



TV Says You're Ugly: The Problem with the Media's Unnecessary Beauty Standards in the Philippines

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Most people, especially girls, grow up having insecurities about their bodies. For a lot of them, these insecurities remain even when they become fully grown women.

According to DoSomething.org, a non-profit organization for young people and social change, approximately 91% of women are unhappy with their bodies and resort to dieting to achieve their ideal body shape. Yet body shape is just one aspect that women are concerned about. There are also issues on the facial structure, nose, eyes, and skin color.

There might not be a universal idea of beauty for all countries. It's hard to have one because we all have different physical features based on our ethnicities. Nevertheless, despite cultural and ethnic diversity across the globe and even in America, Hollywood has set impossible beauty standards for every woman of any race. For Hollywood a perfect woman is slim and tall with big round eyes and straight nose, and is most definitely white. Of course these standards are impossible to achieve, especially when you are a woman of color.

Since the Philippines was once a colony of Spain and afterwards America—some would argue that it is still under the lingering influences of the US—it somehow has the same standards of beauty.

The evidence of colonial mentality in the country can be seen in TV shows, infomercials, and magazines nationwide. There are numerous skin whitening products offered to Filipinas promising that they will look like the celebrities they aspire to be. If that is not

enough, just a look at the Philippine showbiz industry would make you think we are in a western country because of all the half-white women dominating it.

If there are celebrities with darker skin tones, that we locally call “morena,” they usually still have straight noses. That is why there have been needs of celebrities or noncelebrities to undergo cosmetic surgeries just to become conventionally good looking.

What is more aggravating is the Philippine media’s insistence that having a dark skin, a flat and big nose or curly hair means you are “ugly.” One example is the TV drama “Bakekang” which aired on GMA 7 in 2006 and was based on a comic novel written by Carlo J. Caparas. In the story, Bakekang, the female protagonist, has been scorned all her life because of her physical appearance. She has dark skin, a big nose, and ugly teeth. At the start of the show her goal was to be impregnated by a white man only to have a “beautiful” white-looking daughter. I could say that even though this show was aired almost a decade ago, its ideas are still present in today’s Philippine society.

I believe that it is time the media changed its female champions. An actors like Eugene Domingo, who played the lead in films such as the Woman in the Septic Tank (Ang Babae Sa Septic Tank) and Kimmy Dora and through whose pure talent became widely known in the country, should be the type of women the Filipino audience looks up to. She does not have a straight nose, a slim body, or Caucasian-like skin, but she has won numerous awards and gained international recognition because of her excellence in performing arts.

This way, I hope women in the Philippines and all over the world will realize that their worth does not come from how white, how slim or how conventionally good looking they are but through their own beauty that will shine just by being who they are.