the TV show Fringe, if Lance Reddick as Phillip Broyles and Anna Torv as Olivia Dunham are sharing a scene it was almost impossible for them to be both correctly exposed at the same time, as Lance is quite dark, and Anna is very pale, and the sets were very bright.. compared to

As for "Even today, in low light, the sensors search for something that is lightly colored or light skin... See More Reply · · 5 · Edited · April 6, 2014 at 11:57am

Alissa Marie Exantus · Works at University of Florida Wow! A powerful powerful post. I will be sharing this in my Race and Racism class next semester, which is focused

In 1923 (just over 90 years ago), he wrote the following in the NAACP's journal, "The Crisis" (vol 26, No. 6, pp. 249-

Reply · · 1 · April 17, 2014 at 3:53pm

250), entitled "Photography" "Why do not more young colored men and women take up photography as a career? The average white photographer does not know how to deal with colored skins and having neither sense of their delicate beauty of tone nor will to learn, he makes a horrible botch of portraying them. From the South especially the pictures that come to us, with

Yet here is a fine and paying career for artist and artisan, for man and woman. Scurlock in Washington, Battey and Bedou in the South and serveral in the West have attained high rank in their artistry. Good incomes are possible and excellent social service. Why are there not more colored photographers?"

Reply · · 7 · April 17, 2014 at 2:39pm Denise E. Allen · Top Commenter · Owner at Self-Employed Thanks for posting this great article.

Elon Weintraub · Top Commenter end of the optical colour spectrum that it is difficult to capture reds without also capturing non-optical infrared light. This is the power of digital cameras. They put photo precessing and color correction into the hands of the individual. Reply · · April 17, 2014 at 4:17pm Annette Davis · Top Commenter · Paris, France

> If White people could abstain from making overtly racist or "I'm not a racist but"-comment, it would be great, thank Reply \cdot 4 · September 3, 2014 at 2:16pm valeries451a52ab6

Bryan Partington Thank you! I have been shooting in raw then adjusting through NEF Codec. Though I hadn't even I started using Fuji film instead of Kodak at some point in college (in the 1980s), or maybe it was later - during a thought about how IR light was the reason for the desaturation. A friend of mine has an IR retrofitted camera, I may couple of summers studying in the Arab world (in the 1990s). In both cases, I had diverse groups of friends with whole spectrums of skin tones. Someone once told me Fuji did a better job of capturing the variety of skin tones, so I tried it and that seemed to be right. Really sad that Kodak tried adjusting their tones for advertisers of chocolate and furniture rather than to better capture the range of people's skin tones... and all the other examples given. Thanks for filling in the history of something I had been passively aware of for years. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE stephenn45c9200d4 about a month ago

> I think it has all been not so much a deliberate, conscious, intentional racism, but a racism based on sheer ignorance and the bias of just being 'white', or Caucasian. Imagine, when the technology was being developed by 'white' people, and their first attempts didn't exactly match their self-perceptions. They worked on the 'problem' until they were satisfied with the results, and then—sent it off to the marketplace. Blissfully unaware of the problems experienced by people of other skin tones. That it took so long to address the fundamental problems seems very mind boggling indeed. I'm just wondering if some of the information offered here in this eye-opening article can be applied to historical photographs of Aboriginal Canadians... because in some of the photographs I've seen, these people's portraits seem quite dark. Perhaps that's due to my conditioning in my "self-contained box" (a lovely little phrase I gleamed from Latanya Ivey's comment). Because of something she wrote in her comment, I realized that I have pretty much

Photos sometimes make me look bluish and ghastly pale. I assume that the lighting was bad or the angle was bad or some other issue, not that there is some grand scheme to make me look bad. Because that would be stupid Reply · · 67 · April 3, 2014 at 12:28am

Imagine someone in England invents a computer program that recognises speech with perfect accuracy. The program is so successful, it is soon sold overseas in America. However, the program was specifically designed to understand an English accent. It does recognise American ones, but with slightly less accuracy.

