

# Many Blacks Are Responding To Plastic Surgery

By Doug Smith  
Recommend "plastic surgery" to residents of most black neighborhoods and you're apt to get an invitation to have your head examined. Or worse.

Among blacks, plastic surgery is generally considered a medical specialty that is used exclusively by wealthy whites, with few exceptions. But in the past few years, the exceptions have been increasing. More black doctors are moving into

the field and more blacks are utilizing the services of plastic surgeons. Drs. Macy G. Hall, Jr., and Ivens C. LeFlore of Howard University, for example, are two of about twenty black plastic surgeons in the country, with another half dozen pursuing residencies in plastic surgery. There are more than 2,000 plastic surgeons in the nation. Dr. Hall, chief of plastic and reconstruction surgery at Howard University Hospital in

Washington, D.C., performs several operations a week. Dr. LeFlore, an assistant professor at Howard University and Georgetown University, who has a private office at the Washington Hospital Center, says he operates daily. Recently, Dr. Hall had a female patient from North Carolina who had suffered severe facial burns in an auto accident. "I think I'll be able to improve her appearance greatly," Dr. Hall said, after examin-

ing pictures of the woman's disfigured face. Another female patient from the Washington area sought Dr. Hall's service to reduce the size of her breasts. "They were extremely large and the weight was causing her pain," says Dr. Hall. "After they were reduced, she not only looked better, but she no longer experienced the pain and discomfort." "Plastic surgery," says Dr. LeFlore, "is for those who can respond

to the challenge of having their work tested immediately. You tell the patient exactly what to expect, where the scar is going to be and how it's going to look. Then you and the patient see how well you did. Your results are immediate, on the surface." Explaining the history of his specialty, Dr. Hall notes that the term "plastic surgery" was derived from the Greek word "plastikos", meaning capable of being formed, fashioned or

molded. "Plasty" is also a Greek derivative of "plastia", a combining form denoting the act or process of forming, such as rhinoplasty (nose forming), mammoplasty (breast forming). "To the lay person, the words 'plastic surgery' connote the use of a plastic (synthetic) substance to be molded and placed within a body part," Dr. Hall says. Though it is one of the oldest surgical specialties, plastic surgery is still young and developing in many ways. Says Dr. Hall: "One sees in the history of plastic surgery a close relationship between social customs and civilization as a whole and the surgeon's responses to the resultant needs."

"In the 16th century, the Italian surgeon Tagliacozzi gained fame for his method of nasal repair (starting early evolution of the rhinoplasty). During the renaissance, amputation of the nose or ears as punishment for thievery and adultery and the devastating effects of leprosy and syphilis all made the need for a method to rebuild the face very evident." In recent years, the skills of the plastic surgeon have been used primarily to help affluent whites maintain a youthful look. Facelifts, nose jobs, breast enlargement and hair transplants continue to make up the bulk of the plastic surgeon's workload. Blacks have begun to use the services of the plastic surgeon more often than in the past. Dr. Hall says that there are some distinctive problems. "Blacks and Orientals have a greater propensity to form heavy thick scars," Dr. Hall says. "The patient with thick or coarse, or oily skin predisposes to poor wound healing and produces more than the usual reaction to sutures (stitches) leading to unsightly scars."

Despite the inevitability of this scar formation process, Dr. Hall says there exists in the population, both lay and medical, the strong belief that the surgeon, especially the plastic surgeon, can make an incision or scar disappear. The simple facts of wound healing make this physically impossible. "The final appearance of a scar after surgery is dependent on the surgical techniques, age of the patient, region of the body, type of skin and skin disorders," Dr. Hall emphasizes. Treatment by plastic surgeons is generally expensive, but insurance for some treatments is available. "Blacks are not aware that certain plastic surgery procedures are covered by insurance," Dr. Hall points out. "Most insurance policies pay for congenital defects if they're covered at birth. Most insurance companies pay for procedures as a result of an acquired disease such as breast enlargement. All insurance companies pay for the removal of keloids and scars as a result of an injury," he explains.

