

Has Lil' Kim gone beyond the pale?

Hip-hop diva Lil' Kim's skin seems to be getting lighter by the day. Her fans aren't sure they like the new look.

In her latest guise, hip-hop diva Lil' Kim looks paler than ever. Is it a trick of the light or is she taking lessons from Michael Jackson?

The larger-than-life rap star is well known for her blonde wigs, blue contact lenses and skimpy clothes, but in addition to her explicit lyrics and tendency to be photographed with her legs akimbo, a stranger thing seems to be happening to Kim - her skin tone seems to be getting lighter.

When asked about her image change in the past, Kim had said that when she was growing up she was bombarded with images of blonde-haired blue-eyes girls.

Of course, dark or light, not everyone likes her in-her-face image. For her efforts it's been said that she's trying to look like the next Pamela Anderson, with whom she's good friends. When asked to share her opinion of the rapper, US academic Bell Hooks famously compared her image with that of a transvestite - a man who likes dressing up in women's clothes.

But despite her doll-like persona, there's no question that she's still the Queen Bee of rap. So why does Ms Kim insist on continuously losing weight and looking about three shades lighter, as she does in her recent video *How Many Licks*?

Impressionable

The video shows her changing her image from the lighter skinned 'Candy Kim' character to a darker 'Knight Rider Kim'. Perhaps it just reflects the course of her career, over which the controversial rapper has got lighter, blonder and smaller. But while this definitely helps to sell records, does it make Lil' Kim the ideal role model for impressionable young girls?

'I think the message is that if you don't have long silky hair that's blonde, blue eyes and skin that's light then you're not perfect, not worth it and not normal', declares Gillian Antwi, 14.

'It's obvious from her past videos that she's lost a lot of weight, she's become lighter skinned, her hair's got blonder and even her nose looks like it's got smaller', observes Gabriella Gay, 14, who also wonders exactly how Kim achieves her dark to light look.

'I'm not sure what she's done to her skin', she says. 'Maybe she's done a Michael Jackson. Maybe she's bleached her skin. I don't know but I'm sure make-up alone can't do that.'

'I understand how she gets her hair to look like that with hair dye and weave but how does she get her face to look different?' Gabriella continues. 'Suddenly it's become sharper, her nose has suddenly decreased a great deal.'

Chubby

Camille Noriega, 16, adds: 'I recently saw her in the film *She's All That* and I couldn't believe it was her. She looks completely different, her hair was brown, she was slightly chubby - then you see her in this new video and it's like woah! Talk about a 360 degree change.'

Such a transformation hardly sends out good signals to young black girls believes Camille. 'When she was just normal you could relate to her, she was more approachable, she looked like everyone off the street but now she looks so different. 'Maybe it's because she's got more money and she's above us now. You can't relate to her anymore, you can relate to her music but not to the way she looks.'

But some can still relate to the ever-lightening Kim. 'Once this boy and I were talking about what he finds attractive in girls and he bought up Lil'Kim as an example', explains Della Hicks-Wilson, 15.

'I was like, why? Because I don't find her particularly pretty. He was a black boy and he was saying; 'Oh, I like her blonde hair and her blue eyes and all this business, and I thought, what? It's beyond me, because it's not really her, but I suppose it's because she shows off her body.'

Images of pop stars and celebrities are often subject to what is known as airbrushing - an industry technique whereby any imperfections are literally brushed over.

Though it is a closely guarded industry secret, many black artists have often been given the airbrush treatment, and not just to blot out the odd spot or blemish, but to actually make them appear shades lighter than they actually are.

In 1995 images of model Naomi Campbell taken for an Italian company were lightened considerably without that much adverse comment. In fact, one paper joked at the time: 'Everything's all white for Naomi now.'

But whatever the explanation behind Kim's chameleon skin tone and whether it's at the request of the individual artist or not, making someone look lighter is wrong believes 11-year old Cindy Crome.

'If someone tried to do that to me I wouldn't allow it', says Cindy. 'I don't want to be lighter because I like the colour I am now. It's your image and it's up to you what you want to do with it.'

About the team

This article was produced by Della Hicks-Wilson, 15. It was published as part of Teen Talk, the Children's Express page in [New Nation](#).

5 comments

Lil kim new look

I think kim shoulda just stayed natural because now she looks like a dummie doll with all those fake features

Shanel from New York, 03 December 2009 19:55

lil kim light skin

In the days of globing warming this is not the time to get rid of the Gods Greatest Gift Melanin... Lil kim your sad it's your time to evade the sun.

larry Horton (age 40) from New York, 24 October 2009 21:09

Black people be proud

I am not surprised that Lil'Kim has done this to her skin, and I still believe that Michael Jackson bleached his skin. I am not stupid, I do read a lot. If Michael had vitiligo, why did his facial features change and why did he go to such lengths to have white kids. He simply hated who he was. Come on people, just because someone is a millionaire, it does not mean they are happy with themselves. If you go to India, people are lightening their skins. It is because people are not proud of what they look like

Babyluv (age 17) from Botswana, 13 September 2009 06:59

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