

# 'You're So Exotic-Looking!' And 5 Other Lines That Make Me Want To Smash Things



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Light-skinned coloured women (and men) with light eyes and soft curls (or straight hair) have been held up as the beauty standard for generations - in their own communities. These features are celebrated because they are closer to whiteness. Colourism is prevalent within the coloured community, and outside it, of course. No matter where it comes from, here are five lines that make me want to smash my glass:

## 1. 'What are you?'

This is dehumanising - what do I look like? An animal. A whitie. A coloured. A foreigner. A sociopath. What do you mean? When people ask me, 'What are you?' I wish they'd just come out with it and ask what they really want to ask me: 'What race/ethnicity are you?' But they don't, because at some level, they know there's something wrong with their line of questioning. From total strangers to job interviews, this question always comes up. So I've come up with an answer for one and all so you never have to ask again: I'm a tief\*.

## 2. 'You don't look coloured. I don't believe you.'

You've asked me (even though it's got nothing to do with you). Now I've told you (even though I could've ignored you). And you *still* want to argue with me about what I am? FR? You're really going to tell me that you don't believe me about my own race? Do you know me? Do you know where I'm from? Have you met my family? Have you seen my nipples? Nope. HJB.

## 3. 'There's something exotic about you. You look Brazilian/Portuguese/Spanish/Argentinian...'

THIS IS NOT A COMPLIMENT. This line is always presented to me by men as if it's supposed to be some kind of praise. It's not a compliment to say I don't look local. Do you really think I can't see the objectification in what you're doing? Just because you've spent a lifetime fetishising/idolising Latina women doesn't mean this gets to fly. You can't pinpoint my race but you're trying to run your game, so you decide calling me exotic might be a good play. No. Do better. What makes it worse is that this line is often followed up by this one:

## 4. 'But you're so beautiful, though'

In other words, my more Eurocentric features are what make me attractive to you. When your finding me beautiful comes from a place of anti-blackness, do you actually expect me to engage you further? You like the ways I look similar to foreign light-skinned women of colour. I already don't trust the reasons why you find me attractive, your politics make me sad and your game is trash.

## 5. 'Where are your parents from? Don't lie, one of your parents must be white'

You want receipts? Should I carry around my mother's ID? Birth certificate? I'm aware that being misidentified shouldn't upset me as much as it does. People are misgendered regularly. The privilege of light skin as a woman of colour means I'm exoticised rather than discriminated against the way people of colour with darker complexions are, and I know the irritation I experience is dwarfed compared to these issues.

My actual and perceived proximity to whiteness isn't something I celebrate. It is the result of colonisation and cultural eradication. It is also something that I benefit from daily in a society that remains racist.

\*bitch. If you're ready to learn the full meaning, head over to [Mark Fitzgibbon](#) (you might want to put seatbelts on your ears first).

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