



**Challenge Image: Skin & Face Issues**

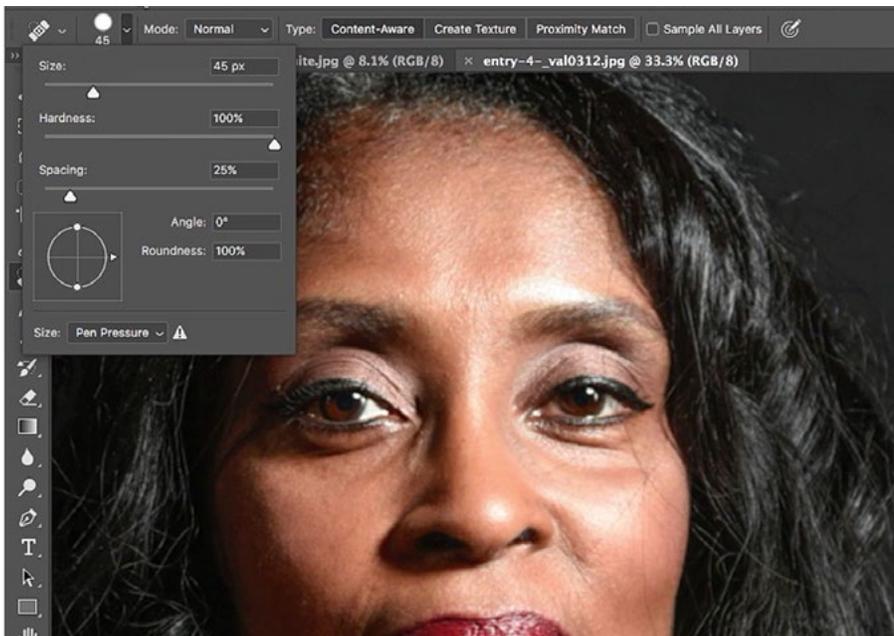
# Challenge Image: Skin & Face Issues

In this lesson, we're going to walk through two challenge images that were submitted by Masters Academy members. In both of the images, we're going to learn how to tackle some problems/challenges we can encounter when working on the skin and face.

## Reduce Sheen

We've all captured images where our subject's face has areas that look shiny, overly bright or blown out to white. Let's look at a few methods for correcting this.

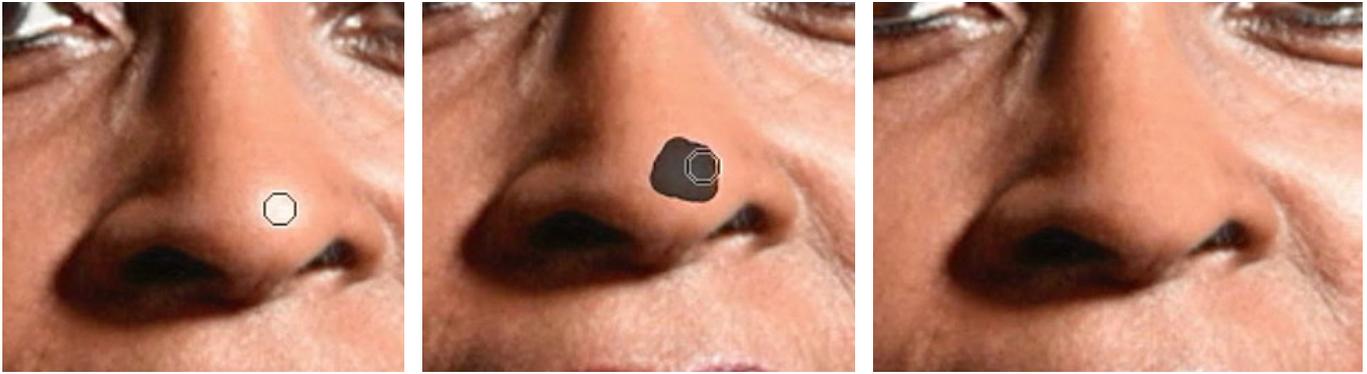
If the blown-out area is very small, try using the Spot Healing Brush, which can be found in the Toolbar on the left side of the interface. Make sure you are using a hard-edged brush (we're using 100% hardness) and if you are making your adjustments on a new, empty layer, turn on the Sample All Layers check box, which can be found in the Options Bar above the main image window.



