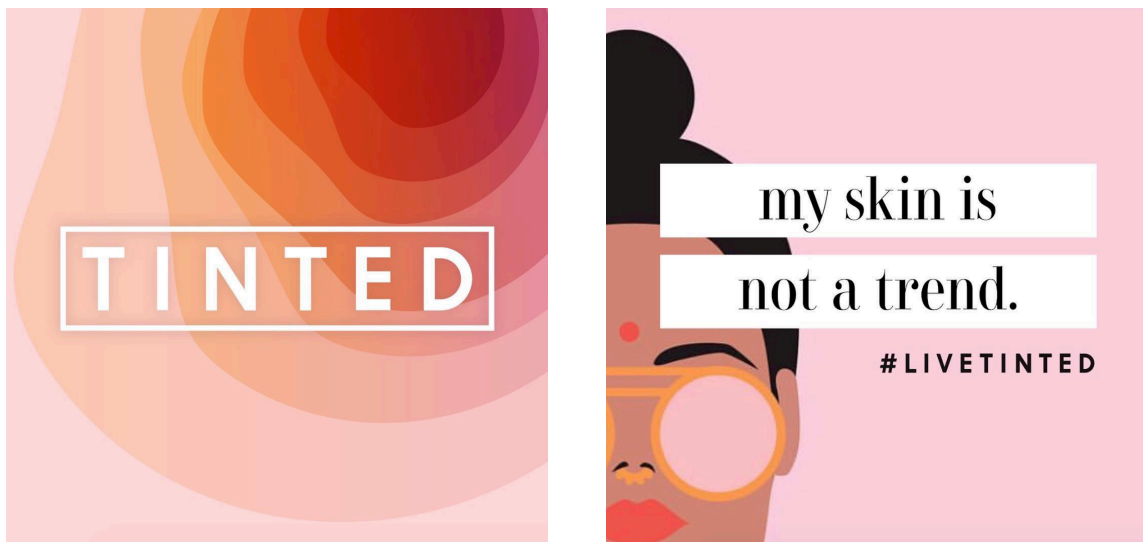


# Tinting A Community For “All The Shades In Between”

By Nam Phuong Thi Doan '18

To anyone growing up feeling excluded from the traditional Western beauty standards because of their skin color or struggling to find the right beauty products for their skin tones: TINTED welcomes you.



*Photo courtesy: TINTED's Instagram @livetinted*

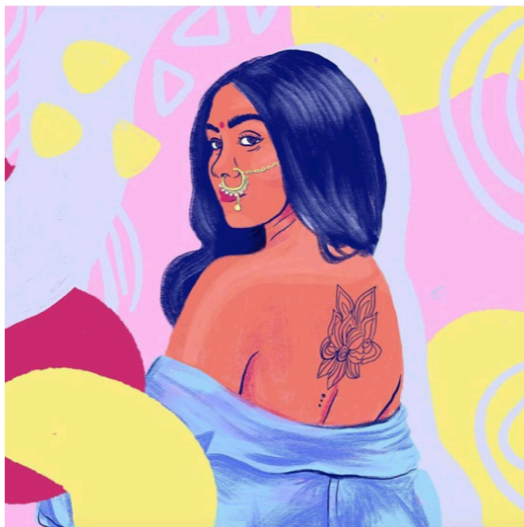
Co-founded in January 2018 by beauty influencer and social media producer Deepica Mutyala and her cousin, serial entrepreneur Neilesh Mutyala, TINTED creates a vibrant beauty community for everyone who feels underrepresented in the traditional beauty campaigns because of their darker skin tone. Within three months of its launch, TINTED has become an international digital community (#TintFam) with more than 18,000 followers on Instagram, including amazing creatives and people from different backgrounds all over the world.

Growing up in Texas, Deepica Mutyala struggled with conforming to the existing beauty standards as a brown-skin woman. “She realized over time that there was both a gap and obviously an opportunity to start representing what we are calling ‘all the shades in between,’” says Neilesh Mutyala.

