

Chynna Caleb-Nicholson

Dr. Denise Sutton

BUF 4700

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### Information Block: Please Do Not Get Burned

The history of sun protection or *photo protection* is not a phenomenon that came about in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a practice that dates back to ancient Egypt. “In ancient Egypt, olive oil was used as sunscreen, and women used lead paints and chalk to whiten their faces” (Roelandts, 2009, p. 6). As time progressed, there would be periods where darker, more bronzed skin tones were favored, and lighter, paler skin tones were not, fashioning a forever beauty trend. In 1923, fashion powerhouse Gabrielle “CoCo” Chanel was spotted and photographed in the French Riviera flaunting a suntan (Idacavage, 2016). As Chanel was being credited as pioneering sunbathing, the public would soon learn the effects of this newly loved practice.

Society's relationship with the sun has always been favorable, as the sun is responsible for all of the energy on Earth (Arthur, 2019). The sun produces electromagnetic energy like X-rays and radio waves, but the biggest concern is the various forms of radiation such as visible light, ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and infrared radiation. UVR is separated into three categories with UVB being the medium part of the spectrum that causes sunburn or photo damage (Marks, 1992, pp. 1-3). According to the CDC (n.d.) Ultraviolet radiation is a form of non ionizing radiation from the sun that can cause premature aging, potential blindness, and skin cancer, with a benefit of Vitamin D that is necessary for human health.

With immense interest in sunbathing and the discovery of noxious skin conditions a product was needed to shield the skin. “In 1938 a chemist named Dr. Franz Greiter invented the

first modern sunscreen. Nearly twenty-five years later, Greiter also came up with the concept of "sun protection factor" (SPF), a measure of how well sunscreen blocks UVB" (Durant, 2014, p. 226). While sunscreen is intended to protect the skin, ingredients such as oxybenzone and avobenzone have caused concern among experts as they can potentially be absorbed into the skin, leading to skin cancer and skin irritation (Consumer Reports, 2019); presumably having the same effect as not wearing sunscreen. Along with being plagued with the concerns of the sun's UV rays and potentially dangerous ingredients within sunscreen, people of color with darker complexions are often left with a white and ashy tone after applying mineral based sunscreens (Wadyka & Yao, 2023).

There was an untouched market within the sun care industry and in 2016, Black Girl Sunscreen was launched by Shontay Lundy because of limited sunscreen options for women of color and the white cast that never completely blended into the skin of darker complected women (Davis, 2020). Lundy was the perfect candidate for starting a sunscreen line because amidst targeting women of color, she was conclusively targeting herself. Prior to starting BGS, Lundy attended college, receiving her bachelors and master's in business administration, management, and operations before working in the car rental industry where she learned how to be customer focused, sales and drivers of growth; all of which she implemented into her company (Jones & Lundy, 2020; Mallick, 2021).

During the beginning stages of BGS, Lundy was met with a realization and in an interview with Vogue (2020), Lundy revealed that prior to launching BGS, she had never worn sunscreen and often scurried to find shade because she "didn't embrace her skin color at the time". Lundy's admittance is an issue that impacts the black community, especially women. Hall, Russell, and Wilson (1993) noted:

Black identity is a multifaceted and, in some ways, nebulous concept. Being Black affects the way a person walks and talks, his or her values, culture, and history, how that person relates to others and how they relate to him or her. It is governed by one's early social experience, history and politics, conscious input and labeling, and the genetic accident that dictates external appearance. Skin color appears to affect identity, but in complex and seemingly unpredictable ways. (p. 62)

Contiguous to struggling with one's black identity, "colourism has more pronounced effects on the self-esteem of dark-skinned black women than it has on dark-skinned men, sending the message that black is not beautiful in women" (Gabriel, 2007, pp. 28-29).

