

One crappy October morning, I was sitting at my desk in the production office for the film I was working on (pretending to be busy), when I opened a link from a friend to an OkCupid blog. The dating site, which I'd been on forever, had collected internal data on how much a user's race affected the response rate she'd get after making the first contact. When I read the results, all I could think was: Everybody hates black women!

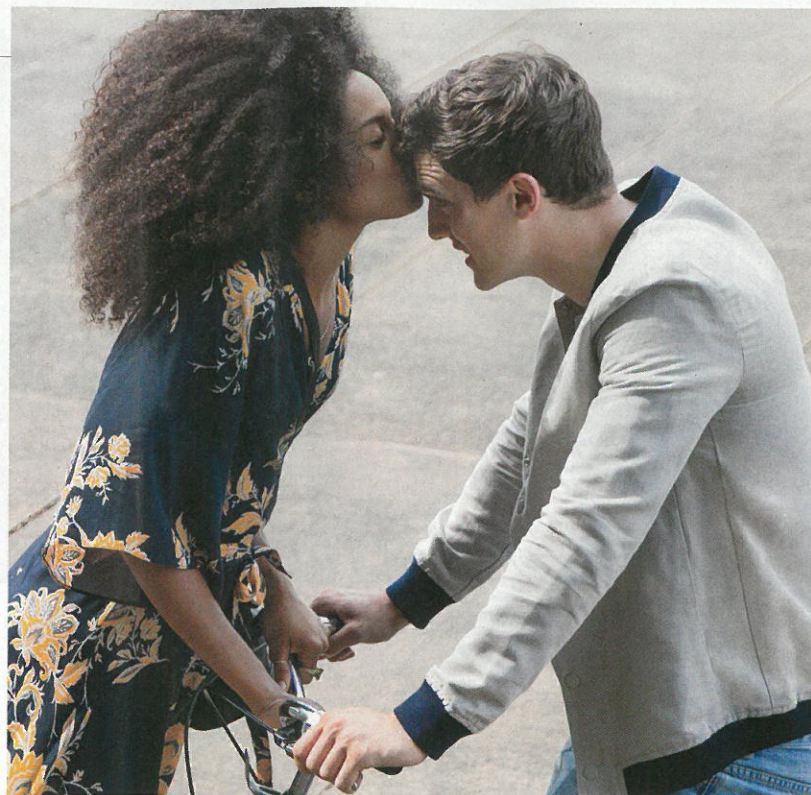
Their chart made it painfully clear: When a woman on the site sends a message, her likelihood of getting a response is much higher if she's any race but black. Men answered messages from other women—Asian, white, Hispanic, everyone—with average reply rates between 42 and 50 percent. Black women like me? Only 34 percent. Even among black men we came in last. I remember looking around at the people in my all-white department and thinking, My God, no matter what I do to try to meet someone, at the end of the day, the main thing people see is that I'm black.

The data made me feel hopeless about finding a partner. And then there was my own baggage: Up to age 25, my attempts at dating—and I say "attempts" because they weren't working—had almost exclusively been with white folks (men and women; I'm queer). I found black people attractive, but I didn't feel I had much in common with them. And the people in my white hipster bubble I thought I had so much in common with? Now I wasn't so sure.

But as hurt as I felt, I would eventually look back at this as the start of a journey that would change the way I saw myself.

Jeff Goldblum, So Sexy

I grew up in Palo Alto, the predominately white, affluent city in Northern California that's home to Stanford University. It was idyllic in some ways—I can't thank my parents enough for busting their asses through far more intolerant times than my own to make it our home—but being an "other" in a nearly homogeneous community had a profoundly destabilizing effect on my identity. I didn't recognize myself in the portrayals of black life I saw in pop culture, the few other black kids at my schools couldn't understand why I



Love transcends: While 11 percent of Americans think interracial marriage is bad for society, 43 percent say it's a good thing.

"talked so white," and nobody got why my first celebrity crush was Jeff Goldblum in *The Fly* (so scary, so sweaty, so sexy—am I right?). And while I went full Becky in my youth, my older brother fell deep into Asian culture—Asian drag racing and, yes, Asian girlfriends. My parents, who'd hoped we would hold on to our culture, were like, "What did we do wrong?"

After a while I began to ask that same question of myself. From my first double date in sixth grade to a couple of women in college and various male "sleep friends"

(a term my mom came up with because she finds *f-ck buddy* unsavory), none of my romantic encounters turned into a real relationship, despite my best efforts. I met one of those sleep friends at a bar during my twenty-seventh birthday party. He was supercute—I have a weakness for white dudes with long hair—and we talked all night about metal, *The Lord of the Rings*, and skateboarding, and finally I asked if he wanted to come over and watch *Kindergarten Cop*. He did. We hooked up off and on for about a year; I really wanted him to be my boyfriend. But it became clear he was fine with the sleep-friend situation we had, so I stopped seeing him.

That kind of thing was typical. I became convinced there was something deeply

wrong with me, but I didn't know what it was. I felt like I was walking around with something in my teeth and no one was telling me. When I thought about whether my race was a factor in my relationships, the idea made me panicky and sick. My biggest fear was that no one wanted to choose me because I was black, and yet I felt guilty for doing the same thing, since the only black person I'd ever dated was that boy in sixth grade. The truth was, at the time I felt I shared a stronger commonality with people who were white. But did they feel that bond with me? And was that enough?

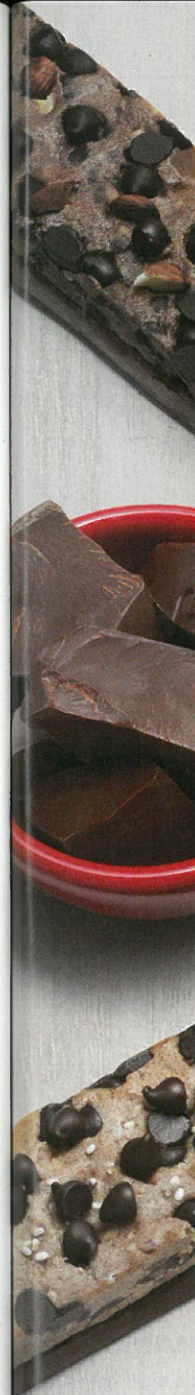
How Do I Date Black People?

At first I ignored the OkCupid blog post, but it put a pin on the race issue, like a little red flag I'd be forced to come back to. And things shifted in me after the killing of Trayvon Martin, as more and more black folks got shot and tensions between the police and people of color reached a fever pitch.

I was stuck in traffic on the Long Island Expressway, listening to *The Brian Lehrer Show*, when I had "the moment." It was 2014, and the video of Eric Garner dying in Staten Island after a police choke hold had just surfaced. All of these people were calling in to say that Garner had been breaking the law, he was resisting, the police officer was right to do what he did. I felt angry. I also found

88%

of people ages 18 to 34 would consider dating outside their race, a Fusion poll shows.



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