

Editor's Note 1: How do you identify?

March 2011

Prior to college I never knew Women's History Month existed; perhaps because I was always too worn out from Black History Month to notice the events which occurred after, or maybe it's because I simply did not understand the need to have a month completely devoted to women's accomplishments. However, just as with every other aspect of my life, the more mature I become, the more relevant I find certain practices. I fully respect every woman of all races and ethnicities who have aided in the process of social justice and equality in this country. However, as a Black woman in America I identify with my Blackness more so than my femininity. This may come as a shock to some, and a solidification to others, but the reality of American society is when people look at me they see a Black woman, not a woman who is Black.

Acknowledging and embracing your identity in this country is a vital part to survival. There are individuals who do not know or understand their ethnic background and fall into the trap of American culture, failing to think critically of the larger societal implications from lacking self-awareness of your identity. As Black people we must acknowledge there are certain institutions that were designed specifically to ensure we fail. When African slaves arrived in the New World Europeans recognized their intelligence and strength. However, in order to ensure slaves would not revolt, they embraced the *Willie Lynch Doctrine*. This doctrine was proclaimed to not only influence current circumstances of rebellion, but those for years to come. "The Black slaves after receiving this indoctrination shall carry on and will become self-refueling and self-generating for HUNDREDS of years, maybe THOUSANDS." (Willie Lynch)

Consequently, this is why it is important to understand the history of Black people in America. We need to acknowledge the intricacy of how our ancestors were brain-washed to believe they were uncivilized, ignorant, and not worthy of equal rights, with women not being treated any differently. We need to understand that we were set against one another from the moment we stepped off those boats; men against women, old against young, light against dark. However, once we embrace the philosophy of our past we can begin to move forward. Education and perseverance are the keys to unlocking the bonds of slavery still looming about the Black community. Those individuals we praise and thank during Black and Women's History Month were some of the most intelligent

minds of their time and ours. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. went to college at 15, Angela Davis obtained her Ph.D. while organizing during the Civil Rights Movement, and there are many other leaders with the same background.

Ntozake Shange once said, "The reason things are this way is because they want to keep us one dimensional." However, the Black race is far from one-dimensional; Black people developed the greatest discoveries, inventions, and innovations that have occurred in this country. Yet, we must begin instilling these history lessons in our children in order for our community to prosper.

In closing I am not negating the importance of Women's History Month; many women, especially White women, had to fight hard for the rights they have obtained as well. However, I am from the teaching, "You have to get your own house in order before you start helping someone else work on theirs." Until the Black Community begins to thrive and succeed in the manner they should I will continue to educate my peers and the youth on the history of our people. Regardless of whether or not you agree with my philosophy you need to understand who you are as an individual and how you identify yourself. Identity is important, because it helps you build a belief system and opens your eyes to the world around you. Therefore, this month I truly charge each of you to look within yourself and determine what it is you identify with. Now understand this is not an overnight experiment, it is something you will be working on for the rest of your lives, but beginning now can only help you in the future.

"Everything that came out of slavery time is not poisonous. We are from that era and we are not poison."

~Ntozake Shange