

# The Color of Love

□ University interracial couples may not worry about physical assaults, but they do face more subtle forms of prejudice

By Tammy Batey  
Emerald Reporter

While most couples simply worry about meshing their different personalities, interracial couples must deal with prejudice, and sometimes, violence.

In an extreme case, an interracial couple in Portland recently had crosses burned on their front lawn, and their children were threatened.

On the University campus, however, students involved in interracial relationships say they don't worry about physical or verbal assaults. Instead, they say they face subtler forms of prejudice, including misconceptions and stereotypes.

Jodi, who asked that her last name not be used, is half Native American and half white. She said she's dated two African-American men.

Jodi said her white male friends and the African-American women she came in contact with both reacted negatively toward her relationships.

"The white males seemed jealous. They would ask, 'Why are you always dating black men?'" Jodi said. "It was initially a shock when I was labeled, 'Oh, Jodi only dates black men.' I know a lot of black women have a resentment toward white girls who date black men.

I think they think it's a threat to them."

One time she said she was walking with an African-American male friend and a white man told her, "I can't stand mixers."

"I think it's socially unaccepted," Jodi said. "It's a threat. There's a backlash of racism in our society today. There's still something that says races shouldn't be intimately involved."

Sandy Tsuneyoshi, Student Health Center senior staff psychologist, said it's very important for the person in the couple who is of the dominant culture to be understanding of the prejudices directed at the person of color.

"You experience very disturbing and rude behavior if you're a mixed couple," said Tsuneyoshi. "I've been rudely stared at. Sometimes you get the impression you're an alien when people stare with their mouths hanging open."

Two minorities of different cultures face "double trouble," Tsuneyoshi said. These couples face opposition from their different cultures and from the dominant culture.

Some people may become involved in interracial relationships for the wrong reasons, Tsuneyoshi said. White people may date people of color because they have stereotypes of people of color. People of color may date outside their culture because they're rejecting their culture and the prejudice they face.

"Some people have a strong rejection about their culture and not wanting to be anything like their culture," Tsuneyoshi said. "They have self-hatred. They hang around with only peo-



Photo by Michael Shindler

Brian Rivers and Yuki Kumashiro are one of many interracial couples on campus who must deal with outsiders' misconceptions and stereotypes.

ple not like them because they don't want to face their identity."

University student Leslie Hwa said she's dated three white men. She said she was never asked out on dates in high school. Hwa said she believes this is because she is half Korean and half white.

"Men don't ask me out, and I honestly think it's because I'm Asian," Hwa said. "If I go to a bar with all of my friends, they will be asked to dance and I'm the only one left at the bar. I think it has to do with my race."

Hwa said older men ask her out, and she believes this is because they have internalized the media's stereotypes of Asian women as submissive.

Other interracial couples say they experience no prejudice but must adjust to the other person's culture.

Yuki Kumashiro, who is Japanese-American, and Brian Rivers, who is white, have gone out for two years. Kumashiro said sometimes their cultural differences can cause some prob-

lems.

"In Japan, the family is really important," Kumashiro said. "He thinks I'm too dependent on them, but I think it's normal, so that's kind of a conflict."

Rivers said he's learned to appreciate and respect the differences between their cultures.

"I've learned a lot about her culture," Rivers said. "It seems to be a lot more peaceful culture than ours. It seems more polite."

Thomas Frye, a white ex-Marine, said his relationship with a Native American woman was not an issue with his friends because many of his colleagues were dating Native Americans.

"It was no big deal," Frye said. "There was a problem with her friends, but I can't blame the Native American for being apprehensive of the white man."

"As far as I'm concerned," Frye said, "I see past the color of a person's skin. A person is a person."

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