This is a constant source of small frustrations for Americans. Their drive-thru orders are always accompanied by a mysterious side of pickles, and automated helpdesk services invariably redirect them to sales, where they accidentally buy thousands of dollars worth of Apple products. Eventually Americans get a reputation for having short fuses over the phone, disgusting eating habits and an insatiable thirst for iPads.

Reply · · 386 · April 3, 2014 at 4:00am

View 47 more

And to add to your argument Brittany, I hate comments like yours. I hate when people fail to adequately comprehend an article and then lambast the author as a result of their failure. Did you even read the article? I mean really read it before getting defensive and all into your feelings? Please read it again. Pay close attention where the author mentions that Kodak didn't change their technology to be more sensitive to darker colors until [white] people complained about not being able to pick up the brown tones in FURNITURE. Read closely where the author mentions that the standard image for perfecting a photograph and establishing a "normal" skin tone--based on a white woman--wasn't expanded to include other skin tones until the late 70s and 80s. Darker peoples have existed and been

Gloria Mungai · School of Visual Arts This is talking about how cameras back then were designed to recognize lighter faces just read more god.... Reply \cdot · 33 · April 3, 2014 at 7:23am

Henri Bersoux white player and a black player in the shot the camera's automatic response (can't go manual at 12 frames per second) defaults to the white person. I don't think I can fix that but I'd be happy to hear suggestions from professional photo be based on white skin. It has to be manual. And so far only the "shadow" tools appear to help. Any other suggestions? (p.s. I don't think it's prejudice, just marketing; the makers base default values on the largest pool of buyers; as a Mac user I come upon many websites that are not optimized for the Mac; they're not prejudiced against MAC

users; they just decided it was not worth their time optimizing their site for 5% of the computer population) Reply · · April 19 at 9:11am Jeff Preuss · Top Commenter · William Jewell College Wow. This was a very fascinating read. I'd honestly never even thought about how early film stock may have been

calibrated. Being white, the thought never would have even crossed my mind, but it's so obvious once it's pointed out. Those in power at the time photography began would calibrate things for their intended and expected consumers, by and large the white population. Not necessarily racist, but with a definite bias.

funeral in Haiti, who died last year. Very young, very handsome man. And when I printed the pictures---the greenish-yellow of his skin, the dead flat color. None of it was him. It made him look dead already. I cried at the printing shop for grief, but also so much of: "and this is how he will be remembered. This is how he is seen by everyone here." Every photo has to be corrected, it feels like. Every one. It never ceases to shock me when I see how each photo so distorts me next to my friends---you can't see the wrinkles on their faces, the glitter in their eye, even scars don't show up. Everyone looks just like you said---like charcoal. The most luck I have ever had is with the Gh2, fyi---colors come out crisp and rich varieties of dark hues emerge in them (if you r interested http://alissajordan.com/) Reply · · 4 · April 7, 2014 at 12:14pm

Peter Taylor · Top Commenter · GRCC, GVSU, CMU As a white professor teaching almost all white classes, I've encouraged a discussion on just this topic in each Black and White Zone System class I've ever taught. The engineering of film was always based on "A Kodak Moment" of average reflectance -grass, blue sky, caucasian skin. At least as a careful observer it always seemed obvious. The careful considerate photographer looks at all the objects and renders each with its fair share of interest. some times it's the person, and sometimes the person plays a minor supporting role. This article is truest when considering direct prints or unprocessed digital images. Careful printing/editing would equalize face readability regardless of skin color, if that was the artist's intent. Reply $\cdot \cdot 3 \cdot \text{April } 7,2014 \text{ at } 8:18 \text{pm}$

Peter Taylor · Top Commenter · GRCC, GVSU, CMU I have, though, harbored a secret crush on all the "Shirleys' B-) Reply · · April 8, 2014 at 5:41am

Stephanie Kovach · Top Commenter · University of Alberta The photo of the woman smiling/laughing is stunning. It makes me feel happier just looking at it! Reply · · 2 · April 3, 2014 at 11:03am Mark Rutherford · Top Commenter

