



Add photos  
to sell your stuff faster!



CLICK  
HERE  
to start selling today!

NEW  
Online  
Classifieds

CLICK HERE  
TO START  
selling today!

Search Recent News Archives Web for

Welcome **Guest**  
[Sign Up](#) | [Sign In](#) | [Member Benefits](#)

- Classifieds**
- ▶ Jobs
- ▶ Cars
- ▶ Real Estate
- ▶ Rentals
- ▶ Stuff
- ▶ Personals
- Shop Local**

[Back to Home](#) > [News](#) >

Tuesday, Jan 18, 2005

## Nation

email this print this

Posted on Fri, May. 07, 2004

### Different strokes of the scalpel for different folks

BY LORRAINE KEE  
 St. Louis Post-Dispatch

**ST. LOUIS, Mo.** - (KRT) - Lucille Harris turned 60 in April. But the African-American great-grandmother could pass for someone considerably younger, thanks to her plastic surgeon.

In July, Dr. James B. Lowe III performed surgery on her eyelids, brow and cheeks.

"As you get older gravity becomes your worst enemy," said Harris, a veteran educator in the Normandy School District in St. Louis, Mo. "The gravitational pull made me look unhappy and sad, and I'm a vibrant and energetic person. I didn't want to look tired and unmotivated.

"I'm very pleased with the result," she added. "That Dr. Lowe. He's a jewel. He's the only doctor who ever sent me flowers."

In his office recently, Lowe flipped through some fashion magazines on his desk in St. Louis. These pages, he said, used to be flush with models who all looked the same.

Fair-skinned. Long, straight hair. Long, straight bodies.

"In our culture, beauty is often defined by magazines," Lowe said, nodding at a model with coffee-bean brown skin. "But the standard of beauty is changing. It's opening up a little bit."

Lowe is the primary investigator for a study in Washington University's School of Medicine designed to preserve what comes naturally for those of us who look different. For the past two years, Lowe and other scientists, technicians and medical students have measured and studied the facial features - brows, cheekbones, lips and noses - that set us apart.

They're looking for young and old members of ethnic groups who haven't already been altered. They hope to measure the features of African-Americans, Hispanics, Middle Easterners, Native Americans and Asian cultures - Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and Hawaiian.

- News**
- Obituaries
- Breaking News
- Crime & Courts
- Local
- Nation
- Photos
- Politics
- Weird News
- World
- Sports**
- Entertainment**
- Business**
- Living**
- Opinion / Letters**

- ONLINE EXTRAS**
- [Archives](#)
- [Discussion Boards](#)
- [Maps & Directions](#)
- [American News Ads](#)
- [Farm Forum Ads](#)
- [Farm Forum in PDF](#)
- [Yellow Pages](#)

- SITE SERVICES**
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Special Event?](#)



Announce it in the  
American News!  
• **Forms and  
information**

Lowé hopes the study will enable him to be sensitive to the needs of his ethnic patients who aren't represented in medical school textbooks, never mind fashion magazines.

Standards for Caucasian beauty are well documented, Lowé said. What's considered attractive among ethnic groups isn't, he added.

For instance, Lowé said, plastic surgeons learn that the width of a Caucasian's eye should be equal to the distance between the eyes. The width of a Caucasian's nose should not exceed the width between their eyes.

The study's final findings won't be released for a while. Lowé figures it might take as long as 10 years to collect all the data that he's seeking. But he knows already that Asians, for instance, have a wider distance between their eyes than Caucasians. He knows that African-Americans' noses tend to be wider than the distance between their eyes.

"You can take the most beautiful African-American and the most attractive Asian, but if you switch their noses they aren't going to look right," Lowé said.

The study, which eventually may involve a panel viewing photographs to assess whom they consider attractive, will map distances between facial features on those beautiful people.

It's not a one-size-fits-all approach, he said. The measurements will be a guide, said Lowé noting that some beauties don't fall easily into a category.

"We're not trying to define beauty," he added, "but (rather) what's the norm in each ethnic group.

"They want to preserve their ethnicity," he added. "You want it to look natural."

Lowé called it achieving a "harmonious balance" between our features. Though each ethnic group defines its own beauty standard, he said, studies have found that facial features in thirds - think geometric sections of the face - are pleasing to the eye.

Lowé displayed the magazines to make a point. Beautiful, bikini-clad Gisele - born in Brazil but of German descent - adorned the copy of Time's Spring 2004 Style & Design supplement. Fair-skinned knock-outs still outnumber the darker beauties.

But it's changing, Lowé said, for the better. Slowly.

Also among the pages were leggy, femme fatale Naomi Campbell in a Valentino ad. Model-turned-cosmetics merchant Iman and Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo appear in an article about the most powerful women in fashion.

Not everyone wants to preserve what they were born with. Some people of Asian-descent, for instance, have turned to plastic surgery for a crease above their eyes. And Michael Jackson ... well, enough said.

Some characteristics are more in fashion than others. Take, for instance, Angelina Jolie's full lips. Did they come courtesy of collagen or her constitution? And a recent article in VIBE magazine, self-described "champions of urban music and culture," chronicled the boom in bangin' backsides thanks to plastic surgery.

The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reports that cosmetic procedures jumped by 293 percent between 1997 and 2003. Last year alone, about 8.3 million procedures - from Botox to rhinoplasty - were performed.

According to the society, minorities (Hispanics, African-Americans and Asians) accounted for 20 percent of those procedures. The society didn't have a breakdown on what kind of procedures minorities were seeking.

As a rule, Lowe said, no one likes wrinkles, bags and excess skin. But he noted differences between the kinds of cosmetic changes his patients typically seek.

For instance, Asian patients often have concerns about their eyes, their mid-face, Lowe said. Caucasians are often concerned about exposure of their skin to the elements and "neck banding." African-Americans tend to have fewer concerns about the effect of sun on their skin, but they do worry about discoloration from aging, he said. They often come in for surgeries to their brows and cheeks. Two African-American patients recently saw him about narrowing their noses.

In any case, the number of minorities seeking plastic surgery is increasing. Lowe pointed out a U.S. Census Bureau report that minorities would represent half the population in this country by the year 2050. Minorities' disposable income is growing and procedures are becoming more affordable, he said.

Besides, our hang-ups about plastic surgery seem to be vanishing along with some our preconceived notions about beauty.

"Differences are great," said Lowe.

"If everyone was the same, how boring would the world be?" Lowe said. "It's nice to have differences. It's exciting."

Harris said her mother once had plastic surgery. Harris herself underwent another procedure a few years ago. But this time around, she'd hesitated because of the costs. She has no regrets, but both surgeries cost her about \$20,000. She thinks African-Americans hesitate to have plastic surgery because they often age well. With a little education, she figures, other African-Americans will come to appreciate what plastic surgery can do for them.

"We don't usually show age as readily as Caucasians," she said. "We're more accepting. We accept it as this is just the way it is."

Harris understands that we all get older. She loves being a great-grandmother. But she figures she's still got a lot of living to do. She was out dancing 10 days after her surgery.

"I want to look like I'm alive and vibrant," said Harris, who has daughters in their 40s. "I want people to see me as a vibrant senior."

---

© 2004, St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Visit the Post-Dispatch on the World Wide Web at <http://www.stltoday.com>

Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.



[email  
this](#)



[print  
this](#)



[Click here  
to visit other  
Real Cities sites](#)

[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)  
[About AberdeenNews.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight Ridder](#)  
| [Copyright](#)