**In order to tone down the small area of sheen on the subject's nose, we activated the Spot Healing Brush and are setting the hardness of the brush to 100%.**

We'll use the Spot Healing Brush to paint over the bright spot, making sure that we completely cover the area. If the bright spot was fairly small, the tool should do a good job in removing it.

The problem is, without any kind of highlight whatsoever, the skin may look flat and unnatural. We want to bring just enough of the brightness back so it looks natural.



**The Spot Healing Brush is used to paint over the bright spot, making sure to cover the entire area, in order to remove the sheen.**

The method for doing this will be different, depending on whether you are doing your retouching on the image layer or on an empty layer.

If you are doing your retouching on the image layer (like we are in the video), go to the Edit menu and choose Fade. The Fade command allows us to lessen the effect of whatever we did last. In the Fade dialog, adjust the slider while looking at its effect on the image. When you're happy with the subtleness of the highlight, click OK.

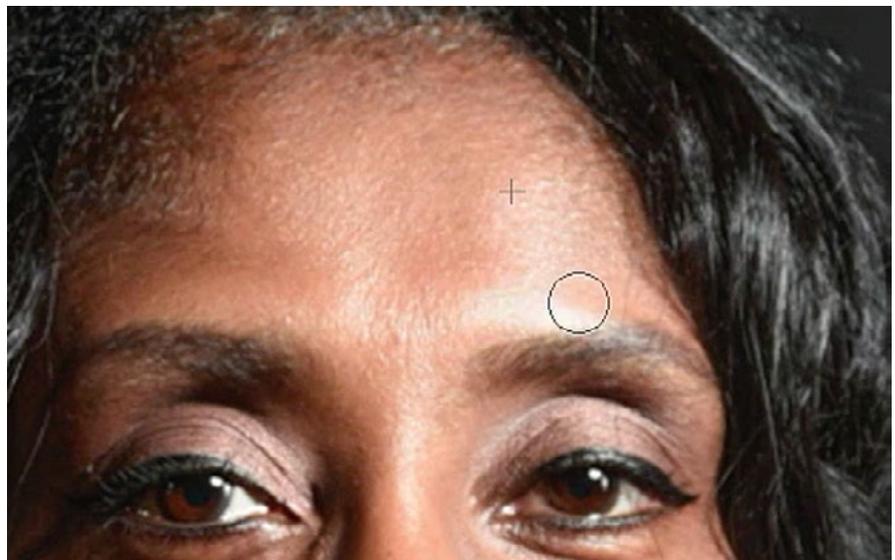


**The Fade command is being use to reduce the effect of the Spot Healing Brush.**

If you are doing your retouching on a separate, empty layer, simply lower the opacity of the layer until the area looks natural.

Now we'll move on to the larger areas of sheen. In correcting these areas, we want to make sure that we maintain the texture of the skin, and we will use the Clone Stamp Tool to do this, making sure that we're using a soft-edged brush. The Clone Stamp Tool creates a blatant copy, and if we do this at 100% strength, it will look blotchy and unnatural. We're going to lower the opacity of the tool using the Opacity setting that can be found in the Options Bar above the image window. We want to be able to subtly build up the effect, so we'll set the opacity to 20%. We'll also apply this work on a new, empty layer because we may need to erase any overspray later. Because we're working on an empty layer, we'll make sure that the Sample menu (in the Options Bar) is set to Current and Below.

With the Clone Stamp Tool, we need to Option+click (Alt+click on Win) to sample from an area of skin we want to use as the "patch" to somewhat cover up the bright spot. We'll then adjust the brush size and carefully paint over the area where the sheen is too bright. We'll repeat the sample-then-paint process, sampling from different areas, slowly building up the effect until it looks natural. If there was



**Using the Clone Stamp Tool (set to a low opacity), we are sampling from an area of skin that looks good and painting over the problem area, repeating the process in order to build up the effect.**

any overspray into areas that should not have been painted on (the eyebrow, in our case), you can use the Eraser Tool to clean up the retouching job.