The use of the caucasian 'Shirley' while ethno-centric is not indicative of an intentional bias towards light skin tones in Kodak's films. The skin of the Shirleys was used as a general reference but the actual calibration was based on densitometric readings from the color wedge and greyscale on the charts. As film technology improved all skin tone rendering was improved which was more apparent in the darker skin tones since the film's dynamic range was There are many examples of real corporate racism but this is not one of them. The article is based more on the authors lack of lighting expertise than any intention by Kodak to make 'dark skin look darker'. Reply · · 1 · April 22, 2014 at 9:17am

Trophy Bikes Excellent analysis--a bit like what happened with the women's makeup industry, where they took a while to get a clue on skin tones. With hi-def and extended dynamic range of digital, wonder if this tech hurdle can be programmed Reply · · 1 · April 16, 2014 at 9:10am

Zach D Roberts · Top Commenter · Photographer at Freelance Photojournalist · 126 followers Just a simply fantastic piece. Should be a must read for up and coming photographers. Reply · · 1 · April 6, 2014 at 7:19pm

Reply · · 1 · April 6, 2014 at 8:48pm Julian Mountford · Audio Technician at BIG Audio

kenl4308a5ad1 about 8 months ago I have thought about this for years. Most cameras are incompetent especially those attached to smartphones. They can only display the likeness of light skin tones. Dark tones get blurred, smeared and exaggerated, especially when the lighting is bad. The makers of cheap cameras don't care much for their technology e.g applying color correction or something.

Fascinating! Thank you for opening up my eyes to something I'd never considered before. FYI, you're beautiful:) RESPOND 0 0 SHARE neilr14

about a year ago I was blown away by your article. And by how some of the comments seem to miss the central points of the piece, especially those with a "hey, white people didn't do it on purpose" theme. I am currently reading Nell Painter's wonderful book, The History of White People, and Theodore Allen's The Invention of the White Race. They are somehow amazingly relevant to what this article gets at. As a 17 year old "naif" I sat in my girlfriend's "TV room" watching a televised dramatic performance starring Claudia McNeill, the wonderful black actress. What a rarity in the early 60's

to see a person, let alone a woman, of color, in a starring role at that, on TV. And her performance shone vibrantly. She was a big woman, with very dark skin, and a broad nose. I commented aloud that I thought she was beautiful beyond belief, and was derided to the point of humiliation by my girlfriend's parents, sister and sister's boyfriend not, thankfully, by my girlfriend. "She's not beautiful, she's a nigger—see how black she is" was my potential fatherin-law's reply.(I will not use "n-word". I believe to do so is in itself racist.) Thank the forces of the universe that he never became that. Sitting there 52 years ago, in all my naivete and ignorance, I had a glimmer of what has now become for me a central truth: racism is one of the profound sicknesses of capitalist society. And it permeates every last bit of our lives. This article adds a what seems to be a deceptively small piece to the picture of racism; "deceptively" because the pictorial representation of our humanness is so critical in this age of "the image", and of all-encompassing advertising. The importance of this, and the insights of the article, are huge as far as I am concerned, and I am thankful to the author for being a contributor to my critical education. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE ericdbier

about a year ago Google search "Gwen Ifill." Her color in the pictures varies so much that she looks like different people. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE crownedwinter about a year ago

Nikon D3200. Now I know. Thanks for a very honest explanation of why this is so.

Now I have to figure out how to fix this issue with the technology I have got... RESPOND 0 0 SHARE cintobrewer about a year ago

The D3200 is the base model DSLR from Nikon so it's hardly fancy. The camera is designed in Japan and built in China or Thailand, besides the distribution channels and maybe marketing, I'm not sure that anyone who is "white" had anything to do with building this camera. Maybe you should figure out how to use your tools instead of using the excuse that they are "racist". Syreeta McFadden's opinion may have been honest but I think it's a little ill informed. She obviously doesn't know much about dynamic range, wich is a pretty basic photo concept. RESPOND 0 2 SHARE

I considered each of the images. I couldn't see my face. "Why do I look so dark?" "Maybe it's just dark in here." She flipped the curtains upward and wound them around the curtain rod to let the dull winter light in. It didn't help. The clothes were OK — the bright blue vest over a striped blue shirt underneath. The updo wasn't the camera's fault. But my eyes looked like sunken holes in a small brown face, and my pupils were invis-"I don't even look like me."