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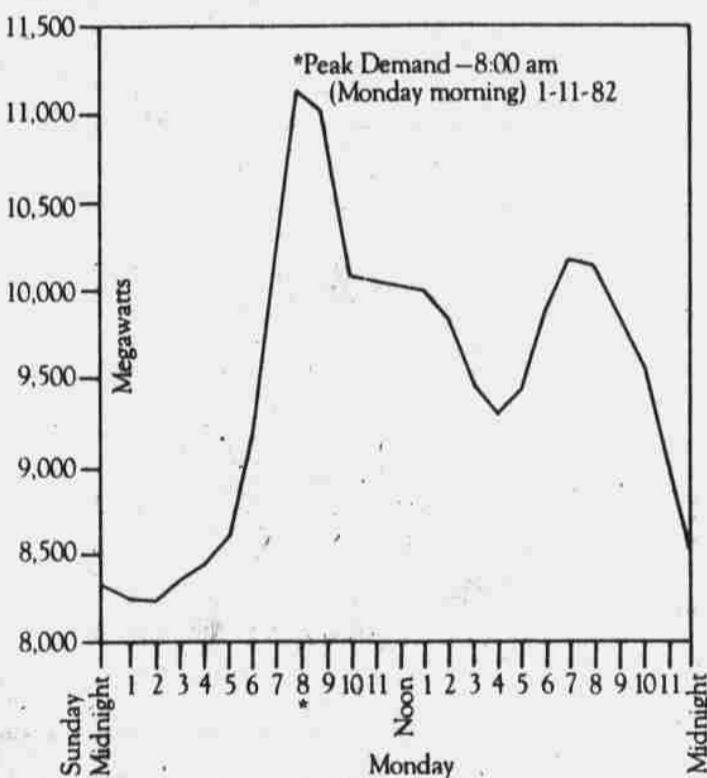
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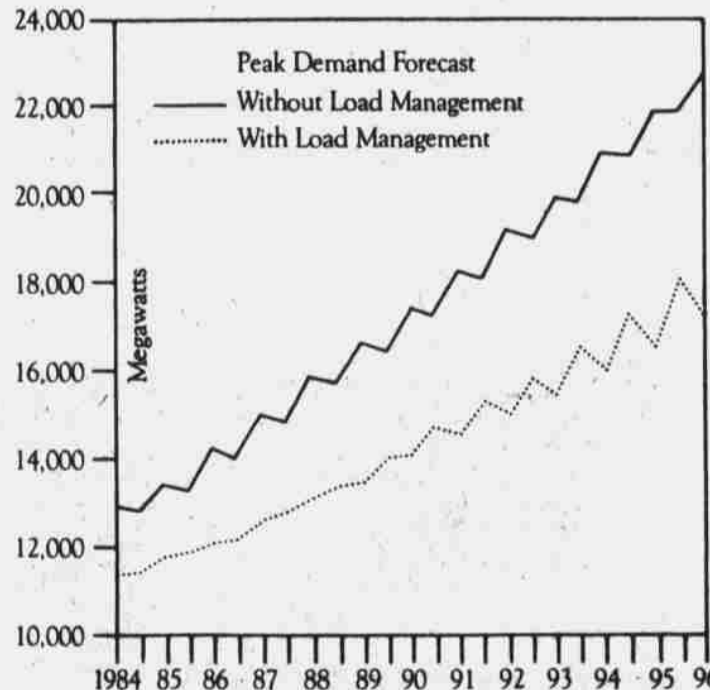
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## Civil Rights Journal An Ungodly Turn

By Dr. Charles E. Cobb

Executive Director  
United Church Of Christ  
Commission For Racial Justice

President Ronald Reagan said that the American Society has strayed from its earliest ideals and that God, the source of our knowledge has been expelled from the classroom. The President was accurate except God has not only been expelled from the classroom but from much of American life, particularly in the chambers of government. This was never more evident than when after extensive debate, the Senate voted to restrict the power of federal judges in their effort to keep some semblance of justice in our nation's schools.

When the Senate voted against the busing of students except over a limited distance and a limited period of time for school desegregation, they once again gave rise and substance to that charge which has plagued this nation's life since its founding, racism, the unadulterated practice and sense of superiority based solely upon ethnic identification.

Busing is certainly a camouflage to hide racial attitudes so long resident in the minds and hearts of many in America's white community.

As disturbing as the vote in the Senate is, what is even more disturbing are the constitutional implications. It is only a matter of time before activities of the Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis and many other racially discriminatory acts will be beyond the pale of federal courts and law enforcement. It is only a matter of time before all social, civil and human rights legislation and programs will be non-existent. It is only a matter of time before the call to justice, equity and fair play will fall of deaf and impotent ears.

The tragedy of all of this is that in this resurfacing of racism, the leadership is being furnished by the highest elected government officials. President Reagan may claim he is not a racist, but his every act indicates that he is, as he appeases long established racists such as Senators Bennett Johnson of Louisiana and Jesse Helms of North Carolina. It isn't what President Reagan and Congress say that sets back the struggle for racial

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