February 7, 1978

Dear Ann Landers:

Now that you've taken care of the blue eye/brown eye inheritance myth would you be so good as to set the record straight concerning another popular genetic myth. I refer to the "black baby" ~~m~~ folk tale that is alive and well even in this supposedly liberal age.

Just recently I noted that a popular "confessions" magazine carried a story in which a young white wife supposedly gave birth to a black (dark brown and completely Negroid) baby. This is "explained" by the discovery of her otherwise white husband's partial black ancestry. Needless to say, such a couple could only produce white children, but countless readers of that magazine will accept the story as gospel.

You have no idea how popular this idea is among ~~people~~ otherwise intelligent people. There is even a story going

around, which I heard from two totally different sources, that a blonde celebrity's supposed black ancestry was revealed by a dark-skinned baby. (I refer to Dinah Shore, which of course can't be printed.)

Ideas like this are reinforced by television shows that couldn't care less about the misinformation they feed to their audiences. In "Roots", for example, the audience is told to believe that a blonde white man (Chuck Connors) and a brown-skinned Negroid woman (Leslie Uggams) produced a black-skinned son (Ben Vereen). Also, in a recent "Quincy" episode the star character (Jack Klugman), who is supposed to be a doctor, alarmingly tells a white mother to have her daughter tested for sickle cell anemia because her father was found to be partly black. In reality it wasn't possible for the daughter to be in danger since sickle cell anemia is a recessive trait and appears only when both parents carry the gene for it. Yet "Quincy" ominously ~~told~~ the mother that the daughter's impending marriage made such a test essential.

Please set the record straight, Ann.

- Tired of Genetic Myths