BuzzFeed Ideas News Buzz Life Quizzes Videos More Teaching The Camera To See My Skin -

my mother, father, and me. She wanted to know what we thought.

Navigating photography's inherited bias against dark skin. Syreeta McFadden BuzzFeed Contributor

tion. In some pictures, I am a mud brown, in others I'm a blue black. Some of the pictures were taken within moments of one another. "You look like charcoal," someone said, and giggled. I felt insulted, but I didn't have the words

for that yet. I just knew that I didn't want to be seen as a quality of a dark black that would invite hatred on my skin.

A year later, it was 1988 and the overhead kitchen light burned the dullest yellow as my mother placed four proofs on

the table from an Olan Mills photo session. Each wallet-sized print contained various permutations of my little sister,

I was 12 years old and paging through a photo album; my memories of the days seemed to fade in the photo's recrea-

The photos were horrible. Mom was kind of blown out on one side; my father's hair, a scalped crop fro, disappears into a faux marbled background. He's half brown and tan, teeth capturing the strobes' glare.

My mom had saved up quite a bit of money to try to create a pastoral scene of domesticity of our rough and ragged family to give to loved ones. I just couldn't understand how the camera could get us so wrong. Photography is balancing an equation between light and documentary. Beauty and storytelling. Honesty and fantasy. The frame says how the photographer sees you. I couldn't help but feel that what that photographer saw was so wildly different from how I saw myself. By the 1990s, when I began taking pictures, I hated shooting brown skin on color film. The printed results failed to accurately represent my subjects, their shades obscured, their smiles blown out. I understood that some of this had to do with harmonizing the basic components of great image-making from the gear: film speed, aperture, and the ghost we all chase, light.

The inconsistencies were so glaring that for a while, I thought it was impossible to get a decent picture of me that captured my likeness. I began to retreat from situations involving group photos. And sure, many of us are fickle about what makes a good portrait. But it seemed the technology was stacked against me. I only knew, though I didn't understand why, that the lighter you were, the more likely it was that the camera — the film — got your likeness

When I picked up the camera, lighting brown skin in the grayscale felt freeing. How is it possible that the suggestion of brown, beige, cappuccino, cocoa, and sable skin was evocative in black and white? Somewhere in the grayscale, we didn't look so off against white skin. The light was kinder. Or at least it was in grayscale that I learned the power of light and the limitations of the gear. I had control. I could capture blackness without producing a distortion of it. Most photographers — my parents, the Olan Mills studio — didn't have that control. Unless you were doing your own processing, you took your roll of film to a lab where the technician worked off a reference card with a perfectly balanced portrait of a pale-skinned woman. They're called Shirley cards, named after the first woman to pose for them. She is wearing a white dress with long

black gloves. A pearl bracelet adorns one of her wrists. She has auburn hair that drapes her exposed shoulders. Her eyes are blue. The background is grayish, and she is surrounded by three pillows, each in one of the primary colors we're taught in school. She wears a white dress because it reads high contrast against the gray background with her black gloves. "Color girl" is the technicians' term for her. The image is used as a metric for skin-color balance, which technicians use to render an image as close as possible to what the human eye recognizes as normal. But there's the rub: With a white body as a light meter, all other skin tones become deviations from the norm. It turns out, film stock's failures to capture dark skin aren't a technical issue, they're a choice. Lorna Roth, a scholar in media and communication studies, wrote that film emulsions — the coating on the film base that reacts with chemicals and light to produce an image — "could have been designed initially with more sensitivity to the continuum of yellow, brown and reddish skin tones but the design process would have to be motivated by a recognition of the need for extended range." Back then there was little motivation to acknowledge, let alone cater to a market beyond white

Kodak did finally modify its film emulsion stocks in the 1970s and '80s — but only after complaints from companies trying to advertise chocolate and wood furniture. The resulting Gold Max film stock was created. According to Roth, a Kodak executive described the film as being able to "photograph the details of the dark horse in low light." Kodak never encountered a groundswell of complaints from African-Americans about their products. Many of us

I haven't used a film camera for a while (the last shot I took is still in my camera and I'm afraid to develop it), fairly much switching to digital, but this goes a LONG way to explaining why my darker-skinned friends never looked quite right in any of my shots. They just didn't look like THEM.