“All the shades in between” are not bound to race or ethnicity, but rather a diverse range of medium skin tones. To quote [the company’s website](#): “We are not a one-size-fits-all demographic and we know our TintFam represents a range of opinions, political or otherwise, that is as diverse as the spectrum of our shades and hues.”

TINTED is passionate about honing their value through #tintimonials, the testimonies from tinted people all over the world who are eager to share their experiences on what representation means to them in the beauty industry. The conversations happening on #livetinted extend beyond the beauty world, from social justice to intersectionality, from “ongoing consent” and body hair to expectations for East Asian women.

“It’s fascinating to see the stories people share with us, from East Asia to Europe, places where they might feel more like a minority because of their skin color than tinted people in the U.S. This means more than to have beauty solutions delivered to them but to see that they have a voice digitally. Traditionally, mainstream media has ignored this population in marketing campaigns. The digital community allows these individuals to identify with people that look like them and have a hub, an area to share their stories,” Mr. Mutyala indicates.



*Sharan Guru featured on @livetinted on the topic of “ongoing consent”*



*Body hair on @livetinted*

The fetishization of whiteness does not only infiltrate the beauty world, but also the construction of identity and power in the fabric of everyday life. In East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, skin-lightening is a beauty trend that has deep roots in colonial times. A lot of people are still using skin-whitening products and the rejection of darker skin affects the way children feel about themselves and how they are welcomed in the community.

Eleanor McPhee, a third-year student at Bennington College and a beauty enthusiast, opens up about her struggle with self-image growing up as a brown-skin girl: "I grew up with an Indian mom who lived in Trinidad and is very dark-skinned. She grew up not loving that part of herself. In the Caribbean and India, there's an obsession with lightening skin and having a good complexion. When I hear people say 'You have a nice complexion' in my family, I know that they're not really referring to the texture of my skin but how it's lighter than theirs."

McPhee expresses her excitement about the launch of TINTED: "Watching my mom learn to love her skin and the older generation in my family to embrace theirs was very instrumental in how I feel about myself and my confidence. To see a company doing that now is so amazing!"

So, what would having a beauty company and a digital community like TINTED mean for people of color, especially the generations that grow up in the digital age?

According to McPhee, the first key is publicized visibility. She expands on the issue of representation in mainstream media: "Yesterday I was waiting at the grocery store for about twenty minutes and all of the magazines just had all white people, still, in 2018! I think there was one magazine that had Cardi B on the front and that was it. Really? Even for the tabloids, our skin is not good enough? At home you see magazines with people of color and their skin is whitened. I don't want to see that. I don't see whiteness as the only possibility for beauty."



*Padma Lakshmi on @livetinted*



*Princess Nokia on @livetinted*

The second is identity empowerment, "There's one school of thought that's like 'struggles make you stronger' but when it comes to something as personal as how you see yourself, it can be so detrimental. The last thing I want is for someone to spend their whole childhood hating the way they look. When we have more people of color, more women of color in the media, kids can grow

up having role models that look like them, which is something I didn't get to have but I hope my kids have," McPhee smiles.

Co-founder Neilesh Mutyala hints at the potential of TINTED's digital community to challenge and break free from the conventional beauty-power structure. "The idea that whiter is more powerful, more beautiful is something we strongly object to. We never feature skin-lightening products on Tinted because they cause real pain."

When asked about his advice for any student who wants to start an enterprise in the beauty industry with a specific vision, Mr. Mutyala says: "There's no reason to wait." He suggests that there are many available channels and creatives who are doing exciting things in the beauty world with whom students can work. "Be authentic to who you are and develop a voice in every part of building your brand [...] If you're claiming to build a more socially or "mission-driven" company but are not educating your audience through a conversation that touches every part of your brand, then it's just a marketing technique," Mutyala says, "It's all about doing business creatively."

*Original article link: <http://www.benningtonfreepress.com/feature/2018/3/26/title>*