

Reflection on “Framing— and Reflecting— Beauty”- Joshua Gray
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Reflecting on beauty for me, a cisgender man, has nowhere near as much intricacy, complexity, or potential pain as carried by the experience of another. Call it patriarchy, call it male privilege but at no point has beauty been weaponized as a means to make me feel less than, inadequate, or relegated to nothing but the external factors that people identify with. In reflection on framing this concept, I want to fully acknowledge that beauty has been and is being used as a term that gives power to some and diminishes the power and validity of others.

The structure that has been put into place to determine one's beauty comes from a eurocentric value of beauty. This structure caused systems such as colorism in the black community and artificial perceptions of supremacy in the white community. Beauty then determined education, marriageability, income, housing access and accommodations, and by extension of all of these aspects of life-- mortality rates.

Today, I am calling that we all reckon with great intention, the concept of beauty. I am personally calling out that this structure is no longer valid and permissible. No longer should we allow this term to cause harm to so many and unearth trauma for others.

Today, “beauty” as we know it will take a new shape and black people-- those that disproportionately have had this word weaponized against them -- will reclaim ownership of it and its cultural significance.

Today, beauty will be a personal experience and not something that is rationalized, intellectualized, or studied.

Today, humans will be framed as artfully and purposefully made rather than beautiful -- a word of limitation, oppression, and objectification.