Reply · · 55 · April 3, 2014 at 8:51am

Thanks VERY much for sharing, Syreeta.

Latanya Ivey · Top Commenter · La Verne, California Don't understand or know anything about a subject? Shut it down so further study and discussion occurs. The people may change, but the playbook stays the same. Whatever happened to, "Hey, I have no clue about anything outside of my self-contained box, maybe I'll learned something today?" Critical thinking is a lost art. The article was a great read, and not the first time, said topic was discussed. All of the excuses and reasons attempting to invalidate it serves a purpose: Education is key. Ignorance is having a field day and some revel in it to avoid heavy topics. (For example, "I hate posts like this." Well, guess what. Others hate having to deal with the topic on a daily basis. Don't like posts like this? Ignore them.) Reply · · 29 · April 3, 2014 at 9:34am

Brittany Green-Miner · Top Commenter · Part Time Student Employee at Salt Lake Community College I didn't know that early films are chemically biased against darker skin tones. I did know that darker shades are harder to capture on film, and that may be part of the reason (though the science of light and photography also plays

If you take the tone of "the absence of our likeness accurately rendered in photographs is one more piece of the construct of white supremacy" out of the article, it's great. Reply · · April 3, 2014 at 11:55pm

Whitley Watson · Illustrator at Whitleywatson.com Brittany Green-Miner

Poor representation of entire people groups and the failure of film companies to respond is indicative of white supremacy and the categorization all non-white people's as others.

It's the general mindset that one group of people is the standard. The Nikon that improperly perceives Asian people as blinking was a great example. While probably not intentionally racist that piece of technology reveals that products are being created that only acknowledge human beings that look a certain way. The standard human is 'white', everything else is considered a deviation from that norm if it's considered at all.

My father was one of the only black kids in his school growing up. Looking at his year books you see all these pictures of cute white kids and a few black splotches. These kids are essentially erased from... See More Reply $\cdot \cdot 53 \cdot \text{Edited} \cdot \text{April 4, 2014 at 7:22am}$

Josh S · Top Commenter · Los Angeles, California Brittany Green-Miner You know what? The cost of making an explicitly white supremacist society that privileged people like you and me into a fair society is that sometimes we're gonna have to talk about the pervasive, structural nature of white dominance, even if it hurts your fee-fees. You're in grad school, fer chrissakes. Grow up. Reply · · 43 · April 4, 2014 at 6:07pm View 8 more

Nina Smith · Top Commenter · Works at Little Hands Gucci Knockoff Sweatshop. I've often been frustrated trying to get film to pick up the array of darker hues & I fell in love with black&white as

a result. A way of getting the camera to show the striking shadows & tones color film just failed to grasp. I learned manual methods of tricking the camera, yes you could do that to pick up darker skin colors beautifully! But now that I shoot digital I think the problem is much worse in some ways. I read about a camera in Popular Science that has

I'm an experienced photo printer and I'm sorry to bust your victimization narrative Syreeta but there is not some racist conspiracy to make black folk look bad in photos. It's just a nuance of printing negative transfer, film based, photography.

Because of density issues with the negatives there are three subjects that are challenging to print properly. The Black folk, overcast skies and swimming pools all tend to come out dark. Would you care to argue that Kodak is racist against overcast skies and swimming pools?