After applying this kind of retouching, you may find that the color is a little bit off in the area you worked on. In our example, the area looks a bit gray. If that's the case, you can "steal" color from another area and apply it in the area that looks off. First,

create a new, empty layer and set the blending mode of this layer to Color. When using the Color blending mode, the layer can only affect the color of the underlying layer but not the brightness or texture. Then, activate the Brush Tool and make sure you're using a soft-edged brush. You'll want to sample an area from the immediate surroundings so that the color looks natural and you can do this by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) to temporarily access the eyedropper and clicking in an appropriate area. Now, you can paint over the area that needed the color adjustment and you'll be painting with the



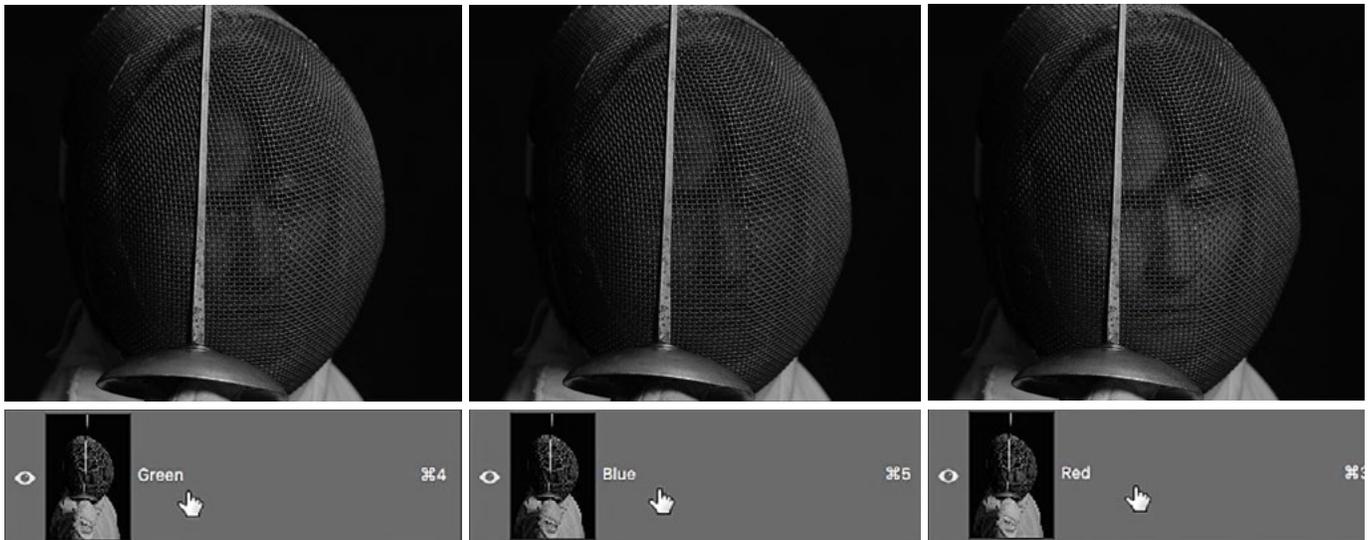
**With the Brush Tool active, we're holding down the Option key to temporarily access the Eyedropper and we're sampling a color that we'll use to paint over the problem area.**

color that you sampled. You may need to sample from a few different areas, gradually painting over the problem area in order to make the colors look most natural.

Another method of correcting this type of issue is to use a technique called frequency separation. Frequency separation works very well in correcting skin that is too bright but still contains texture. We dedicated an entire lesson to that in the past, so we used this lesson to learn some new methods.

## Creating a complex mask using Channels

In the next challenge image, we want to lighten up the fencer's skin without lightening up anything else in the image. In order to do this, it's good to know about channels in Photoshop. Behind the scenes, your picture is made up of three colors: red, green and blue. Anywhere the image is gray, it means you have equal amounts of red, green and blue. Anywhere the image has color, it means that there are varying amounts of red, green and blue. In the challenge image, the mesh covering the face is close to gray.

