art by PHOEBE RABORN
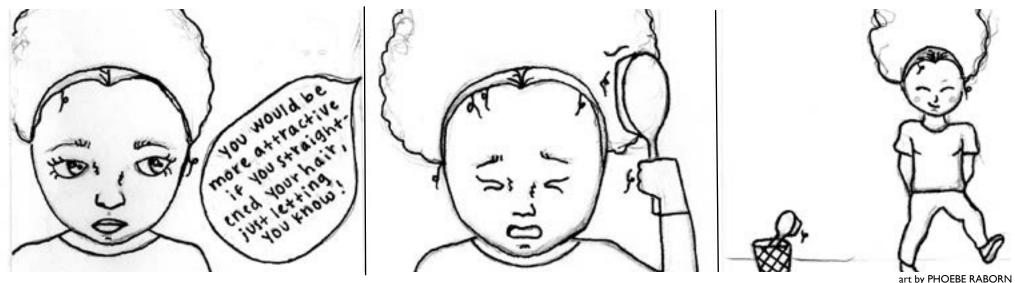
Mi•sog•y•noir leads to psychological distress

by JESSIE BATES
executive editor

Senior Vanessa Washington--like most African American women--has experienced misogynoir in the ways people look at her on the street to the subtle action of women moving their purses away from her when she sits next to them. Misogynoir is an ingrained prejudice against black women in which both race and gender influence bias. The term was coined by Moya Bailey, a scholar of race and feminist studies at Northeastern University in Boston, MA, and Trudy, a womanist blogger, in 2008. In Feminist Media Studies, a peer-reviewed journal, Bailey claims that the stereotypes about black women featured in many jokes have led to ideas about these women that negatively impact their career. She also identifies concerns regarding the pattern of straight men instructing black women about what to do with their bodies. These observations led Bailey to create the word misogynoir to highlight the unique ways in which black women are pathologized in popular culture.

"Being an African American woman is hard because we have two things against us," Washington said. "You see on instagram all the time about how women should be at home and have kids; we are put down a lot, and we are expected to do certain stuff because we are women. I feel like being a woman and black puts that pressure on me to do more than some people have to."

According to a study done by professors Brea Perry, Kathi Harp, and Carrie Oser at the University of Kentucky, misogynoir's intersection between racial and gender discrimination impacts black women's mental and physical health. Advocates of this intersectionality viewpoint--which describes the effect of multiple identities and forms of oppression on experiences of prejudice and inequality--argue that the oppression associated with each of these apparently inferior statuses combine to create an interconnected form of injustice.

Perry, Harp, and Oser write that "exposure to and internalization of stereotypes and prejudices may lead to low self-esteem, sense of mastery, and motivational deficits for individuals in low-status positions.... Social stressors like sexism and racism are experienced exclusively by women and members of minority groups, and these types of stressors may be more threatening and require greater adaptation than individual stressors."

A large part of this stress comes from the persistence of this discrimination. According to Perry, Harper, and Oser's research, black women's inability to effectively end misogynoir creates a sense of helplessness that increases their stress.

"A part of me always thinks about it [this prejudice] but just tries not to; I try to push it to the back of my mind. It's not that I don't want to face it or talk about it, but sometimes I just don't know what to say. When it seems like we say the same things over and over again and nothing changes, you feel like you want to give up," Washington said.

Despite the persistence of this discrimination, Bailey claims that a world absent of misogynoir is possible.

"We need to be honest in K-12 education about the history of violence experienced by black women as we work to dismantle the oppressive power structures of society," Bailey wrote. "It won't happen in my lifetime, or maybe in the generations that follow mine, but we can eradicate misogynoir."

Washington agrees that this increased discussion of the past struggles of black women is vital to end misogynoir, but she believes that awareness of current issues needs to be raised and action needs to be encouraged.

"The first step is for people to be educated on this type of issue, because a lot of people are ignorant about the discrimination that is going on, they don't know how to address these situations, or they speak on it when they don't know anything about it," Washington said. "It will take a lot of effort. I don't think individually we can overcome this, but I think a lot of our problems today are that people don't want to talk about it. We need to be aware, come together, and be active."

@emoblackthot parades as queer black queen

by PHOEBE RABORN
staff writer

An online movement among both men and women has escalated into quite the controversy as social media has enabled a trend called "race faking" or, more recently known as, "blackfishing." This new concept of faking one's race--most commonly a caucasian person misleading his or her followers into thinking he or she is African American--has created an atmosphere of mistrust and betrayal among thousands of Twitter and Instagram users.

The intention of those who fake their race is to gain some kind of popularity or positive attention from those of a different race; their goal is to reach an audience that they feel cannot be reached in their own skin, despite criticism of acting immoral and unethical, or partaking in cultural appropriation.

One primary source is the Twitter account @EmoBlackThot. Starting four years ago, a man named Isiah used this handle to impersonate a black woman. At first, his purpose was to anonymously vent about his genuine sexuality without people from his homophobic environment knowing. As his account gained popularity and support, he began referring to himself as Nicole, and giving advice to his audience using his credibility as a "black woman." He even gained support from unsuspecting celebrities such as Kehlani and Megan Thee Stallion.

"It's people's personal view of their ideal person that they can't fulfill themselves... I think it is a way of lying to people, and that's not okay," junior Skylar Blunt said.

"I think it's offensive, and I feel like people [who participate] have a sense of self hate... and they are insensitive. They don't really think about how it affects so many other people," senior Andre'ya Allen said.

"There is just not a good reason for anyone to do that... and if you come up with some reason, It's probably a really poorly thought out, selfish reason," senior Caroline Carlisle said.

Another issue with this new trend is how it adds to the many reasons social media has such negative connotations.

"I think people ought to accept who they are, and I think race faking is just another thing that gives social media bad views... we have enough problems with our society with people having doubts about news, and the validity of news that race faking just contributes to the mistrust," AP US history teacher Matthew Dean said.