Printing photos from negatives is as much of an art and science as taking the pictures. On a negative a white person will appear black with plenty of detail because the negative will be dense. A white baby with a flash photo will usually be jet black with high contrast between the face and the background so you ... See More Reply · · April 24, 2014 at 1:47pm

Diana Duran · Top Commenter · San Francisco State University This article reminded me of another article I read last year re: film & light colored faces. Here is what some photoghttp://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/25/racism-colour-photography-exhibition Reply · · April 22, 2014 at 12:18pm

Chandra Gilbert · Top Commenter · Carteret High School I honestly believe that some people just don't photograph well. I'm a white girl and I don't even look like I think I should in pics. I look in the mirror then I take a pic and I'm horrified. Do I really look like that? Thank God for digital cameras, I can take a 100 pics and delete the 99 bad ones. I'm not even exaggerating. It's really sad, that's why my

pic is my anime self...lol I will say though that it is odd that black women's skin tone in general is never the same from pic to pic. I was flipping through a magazine and they had a tiny pic of Beyonce and I had to look twice because I thought it was some tanned white girl with blonde hair. Then you see other pics of her and she's way darker. It's crazy and personally, I'd

Reply · · April 17, 2014 at 11:35pm Paul DeLameter Every photo attached to this article with the exception of the last is poorly lit by the photographer! Additionally, Olan Mills has taken millions of poorly lit and poorly posed photos of every race creed and nationality and people

continue to pay them, not a good standard. Reply · · April 17, 2014 at 5:47am Michael McGettigan · Top Commenter · Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Excellent analysis--a bit like what happened with the women's makeup industry, where they took a while to get a clue on skin tones. With hi-def and extended dynamic range of digital, wonder if this tech hurdle can be programmed

Reply · · April 16, 2014 at 5:40am Pamela Patton-Whalen Images in color are an issue for Caucasian people too. I have found that my Samsung GS3 takes more accurate

photos [color-wise] than any of my actual cameras do. In many of my flash photos, my blonde hair looks red. My husband's slightly olive skin photographs orange. His passport photo looks like an Oompha-Loompa from Willie Wonka's Chocolate Factory. And I do agree that the photographer's opinion factors in. I took photos to an Indian developer once and my photos came back with me very tan. I asked what was wrong with the color and she looked me in the eye and said, "I didn't

red and my teeth are not yellow and my husband has never been orange....in real life. :) superior. Western civilisation, in part because of the surpression of other cultures, in part because the more recent empires have been Westeen, is still dominant and sometimes still suppresses other cultures. Because of this, a huge percentage of consumers are Western, and white, which means the "normal" that consumer culture, the culture that supports the companies that create these technologies, has for a long time been "white". This is not the whole picture,

think you'd be happy looking so pale." I told her that I'm happy to have my photos look like what I see in the mirror

whether than fits anyone else's ideal or not. She redid my photos. Now with digital photography, much can be cor-

rected on our own but once again, I find that my cellphone photos look more like we do in real life. My hair is not

it is a small part of a bigger one. A piece of the puzzle of white supremacy, as the artical argues. (The internet makes idiots of us all- my argument is to read with the disclaimer, if anyone gets this far, that it is not meant to offend, be highly academic, and is not pretending to be well researched) RESPOND 0 0 SHARE jacquit2 about a year ago While I agree with many of the points brought up in this article, I do feel like there are some things worth debating.

1. This quote: "if you exposed film for a white kid, the black kid sitting next to him would be rendered invisible except for the whites of his eyes and teeth." This would work exactly the same way the opposite way round - if you exposed for the black kid, the white kid would

be blown out and you'd see nothing but their pupils and lips. This does not work specifically against black people. Unfortunately, especially with film photography, the technology is not quite there to fit in both ends of the light spectrum. You cannot photograph anything with both black and white and not have one of them come out either underor overexposed (as you can see in this article's first image - in the top middle example the white gloves are blown out and the middle of the black dress is under-exposed, leaving you with nothing but middling greys). The bias then is down to the photographer, not the film, as they are the ones who should choose what is important. 2. Listen to the names of the products - Fuji, Kodak, Nikon - all Japanese names. Film was developed to be most