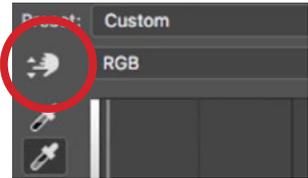


**We're inspecting the three channels and can see that the most separation between the mesh mask and the face happens in the Red channel.**

We'll open the Channels panel and inspect the channels one by one. If the Channels panel is not open in your interface, you can access it by going to the Window menu and choosing Channels. Clicking through the red, green and blue channels, we see that the face really blends in with the mesh in both the green and blue channels. In the red channel, however, we see some separation.

When we boost the saturation in an image, it makes the colors more colorful, but anything that is gray stays the same. Knowing this, we want to make sure that the fencer's mask is truly gray and then boost the saturation of the image. This will leave the mesh mask alone but make the face more saturated. Because the face mostly stood out in the red channel, the boost in saturation will make it stand out even more and we will be able to use that channel to make a selection.

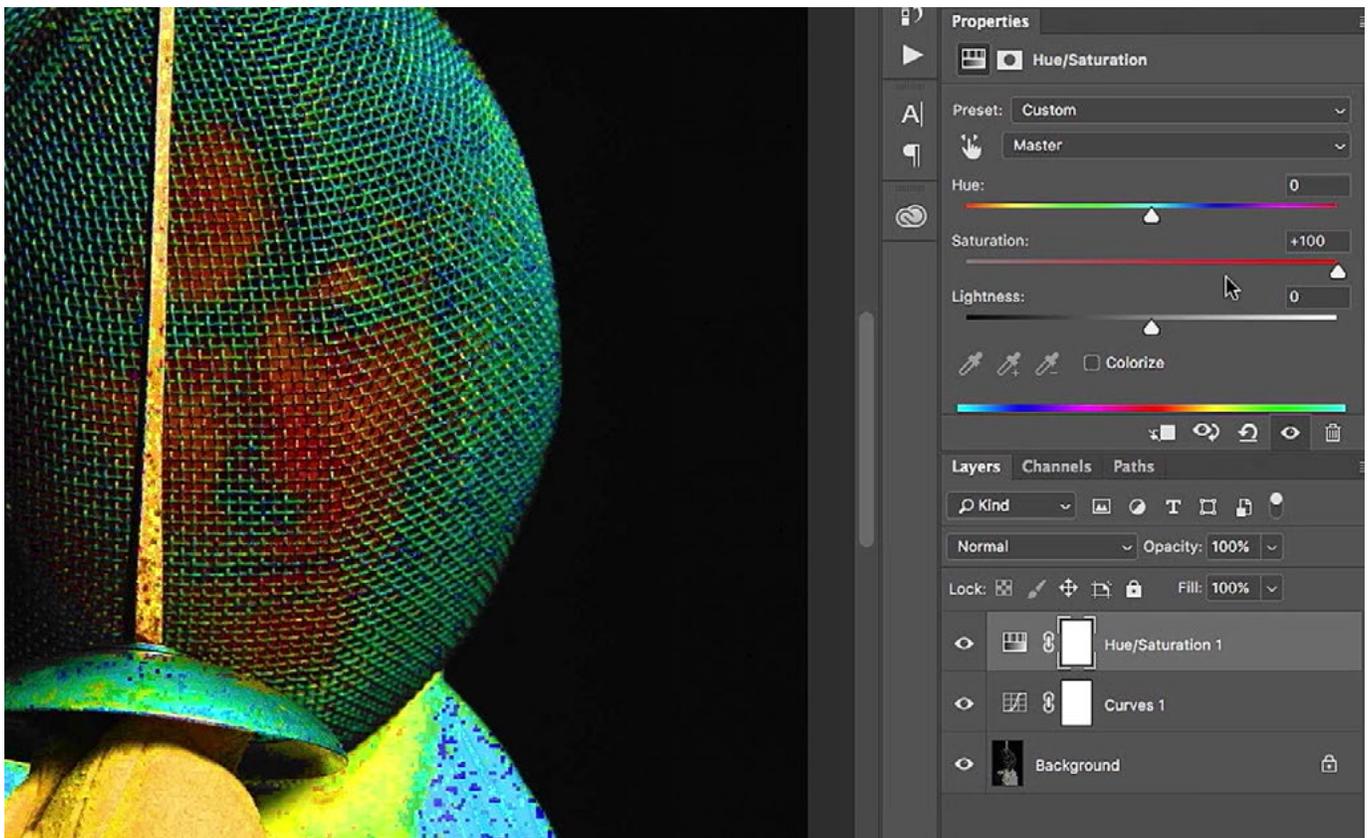
We'll first create a Curves adjustment layer by clicking the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choosing Curves from the menu that appears. We will use this adjustment layer to temporarily brighten the image. We'll click on the targeted adjustment tool in the upper left corner of the Curves Properties panel and we will use the tool to click on the face and drag up. This will adjust the curve to brighten the face.



