

## Get real

c. michelle bryant

While shopping the other day I ran across an item that I must admit astonished even me, and I have been known to be fairly "out there and eccentric" when it comes to style, trends, fashion, and presentation in general. This article flabbergasted me in such a way that it set my thoughts in motion for days to the point that I felt I had to tell someone and therefore it created this particular message. Have I sparked your curiosity yet? It was a girdle.

Now mind you this was not the standard girdle like your mother used to wear from her knees to her waist with criss-crossed elastic around the midriff to flatten her tummy and tighten her thighs. This nude colored "shaper", as it is now I suppose politically correctly called, (although it did have extra reinforcements over the stomach area for flattening) possessed a feature I had never seen before...shapely, lightweight, silicone-formed, buttocks. And that is where my mind started wandering off...hmmmm.

I began to wonder, if as women we choose to live in a world of phony fannies, and push-up bras and inserts, to be so made up that we fear not truly letting our hair down - then how can we really be real? How can we really be expected to be seen for the women we truly are or taken seriously for that matter? Perhaps we have allowed Hollywood to play a huge part in what we deem acceptable in our culture and even in our personal life. The media doesn't help either with Photoshop edited celebrity's pictures on every news stand. And truthfully, the paparazzi may think they are doing harm by catching shots every time Jennifer Anniston has a bad hair day, or when they get a glimpse of Cameron Diaz with cellulite...but I'm thinking- thank goodness she does, because to me, it means she's a REAL person.

I love the rare moments that show up every so often, like when Tyra Banks stood up for herself in 2007 against her critics about her weight. Had she not been the self assured woman that she is, it might have led to her starving herself into a sick mess. Kelly Clarkson is curvy and proud of it. Queen Latifa is a big girl at 5'9". These are confident women who are not afraid to "be real" about who they are.

I once heard someone say that you can have plastic surgery to look younger but your organs will still remain the same old organs. What good is it to look forty "something" on the outside if you are still sixty "something" the inside? As the mother of a beautiful 15-year old daughter, I am choosing to teach her the value of true beauty- things like character, confidence, integrity, and intelligence. *1 Peter 3:3-4 tells us that "Your **beauty** should not come from outward adornment...Instead; it should be that of your inner self, the unfading **beauty** of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*

Does that mean we should not take care of ourselves or be concerned about our appearance? Of course not. Believe me, I'm not overlooking the importance of lip gloss and mascara here. In fact, I'm a firm believer in both. But I am convinced that there is a point in which it becomes unnatural and over done. We get to where it gets to be way too much because we are trying to fix, overdo, under do, redo, instead of "making do" - to the point that we lose sight of who we are and what we have when we try to change what God has given us, who God has made us. I simply believe our bodies are temples and we should address them as such.

My daughter has beautiful brown eyes but has always wanted blue ones like mine. For about a year now I have been taking photographs of her with the main emphasis being on her eyes in an attempt to show her their beauty- the different shades of browns and yellows they contain. Although she still dreams of hazel blues, she is finally starting to accept and appreciate the exotic gorgeous eyes that she has been graced with and just the other day informed me that she liked her eyes.

On the other end of the spectrum, I once had a friend who evacuated with me to a hurricane shelter. You can imagine my surprise when she arrived in a mini skirt and high heels, hair done flawlessly, full make-up, with only her curling iron and make-up case in her diaper bag. Her four children dressed like they were ready for church including ties on the boys, with only their gameboys in hand and I was there in a pony tail, sweats, and no bra, carrying extra toilet paper, bottled water and pop tarts in my stocked "hurricane preparedness" trunk. I was truly prepared for the "real" deal so to speak.

I just believe in being as REAL as possible whenever possible as often as possible. Perhaps I get some of this insight from my upbringing. My mother always taught me to be the BEST me I could be rather than a thousand copies of someone else. She always stressed that by being that way I would at least know the people who liked me- liked ME (not the person I was trying to be or hiding behind).

So after days of contemplating about those fancy fanny panties I've come to this conclusion. It all boils down to one thing. By the time you remove the fake buttocks, the push-up bras, and the hairspray, what have you really got left? You've got the REAL YOU! The woman you should be proud to show the world - stripped away.

I hope you will join me in this quest to be real...inside and out. Do it! I dare you to "get real!" Because seriously, as for me, *"I'm gonna be real!"* and truthfully anyone who knows me, knows - what you see... really is what you get.

*~ c. michelle bryant is a freelance writer and the author of the devotional book God, are You listening?*