modern digital product development is more geared towards including different skin tones, most product development still happens in (racially homogeneous) Japan (my father-in-law works for Canon product development in I definitely agree that instant film processing (as evidenced by the American Shirley cards example) is biased towards white people. Hence why most professional photographers process their own films. That, though, is the fault of the individuals programming those machines, not of the technology. Whenever I have to take either my film or my

suitable for Japanese skin tones. It just happens that Asian skin tones are more similar to white than black. And while

digital pictures to a lab to print, I ask them to switch off the auto-correct on the machines. A decent lab with trained technicians rather than a part-time button-jockey should be able to do that for you. The progression towards the end of this article of how the writer began teaching the camera to see dark skin was not the miraculous changing of technology - it was the writer becoming a better photographer. The comments on this

article describing problems with auto-colour, auto-focus, etc really bother me. A decent photographer NEVER uses auto-anything because it removes all contrast and dumbs everything down to a middling grey. Try taking everything off auto, actually learn how to use your camera and see how much better you manage to capture EVERYTHING. It would also be good to see either some explanation of the pictures in this article (why they were chosen and what

they're trying to portray), or the pictures spoken about in the article. It's difficult to form an opinion when the pictures chosen are blurry/cross-processed/filtered/blown-out like crazy.

Having said all that (if anyone's read this far), I would like to again stress that there are many points in this article that I do agree with, and it is very well-written and thought-provoking. As such, there are just a few points that are worth debating and thinking about more deeply. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE

LeighA about a year ago "Listen to the names of the products - Fuji, Kodak, Nikon - all Japanese names."

Kodak is American. RESPOND 0 0 SHARE LeighA

WOLFGANG PLÖGER "IT'S AMAZING HOW OFTEN I THINK SOMETHING IS JUST 'THE WAY THINGS ARE' TURNS OUT TO HAVE BEEN A DECISION MADE BY SPECIFIC PEOPLE " 2015

Here's the Library of Congress' free digital collection (Click the "View All" under the search bar to browse all 363 White people and thier culture was thought o be superior. This is a well documented and widely acknowledged fact. never really critically looked at those photographs and pondered on just how accurate those photographs are. Thanks People of colour have, in history, been surpressed by by white supremacists- people who thought white culture to be about a year ago for the article! RESPOND 0 0 SHARE

Randhal Mackenzie, it was the use of a few particular sentences, in particular the phrase "construct of white suprem-

a negative racial jab. It absolutely colors (har har) the perception of a number of other references to a "white society"

Reply \cdot 11 · April 3, 2014 at 10:20am that sat in your car for a week to Walmart and it looks like crap it's racist because the photo were of people not white? Brittany Green-Miner · Top Commenter · Part Time Student Employee at Salt Lake Community College

Exactly, Jason. There are some phrases that suggested to me that this is not just an article about how color film is

his more recent appearances on the show Intelligence where those shortcomings have been comparatively overcome, it's all about the dynamic range of the medium.

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/dubois.html

few exceptions, make the heart ache.

http://books.google.com/books?id=81kEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PA243&pg=PA249#v=onepage&q=photography&f=fal

about a month ago

Orlando Mee · Adelaide, South Australia No-one implied it was an 'evil racist plot', that would be completely ridiculous. But it is a failure to account for diver-

No-one does anything about this for decades.

Randhal Mackenzie · Top Commenter

featured in film long before that. The auth... See More Reply · · 479 · Edited · April 3, 2014 at 7:19am

Great article. How about some helpful specific pointers? Just yesterday I shot my stepson's basketball team. The team has black and white players. My "sports" cameras are Sony a57 SLTs selected for rapid shooting. When there is both a tographers. And yes, to a certain extent, I can "fix it" in editing but as I have learned all the "skin tone" tools appear

on technology. As a photographer, I have felt this bias so distinctly---especially developing photos for my friends

Kaleena Williams · Office Manager at Compass i enjoyed reading this, thanks for posting.

I have often wondered why I could not take decent photos of non-caucasian subjects, even with my fancy-pants

angelhair about a year ago People are talking about a white supremacy conspiracy, but there is none. Our society is dominated by Western powers and a lot of those powers have had empires where the colour of people's skin was part of the class system.