

IT AIN'T EASY BEING QUEEN

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Black women have common experiences in America, and yet we are too complex to be seen as one homogeneous group that all think and experience life in the exact same way (Collins, 2009). However, what we have shared for too long and through myriad media outlets, is America's portrayal of us as physically unattractive, angry, overbearing, unintelligent, but strong beasts of burden with spiritual backbone, whose job is to do whatever is necessary to take care of everyone else's needs (Collins, 2009; Gilens, 2000; Gilliam, 1999; hooks, 2000, 2015). Those dehumanizing and "controlling images" (Collins, 2009, p. 77) used to negatively depict us are designed to normalize the maltreatment we are subjected to in personal, public, and private spaces (Collins, 2009). The continuous hostility perpetuated against Black women has caused damage to our minds, bodies, and souls, but that damage is not irreparable (Bambara; 1984; Baszile, 2016, Dillard, 2012; Edwards, 2016). No, no! Our mommas taught us better than that! We march on—like *the truth* we are—fortuitous, resilient, self-determined. Yes, we do! In all our magnificent complexity, commonality, and difference...we continue, we BE, we stroll, we step, we glide, we thrive. Living in the power of our ancestors and sending that power forward, we will not stop. And yet, no matter how effortless we make it seem, one thing's for sure...it ain't easy BEing Queen.

Nah,
It ain't easy BEing Queen...
And no matter how smoothly
we seem
to flow
None that I know
had a happily ever after
More like a
constant struggle

That's
the single story
many stories
an individual's story
our story
HerStory
similar stories
different
separate
and
collective
simultaneously

Stories of pain and triumph
 struggle and success
 falling
 or being held down
 and getting back up
 even stronger

Stories that are powered by the past
 morphing in the present
 influencing the future

In these stories
 their stories
 herstory
 I hear mine
 intertwined
 an intervention of the Divine

The big sisters
 middle sisters
 little sisters too
 though different
 we can relate
 We're seen as the same
 issued the same hate
 apportioned the same fate

One size fits all
 types of descriptions
 angry
 emasculating
 with a sexual addiction

Negative depictions
 encouraged by mass media
 through lyrics
 scripts
 shit
 even in most religions
 we are seen as second-class citizens
 Taking a back seat to the head...the male
 for out of him
 yes, out of his rib
 the Creator formed
 us...the tale
 A setup
 from the very beginning

“And
 since your skin is brown...
 black
 whatever you call that,
 Miss Thing, you are definitely
 at the bottom
 of the barrel
 ummm, move to the back”

Even affirmative action
 will advance the white woman
 over the Black woman or man
 And
 although we call him our Black king
 he too
 will be trained to see us
 as the last choice
 he too
 will be groomed
 to misunderstand our cry for his recognition
 and attempt
 to silence our voice
 Saying, “You’re too loud!”
 “You’re too strong!”

Forgetting
 those are
 the same characteristics
 that kept us
 from dying
 a wrongful death
 as a black nation

Harriet
 loud and strong
 helping you escape the plantation
 Mary
 loud and strong
 starting a college of education
 Madam CJ’s “we too are beautiful”
 strong and loud declaration

Throughout the Civil Rights struggle
 countless Black queens
 with the strength of Coretta or Betty
 stood beside the Black man
 “till death do us part”

organizing
 marching
 sitting
 defying
 strong and loud
 hand in hand

Strong and loud
 Sybrina and Mamie
 mothers of Trayvon and Emmett
 lifted their voices
 Strong and loud
 Deborah and Ava
 give us viewing choices
 Strong and loud
 television networks emerge
 to nourish
 our minds
 bodies
 spirits

Strong and loud
 Alicia, Patrisse and Opal
 forefront the voices
 of queer
 trans
 women
 in the Black liberation movement
 proclaiming, "Black Lives Matter!"
 You hear it?

Loud and strong
 with Solange we proclaim
 the beauty of our crown
 "Don't touch my hair!"
 turn right around
 and boldly
 join India singing out
 "I am not my hair!"
hmp...
 that's right!
 Yes, ma'am...

Lifting every voice
 to shatter
 the messages designed
 to encourage us to believe

that we
 are not
 enough...
 that we need our hair
 to be silkier and longer...
 that we must purchase
 bigger hips and butts
hmph...

Loud and strong
 Patricia, Denise, bell, Sherrill, and Alice
 push the envelope
 in academia
 creating a space where
 the study of our lived experiences
 and knowledge production
 demands
 to be seen
 as rigorous
 research worthy

Loud and strong
 we stood
 stand
 and
 plan
 to continue to speak

Loud and strong
 because a Black woman
 Queen
 can't afford
 to be quiet
 and meek

And
 regardless to how easy
 our magic
 makes it seem
 to be...
 hear our stories
 hear our voices
 take note...
 It ain't easy
 BEing Queen

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