**The targeted adjustment tool in the Curves settings.**

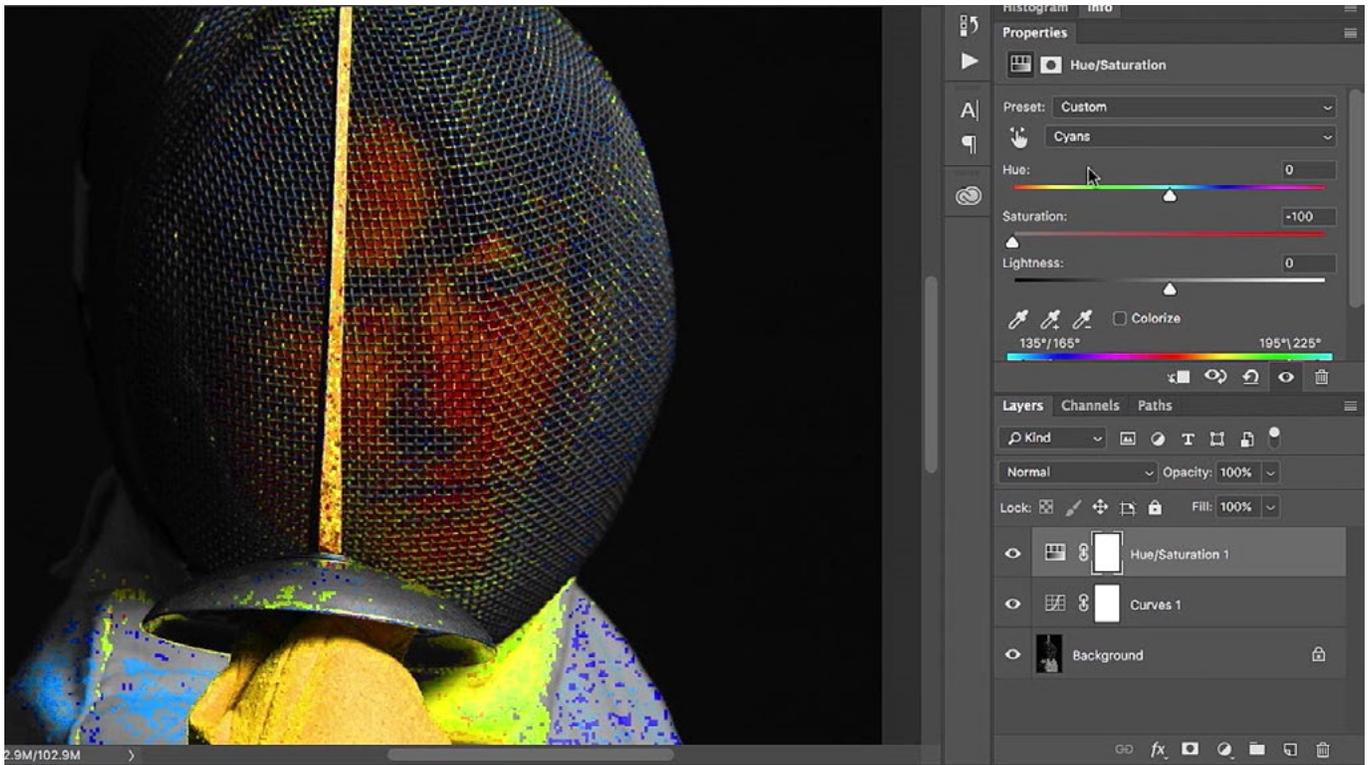
Now we want to ensure that the mesh of the mask is perfectly gray. To do this, we'll activate the gray eyedropper (the middle one) on the left side of the Curves Properties panel and we will use it to click on the mesh of the mask. This tool makes things a neutral gray without changing how bright they are.

