

Light Skin Promotion Outrages

Club owner says he didn't mean to offend

(AP)—Yasmine Toney describes herself as a "dark-skinned sista." So when she heard about a club promotion in Detroit, allowing all-night free admission to black women with fair or light skin, she was incensed.

"It's offensive," Toney said. "It continues a negative stereotype."

"I'm perceived to be aggressive, assertive, attitude-having ... a lot of things, because my complexion is darker," said the 24-year-old receptionist.

The party was canceled last week after its promoter, who is black, received dozens of complaints.

How black women are viewed—and treat each other—depending on the hue of their skin, eye color, and the length and grade of their hair has long been a point of contention for many in the black community.

Many women with lighter skin frequently are accused of believing they are better than those with darker complexions. Many women with brown or dark-brown complexions complain that they too often are not treated as well socially or professionally as those with fairer skin.

Ulysses Barnes, who goes by the name DJ Lish, says he canceled his "Light Skinned Women" promotion after complaints rolled in from women, activists and organizations across the country.

"I thought it was a brilliant promotion at the time," said Barnes,



Yasmine Toney, right, was incensed when she heard about a club promotion allowing free admission to black women with fair or light skin. (AP photo)

who has spent the last several days apologizing to people. "I didn't anticipate any type of feedback. It was just a party thing."

Barnes, 27, also canceled future "sexy chocolate" and "sexy caramel" promotions and just wants the controversy to go away.

But Detroit author and anti-racism advocate Elizabeth Atkins believes it's time for open, effective dialogue on how black women truly see and interact with one another.

"The celebrated standard of black beauty have been the Lena Hornes of the world," said Atkins, referring

to the fair-skinned singer and actress who became one of the most popular black performers in the 1940s and 1950s. "It's been the fair-skinned, straighter hair, bigger eyes and pointed nose."

Atkins and Los Angeles author and women's movement activist Pearl Jr. say media portrayals of black women feed into the stereotypes that are perpetuated by blacks.

Women who should be embracing their shared racial and cultural heritage instead harbor suspicion and resentment, Atkins said.

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The National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women

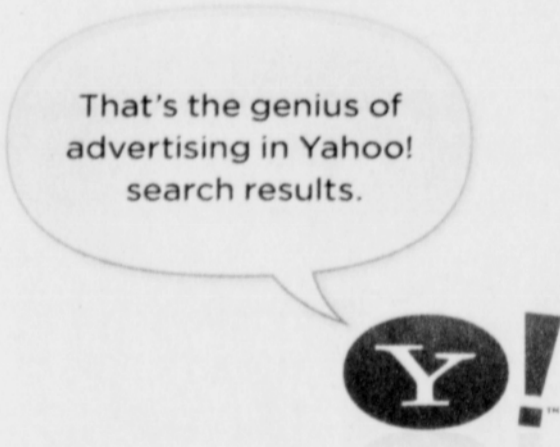
conference opens 7:30 a.m. on Friday at the Hilton, 921 S.W. Sixth Ave., with addresses from Oregon Senators Margaret Carter and Jackie Winters.

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