

“Advice for Living”

May
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Chicago, Ill.

Question: *I have a 16-year-old daughter by a previous marriage. My present husband doesn't like my daughter and my daughter doesn't like him. He is always picking on her. It has gotten to a point where either my husband or my daughter must go. It is impossible for the three of us to live together. Should I divorce my husband?*

Answer: I do not think a divorce is the answer to your problem. It would only create new and more complicated problems, especially with reference to your own personal adjustment. A better approach to the problem would be to seek to bring about a degree of understanding between your daughter and your husband. People fail to get along with each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other. This is probably the case with your daughter and husband. They have probably never known each other nor properly communicated with each other. If you can bring them together and urge them to honestly discuss their differences and confess their mistakes, wherever they have been made, this, I believe, will go a long, long way toward restoring a broken relationship.

Question: *I am a white man (so-called), who is interested in the Negro's fight for equality. I am a NAACP member, but it seems to me that the organization is an exclusive club: people can join but there is no forum for expressing individual opinions. I live in New York. Where can white people go to help, what can individuals do in this fight for freedom?*

Answer: It is certainly commendable that you have such a passion for freedom and human dignity, that you are in quest for an organization through which you can best express your interest. You mentioned the NAACP as an organization which lacks the resources to serve as the proper channel through which your interest can flow. I would suggest that you reconsider your attitude toward the NAACP; it seems to me that the NAACP always leaves the way open for individuals to express opinions through the various branches. This organization has done more to achieve the legal and constitutional rights of Negro citizens than any other organization to which I can point. I feel that continued support of this organization is one of the ways that people of goodwill can further extend the rights of Negro Americans. Since you are in New York, you may very easily familiarize yourself with the resources, methods and techniques of the NAACP by consulting the national office. Of course there are numerous other organizations working for the rights of Negroes, and many of them are doing exceptionally good jobs. There are organizations in the South, for instance, that are working on the local level to implement the decisions that the NAACP has won through the courts. These organizations are in dire need of financial and moral support. You may consider giving assistance to some of these organizations.

Question: *My problem is my mother and my half brothers and sisters. My mother gives them all her attention. She takes them out, buys them pretty clothes. She never notices me. Her other children are light-skinned. I am dark. What can I do to make her love me, too?*

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Answer: You can probably best deal with your problem by beginning with an analysis of self. I know this sounds rather strange to you, since you have already concluded that your mother and half-brothers and sisters are responsible for the problem. But you must honestly ask yourself the question, whether the problem has arisen because of an inferiority complex that you have developed as a result of your complexion. You must be sure that you do not unconsciously develop a bitterness because of your color, and thereby drive persons away from you. Maintain a wholesome attitude at all times and a radiant personality. These qualities, I am convinced, will awaken within those around you a responding attitude of kindness.

Question: *I am a single woman, in my forties. I have a small business, but I am not pretty. My friends tell me they wish I could find a husband. So do I, but where is the man who is looking for anything else besides beauty? Don't good morals and knowing how to make a home and an honest dollar count?*

Answer: Your desire to find a husband is certainly a normal and reasonable one, and I hope our generation hasn't come to the point that men only look for external beauty in a wife. A marriage that is only based on external beauty lacks the solid rock of permanence and stability. One must discover the meaning of soul beauty before he has really discovered the meaning of love. I quite agree with you that good morals, and knowing how to make a home and an honest dollar are the things that ultimately count in making a meaningful relationship. Whether or not you will find the man who has the wisdom to appreciate these values over against the passing value of physical beauty, I am not prepared to say. But at least you can live by the assurance that you have cultivated in your life those great imperishable values that are ends within themselves.

Question: *I am a housewife and the mother of two children. I have found out that many Negroes have inferiority complexes, especially about their looks. It starts when they are children. The stories they are told—Goldilocks, Black Sambo—and the pictures they see play down the Negro. Are there any children's stories, fables or religious stories that contain Negro characters?*

Answer: It is certainly true that many Negro children grow up with inferiority complexes. This is basically true because they grow up in a system which forever stares them in the faces saying, "You are less than," "You are not equal to." Segregation generates a feeling of inferiority in the segregated. This sense of inferiority comes into being as a result of segregation. This sense of inferiority is further generated, as you suggest, by the inferior roles played by Negroes in pictures that they see and the stories that they read. It must be admitted that American society has done far too little in presenting the Negro in a realistic role. The stereotype role in which he has been traditionally presented is distasteful to any well thinking Negro. Fortunately many things are happening to change this trend. More and more through television, movies and other public channels, Negroes are being presented in a realistic manner and their creative abilities are increasingly coming to the forefront. This remains a real challenge for Negro artists and entertainers as well as writers.