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**Biracial is the New Black
From the Fringe
By K. Danielle Edwards
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

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What's up with all the olive-skinned, spiral-curved, hazel-, blue- and green-eyed folks standing in for black people in commercials and print advertisements these days?

I've noticed this trend for a while now – black models being phased out in favor of a new ideal: taupe-hued beauties with coifs that look like water wave #6. Gone are the likes of models Phina and Beverly Peele and in are the... well, they certainly cannot be called black, in the conventional sense. Even during February's Fashion Week in New York, famed model Tyson Beckford asked, "What happened to all the black models?" And Naomi Campbell lamented, "Women of color are not a trend. That's the bottom line."

Well, we have Alek Wek, but arguably she's been positioned for aesthetic shock value, a safari on legs.

These days, it's ever rarer to see an ad for an "ethnic" hair product or even so-called urban wear, while seeing someone who looks remotely like me – honey-colored, nappy-haired, almond-eyed, and leaving little question of which box I check – or gets checked for me – on government forms. Flipping through a recent issue of a popular

black women's magazine, in a Nivea lotion ad, I spotted a lanky light-skinned lovely with a crown of zig-zag curl #2, in the arms of a man who might be described as tall, dark and handsome, but certainly not black.

A few pages over, my fingers landed on an ad for Just for Me hair products, featuring a little girl with a wet-n-wavy 'do and beige flesh, who looked primed for plessage, a la 19th-century New Orleans. Then I stumbled over a Roca Wear ad, featuring a Hapa-looking, sienna-skinned cutie.

A few minutes later, I turned on the TV and shook my head as I saw the new McDonald's "Cha Cha Slide" commercial, featuring a bright-skinned boy with Duke kit hair, who somehow just doesn't fit in with his clearly black mom, dad and sister at the kitchen table.

It's becoming brow-raising to see basic browns, deep onyxes, cool cocoas and caramels coloring the skins of fashion and product models strategically hired to appeal to people like me – African-American, middle class, with at least a modicum of periodically disposal income. Missing in action are also the naps and kinks; I'm even beginning to miss the yaki and kinky-straight textures of recognizably native hair coaxed into submission.

As the appearance of blackness is attenuated, I am beginning to feel alienated. Are real black people pedestrian, not worthy of photo shoots, runways or product placements?

Nowadays, the media reveals an unsettling spectacle – the systematic encroachment upon conventional blackness, as agents of racial ambiguity increasingly replace it.

This is a new age, where appearances of trendy, cosmopolitan biraciality are subverting the apparently staid, boring baseline of the very blackness that injects the multiracial montage with the phenotypic flavor that the masses increasingly savor – that bend in the hair that produces the "perfect" wave, that blast of brown that gives way to tan-envied tawny.

According to some researchers, African-Americans, on average, are approximately 20 percent European. And when black folks get pregnant, because of our history, we often say, "You never know what you're going to get."

But this is getting utterly ridiculous.

BlackCommentator.com Columnist *K. Danielle Edwards*, a Nashville-based writer, poet and communications professional, seeks to make the world a better place, one decision and one action at a time. To her, parenting is a protest against the odds, and marriage is a living mantra for forward movement. Her work has appeared in *MotherVerse Literary Journal*, *ParentingExpress*, *Mamazine*, *The Black World Today*, Africana.com, *The Tennessean* and other publications. She is the author of [Stacey Jones: Memoirs of Girl & Woman, Body & Spirit, Life & Death](#) (2005) and is the founder and creative director of [The Pen: An Exercise in the Cathartic Potential of the Creative Act](#), a nonprofit creative writing project designed for incarcerated and disadvantaged populations. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Edwards.

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