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Essay competition 2013: 11-13 Years

Which is more important for your future: how you look or your character -- how you behave and why?

What is beauty? Is it the clothes you wear? The colour of your skin and the texture of your hair or is beauty truly deep within. The meaning of beauty is something that has varied throughout the years. Of course not everyone's perception of beauty is or will ever be the same, but when asked to think about the true meaning of beauty most peoples' minds instantly turn to models or beautiful women in the public eye, but what is it that makes them beautiful.

We can't pretend that race doesn't play a big part in the society that we live in and what the young people of our generation view as being beautiful. Young people turn to the media to find their role models. Images of white women dominate the magazines we read, Vanity Fair being a key example of this. Its 2012 'Fresh Faces of young Hollywood' issue only features images of white women on their cover. It's fair to say that in most Movies & TV shows we watch the leads are mainly played by white actors and actresses whereas the minor roles are given to the black actors and actresses. This of course has a negative effect on young women who hardly ever see images of their own race depicted in a positive manner. Industries make their success off women who are unhappy with their appearance and seek help to fix their "flaws"; this in its self makes women more self conscious about themselves. Companies such as L'oreal and Clairol digitally lightened the skin and hair colour of both Beyonce and Queen Latifah. This shows how companies like this whitewash their black models.

The success of people with an African descent in the 21st century has encouraged and inspired the young people of today (also with an African descent) to thrive for bigger and better things. Although many people may discouraged you that should not stop you from achieving the great things that you will one day be admired for .Barack Obama is a example of this, he was born in a time when interracial marriage was frowned upon, with his father, Barack Obama Sr., being a black Kenyan and his mother, Ann Dunham, being a white American this did not lead to the easiest childhood. His parents divorced soon after he was born so Obama's father was not part of his early life. But that did not stop him from becoming the first black president of the United States of America. Not only did Barack Obama make history by becoming the first black president of the USA but he was also re-elected, hopefully this will inspire what is the beginning of a long line of black presidents to follow. Oprah Winfrey must be the most successful and influential black woman of our time. Oprah experienced considerable hardship during her upbringing, born into poverty to a single teenage mother in 1954; she didn't let that stop her from achieving her goals. During high school Oprah Winfrey landed her first job in radio, at the age of 19 began co-anchoring the local evening news. Now she is the CEO of one of the most successful companies in America: the Oprah Winfrey Network. Only recently two African-American twins of extraordinary talents achieved an extremely rare feat. With a 4.0 average in both pre-med and chemistry, Asia Matthew graduated from Xavier University at only eighteen with her identical twin sister, Ashley Matthew. After graduating the sisters looked into enrolling at the renowned University of Massachusetts Medical School in a selective yet rigorous eight-year program where you can earn the doctor's degree simultaneously with a PHD in biomedical research .However, the chances of getting into such a prestigious program are extremely low as they only chose the top seven to ten of the best of the best applicants. Ashley and Asia did not let that stop them from achieving their dreams, amazingly, beating all

odds, they both got accepted to the eight-year program on full scholarships. Their plan for the future is to open a hospital for the less fortunate.

In conclusion, the pressure that young people are put on in the 21st century to all look like a particular stereotype is amiss. Beauty is not your appearance but notable features of your personality that makes you who you are. In my opinion your character and the way you behave outshine your appearance. You may be good looking but if you are vain and rude then who would want to be around you. It is important to take care of your appearance but it is your personality, hard work and perseverance that will one day make you successful.