According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), socioeconomic status also known as SES includes income, educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions which contributes to the prediction of one's future physical and psychological health. Unfortunately for minority and marginalized groups in America, their SES does not mirror that of their white counterparts. Hostetter and Klein (2021) reports, "studies have found Black Americans are consistently undertreated for pain relative to white patients; one revealed half of medical students and residents held one or more false beliefs about supposed biological differences between Black and white patients". With these findings, it is important to note the longstanding mistreatment of black people at the hands of healthcare professionals. Black Americans have been on the receiving end of grim medical practices, starting with the experimentation of the enslaved, sterilization of black women, and the Tuskegee Experiment (Hostetter & Klein, 2021). As a result of previously listed actions, black people are more likely to not be insured, have far less access to medical care, and many do not have a primary care

doctor (Batchlor & Kenen, 2022). In addition to healthcare being a major attribute, education and finances are equally important.

Assari et al., (2021), while conducting research about the achievement gap between white and black children noted that:

In the US education system, schooling and residential place are closely connected. As a result, residential neighborhoods affect both the value of property (wealth) and the racial and socioeconomic composition of schools. Therefore, the role of race could be disadvantageous for the academic achievement of minorities. In spite of the modest decreases in the Black-White residential segregation, Black students remain concentrated in racially segregated public schools in urban zones where a higher percentage of the population is from the racial or ethnic minority groups with low income.

Following the above information, past misfortunes like the enslavement of black people have impacted the wealth disparity among races today. For this reason, eighty four percent of wealth in the United States comes from White Americans although they only make up sixty percent of the population and Black Americans make up thirteen percent of the population, amassing only four percent of wealth in the United States (McKay, 2022).

As a result of black and minority groups having fairly low SES and major disadvantages across many segments in life, the avoidance of sunscreen is understandable, but a priority for Lundy to turn around. These socioeconomic factors are why Black Americans and people of color do not wear sunscreen. According to Onyejiaka (2019), after visiting the emergency room because of sunburn, black people were prescribed sunblock nine times less than white patients. Health professionals are not prioritizing or understanding their needs.

Beauty documentary *Toxic Beauty* discusses the dangers of harsh chemicals within a vast majority of beauty and Lundy fought to not let that happen with her BGS formula and ingredient list. From the very beginning, with the help of research, Lundy made the decision to exclude oxybenzone because of its endocrine disrupting properties, and opted to not use octinoxate, parabens, silicones, and fragrances because “we already know what damage it does” (Vogue, 2020). By refusing to use popular ingredients that are dangerous to the body, one is ultimately showing their consumers that not only will they be protected from UV rays, they also will not be put in harm's way due to unsafe ingredients.

Since Black Girl Sunscreen's launch in 2016, the brand has released additional products, varying in SPF levels, a matte finish, a spray on option different from its original lotion formula, and lip gloss. Although the word ‘Girl’ is mentioned in the title, BGS is not only for women or black women but for people of all races and genders. Despite the brand's initial target audience being adults, BGS released a kids line some time after its initial release. In collaboration with Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, BGS has reworked its kids bottle design in honor of the movie's upcoming release. In addition to selling sunscreen, BGS also sells apparel and accessories. The price of BGS is fairly affordable with a price point starting at \$9.99, with the highest priced sunscreen being \$21.99. The kids BGS is cheaper compared to the other options but adults can use the kids version as it still works the same.

In conclusion, there is no modernity without inclusion and although we think we are marking strides, I do not believe it to be true. A market has opened for black people and people of color to wear sunscreen and protect their skin, but it starts with health professionals properly informing their patients. While researching for this case study, I came to the realization that the level of trust has been severely tarnished all around and even with a product or products made by

people of color for people of color, it is pointless because words are being left out of the equation. “The global sunscreen industry is currently estimated to be around \$8.5 billion and is forecast to reach over \$10.7 billion by 2024” (Mallick, 2021); yet the sun care industry is far from inclusive. When someone is sick and goes to the doctor, one expects to be cared for and given referrals for prescriptions that will help them feel better, but instead many are being ignored and not properly treated, continuing the same cycle. People of color are not being given proper skincare treatment because “physicians believe non white patients are “immune” to skin cancer”, but the reality is people of color who are not treated early can potentially receive a late stage prognosis (Onyejiaka, 2019).

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