

My parents are racist pieces of shit, could you help me with a little prank

What's the prank?

That we are gonna get "married/that I got you pregnant"

Today - 11:37 AM

I love women with your skin tone. Want to talk and see if we have something in common?

Today - 12:22 PM

What do you like about my skin tone?

Today - 1:45 PM

Honestly your skin color is the perfect cup of coffee with cream. I can't wait to have mine this morning but I've always been attracted to women with darker skin than me.

SWIPING WHILE BLACK

THE WOES OF ONLINE DATING AS A PERSON OF COLOR

BY MEERAH POWELL

Sent

I'm a shy dater, and a picky one. At least those are the excuses I like to wield for my lack of romantic history — who knows, I guess I could just be horribly uninteresting and un-date-able, but let's go with my personal affliction of being a shy, picky dater.

The fact that I'm a black, mixed-race woman in Oregon doesn't help.

Sure, I was interested in boys growing up, but the boys I crushed on always seemed to date girls who were virtual opposites of me: white, thin, with straight, silky hair.

I gave up, for the most part, until about halfway through college. Then I tried Tinder, the phone dating app where you swipe (right for yes, left for no) on online singles in the area, but I found my shyness and uncertainty allowed me to only swipe right on my friends and joke about the absurdity of looking for love or meaningless flings on the popular app.

At that time, about three years ago, I talked with one of my good friends, also a black woman, about her experiences with online dating. Unlike myself, she was using Tinder and OkCupid in an actually serious manner but, instead of love, she was finding a whole bunch of casual racism.

Dasha Snow, 22, still uses Tinder occasionally, though she recently retired her OkCupid. At the time we first talked about her qualms with online dating, she lived in Eugene. Now she resides in Portland, but says not much has changed.

When I ask her if she's had a mostly negative or mostly positive experience with online dating throughout the years, she says: "By far, majority negative."

Snow says that when she was more active on dating apps, she would receive messages addressing her race every day or every other day. "It was extremely common," she says.

The messages she's received have spanned from fetishizing her race, making stereotypical remarks or even to claims by people who say they matched with her "on accident" since they don't like black women.

One example of a message she received was from a man on OkCupid who said he loved "black chicks" because of "their skin tone, hair, eyes, and I don't want to sound gross or generalize, but I admire how they have nice booties." He continued by telling Snow: "I think it's interesting you did not put hip hop or rap in your list of preferred music."

Although I'm now in a serious relationship, for this story I decided that I would give Tinder another try, and also sign up for OkCupid, to see what kind of reactions I got from the Eugene area. I also had assistance from my white coworker, who acted as a control for the experiment by making a nearly identical Tinder profile to determine the difference in responses we got.

We created our Tinder profiles to state the same information: first name, age, journalist, Eugene. We picked similar photos — selfies, a nicer headshot and pictures with our respective pets.

From there, the rules were simple. We set our accounts to view men only, kept the generic 18-32 year-old age range the app gave us, set a 100-mile radius and right-swiped every person that came up. Tinder limits you to 100 right-swipes, or "likes," every 12-hours, so that kept us at the same number of swipes for comparison. We would only respond "Hey!" one time if they engaged us first in a message.

We did this for two weeks.

Seeing as my friend Snow had been dating online for about three years, I wasn't expecting to receive any responses equitable to hers in only two weeks — but I did.

My coworker and I got a comparable amount of greetings, funny pickup lines and sexual requests, but the biggest standout was that the ones I received mentioned my race, while hers did not.

From icebreakers that involved my race — like the Tinder user who asked me if I wanted to help pull a prank on his "racist pieces of shit" parents in which he would tell them that he got me pregnant and we were going to get married — to people who have clearly never interacted with a black person before — like another Tinder user who said my hair reminded him of *Hey Arnold!* — to gross racial fetishization.

One message I received on OkCupid read: "I love women with your skin tone. Want to talk and see if we have something in common?" I asked him what he meant by that, to which he responded, "Honestly your skin color is the perfect cup of coffee with cream. I can't wait to have mine this morning ..."

Snow says being compared to food items is a normal occurrence.

"On OkCupid, anyone can message you — you don't have to match with them or anything — so I'll just get random messages from random people and they'll just be like, 'my chocolate mami' or something, or 'I really like your skin tone, very unique and delicious,'" Snow says.

Along with the fetishization, on the other end of the spectrum, Snow says she often gets outright ignored while online dating.

In the two weeks of our experiment, my coworker procured 906 matches — or men who also "liked" her — while I ended up with 787.

The 119 less matches I received correlated with Snow's feelings of being ignored, as well as with a study OkCupid put out in 2009, and updated in 2014, which revealed that black women tend to encounter the cold shoulder when looking for love online.