What is your favorite color?

When I was little and living in Vietnam, my favorite color was pink. But after returning to Japan in the second grade of elementary school, I grew to hate it. Or more accurately, I started to pretend to hate it.

I realized the fact that liking girlish things would come with additional labels which were often uncomfortable. Pink is a girl's color only to be worn by girls. Products marketed towards women are often pink. The media is the same way. Women who appeared in movies, dramas and magazines often adorned themselves in pink, and they were always, a little "dumb". Pretty, submissive, and unthreatening.

When did pink become a girl's color? According to one theory the trend of pink dyed clothing started in 17th century France. However, back then, pink was not a women's color. It was also a color commonly worn by men. Madame Pompadour is said to have been a pioneer lover of the color. She was the royal mistress of Louis XV, and was active as a diplomat along with Maria Theresa. In her portraits, she always holds a book in her hand to represent her intelligence. Back in this time, pink was most likely not associated with the image of stupidity and submissiveness.

Time flows by and now we are in the United States of America, 1950s. The first lady Mamie Eisenhower was famous for loving pink. She embodied the "homely woman who supports her husband". There is a famous quote from her that goes, "Ike runs the country, and I turn the pork chops." She also decorated the Whitehouse with pink. Perhaps this was when the color pink started gaining its feminine, homely connotations. Post-war Japan was influenced greatly from the U.S.

In the 1970s, Louise Kapp Howe published a book called the "Pink Collar". Along with white and blue collar, pink collar jobs are careers many women take on. These include retail, nursing, teaching and childcare, many of them being service work. In addition, these jobs tend to be part-time or low-wage. Even now, pink is not seen in an independent manner. Instead, the "standard" that society expects from women are inbedded into "pink".

Why do society, parents and teachers expect these "standards" from us? Especially to us young women. Perhaps that is because when they did so, they were able to find the right way, the happy way to live in this complex world. However, time has been changing. The right answer then is not always the right answer from now.

And this is not limited to the color pink. Women must be this way. Men must be that way. Asians must be hardworking and good at math. We as a society continue creating these numerous standards. Because then we'd have the right answer, and we can feel some sense of relief. Because unpredictable things are scary. I, too, fear what awaits me if I don't live the way my parents and teachers tell me to. However, when I am no longer able to reach the standards they expect from me, what shall I do? Maybe if I listen to the people around me, there is a happy, rewarding, and safe future waiting for me. However, I want to search for myself and live my own truth. I want to be a part of the change we will incite, to create a society where all people are able to live freely. So, I ask you. What is your favorite color? I like PINK.

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Think Pink