

## Editor's Note 2: What's your commitment?

February 2011

“We have to acknowledge that there are massive problems if we want to facilitate change.”

~ Elaine Brown

Since childhood, February has been one of my favorite months; there are always amazing documentaries premiering, special programs throughout the community, and time to truly reflect on what being Black in America means to me. However, as the years have progressed February has begun to awaken the activist that exists within me. Yet only to have confusion, disgust, and annoyance overcome me for the other eleven months.

My confusion is drawn from this notion many individuals, not just Black, have that being involved in the political process in America is an option, and not an important and greatly influential duty of every citizen. There was a time in this country when people would have, and did, die for the “option” of voting. Likewise, it saddens my heart to hear individuals make statements such as “One vote is not going to make a difference” or “I’m too lazy to follow politics”.

After hearing words such as these my confusion transforms into anger; the rage I feel in these moments is the type one may experience when someone mistreats or does not value a person one holds in high regards. It is as though individuals – not just young people – do not understand or believe the extent to which activists in America have sacrificed in order for them to have the liberties they enjoy on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, my largest annoyance is when individuals feel as though they have “arrived” and begin to look down on those who have not yet made it to their socioeconomic status. Instead of going back and providing support, aid, or mentorship to these individuals they automatically label them as lazy or stupid and completely disregard them and their situation. Likewise, they completely ignore the fact everyone did not receive their 40 acres and a mule to begin their life after slavery. Generational poverty, just like generational wealth, plays a powerful role in this nation’s current cast system.

As a people we must understand we have not yet “arrived,” and we will never arrive until

we begin rejecting the “I” and refocusing on the communal philosophy of “we.” Every great movement or revolution in history began because individuals recognized an injustice occurring and decided to step outside of themselves and focus on their community. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s the Black community in America banded together, not only with one another, but with various minorities, student organizations, and political parties to invoke change in this nation.

The vision for equality was clear and infinite; people understood in order for one race to have American liberties everyone would have to join together for the greater good. During Black History month this year I charge you to not only open your mind to learning about the past of our people, but to also observe the world you are living in and think of ways you can make a difference or invoke change or speak out against an injustice. The greatest respect we can pay those who fought, died, and sacrificed all they had for the equal treatment of every American is to continue their legacy not only for their struggles, but for the struggles that still remain. We must realize there are still many injustices in the America we live in today, and even though they may not be as evident as they were in the 60s and 70s they do remain and are intertwined in our government, education, jobs, prison system, and international policy.

In a country that will allow a state to pass legislation denying minority history classes in school curriculum we know there is need for change. When we see local governments spending more money on the prison system than on education we know there is need for change. In a system where you are denied health care because you were not born in a specific country we know there is need for change.

The more we venture outside of ourselves, and truly delve into the essence of who the great Civil Rights leaders were and what they believed in, the more we will be able to understand and acknowledge the changes that need to occur today. I am by no means requesting everyone go out and start a revolution, but I am asking you to evaluate your life and figure out what it is you are committed to. By searching within yourself, I have found you can make a difference and change the world you live in. Be bold in your choices and stay true to what you understand and know is just.

Happy Black History Month!!!