

Tuesday, July 15th, 2008

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EYE FOR ETHNICITY

Julius W. Few

Assistant professor of surgery**Division of plastic surgery****Feinberg School of Medicine****Northwestern University**

AGE: 35

Julius W. Few wants to change the face of ethnic plastic surgery.

The Northwestern Memorial Hospital physician has already made inroads in convincing patients that they can improve their looks without losing their distinctive ethnic features.

The Detroit native delivers his message at his office and in television interviews—some in English, some in Spanish. His audience: Latinos, African-Americans and Asians who have become more interested in plastic surgery, but are worried about the outcome.

"People want to be reassured that plastic surgery can be done without erasing their ethnic heritage," says Dr. Few. "There is this inherent concern that someone is going to change you into their own image or something other than what you were looking for."

When he's not in the operating room, Dr. Few is researching the eye and the subtle anatomical differences among various ethnic groups, so that those differences can be preserved in surgery. His interest in that area grew during a fellowship at Flowers Clinic in Honolulu, after he graduated from the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine and completed residencies at the University of Michigan and Northwestern University.

Half of the patients at the Flowers Clinic are Asian, and Robert Flowers, an aesthetic plastic surgeon, says it's important to maintain a patient's ethnic integrity. But that's not emphasized in medical textbooks, which assume that "what everyone wants is to make their features more European," or in training programs, he says.

However, as more minorities seek plastic surgery, training is changing.

The California-based American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reports that minorities accounted for 17% of all the plastic surgery procedures performed in the U.S. last year, up from 14% in 1999.

Dr. Few is poised to meet the demand. Says Dr. Flowers: "I am sure he will make a name for himself."

SARAH A. KLEIN

Photo: John R. Boehm

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