Now, we're going to increase the saturation by creating a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. We'll click on the adjustment layer icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and choose Hue/Saturation from the pop-up menu. In the Properties panel, we'll drag the Saturation slider all the way up and inspect the results. The face became really red and the mask became neutral in some areas and blue/green in other areas. This means that not ALL of the mask was made neutral by the previous Curves adjustment. That's ok, however, because the mask is still a different color than the face, so we can further isolate things.



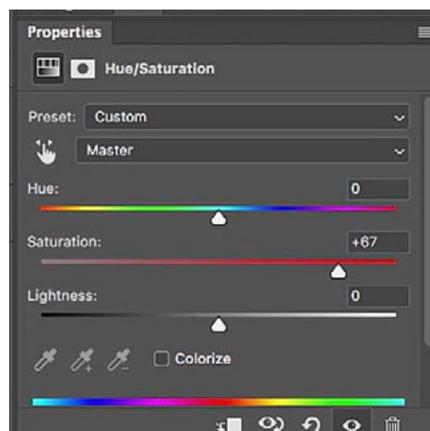
**A Hue/Saturation adjustment layer is being used to increase the saturation to 100% in order to inspect the color and isolate the reds.**

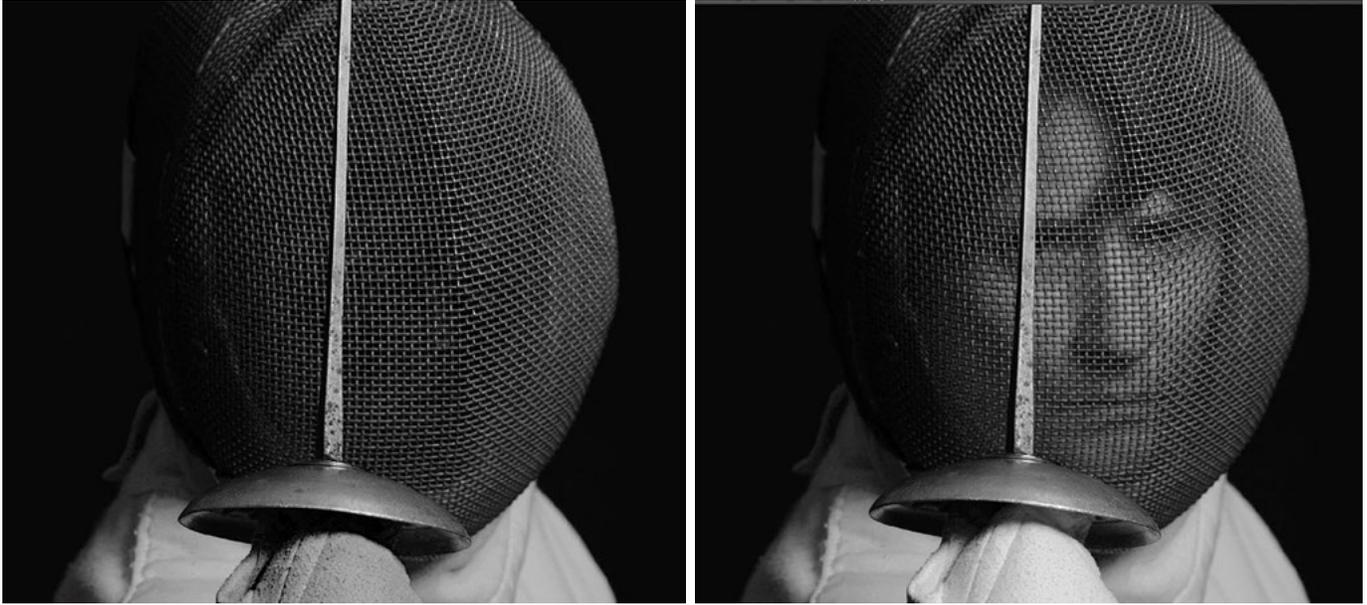
We'll use the color menu at the top of the Hue/Saturation Properties panel and set it to target the Greens. We'll drag the Saturation slider all the way down, removing all areas of green from the image. We'll go back to the menu and do the same thing for the Cyans and the Blues. Finally, we'll set the color menu back to Master and adjust the saturation slider so that the face looks saturated, but not nuclear/ gaudy saturated.



Above: The Hue/Saturation adjustment layer is being used to desaturate the Blues, Cyans and Greens.

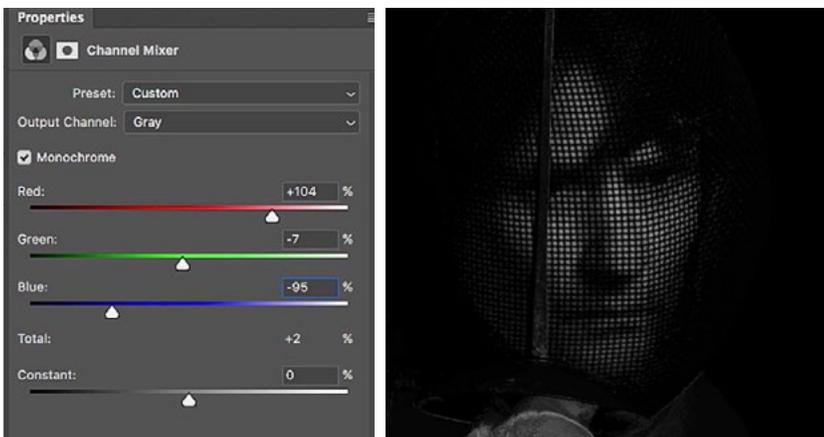
Right: The overall saturation is being lowered, just a small amount, so it's not so far overdone.





**Left: In the Blue channel, the face is not visible at all. Right: In the Red channel, the face is the most prominent.**

Now we will open the Channels panel again and inspect the individual channels. In the Blue channel, we can't see the face at all. In the Green channel, we can make out the face ever so slightly. In the Red channel, the face is extremely prominent. We're going to have Photoshop combine the Red channel (where the face is prominent) and the Blue channel (where the face disappears).



**A Channel Mixer adjustment layer is being used to add more to the Red channel and less to the blue channel.**

We'll go back to the Layers panel, click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the panel and choose Channel Mixer from the pop-up menu. In the Channel Mixer Properties panel, we'll turn on the Monochrome check box and then set the Red slider to 100% (or higher) because this is the information we want.

Then we'll drag the Blue slider to around -100% because this channel had the opposite of what we want. Looking at the result, we've isolated the face quite well.

We're going to turn these results into a selection by going to the Channels panel, holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the RGB composite channel at the top. This will create a selection where everything that is white becomes selected and everything that's black is not selected. With the selection active, we'll go back to the Layers panel, hide all of the layers except for the background layer (the original image) and then create a Curves adjustment layer. Because there is a selection active, the selection will automatically be applied to the layer mask for the Curves adjustment layer. We'll activate the targeted adjustment tool on the left side of the Curves Properties panel and use it to click on an area of skin and drag up. This will lighten the face. The gloved hand also lightened up, so we can use the Brush Tool (set to paint with black) and paint on the layer mask to hide the hand. This will make it so only the face is receiving the brightening effect.



**All of the white areas were isolated with a selection, which was then applied to the layer mask of a Curves adjustment layer. Here, we're dragging the curve up to lighten the selected area (the face).**

