

What's

Black Love

Got to Do With It

?



by

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Foreword by Eugene Mason III, MBA

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Introduction

Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, has spoken about “the danger of a single story” and how where a person begins a story matters. For far too long, a single perspective and narrative of the African in the Diaspora has been accepted as the ultimate truth about who we are. That belief that there is a single story, a single way to view the world, a single interpretation of events that have occurred, and a single truth about the historical context of humans in this world is pervasive in modern culture. Not only is the “single story” detrimental to the collective, but it is often the story of conquests and colonization of indigenous peoples from a perspective that minimizes achievements and demonizes histories of other cultures.

The single story in a country like the United States, a nation that is a conglomerate of ethnicities, serves as a tool of erasure of the cultures that have sustained the country. For those who are not a part of the majority culture, there is often *cognitive dissonance*, which occurs when a person is forced to co-exist with or reconcile two incompatible ideas or beliefs. In modern culture, cognitive dissonance usually shows up as the tension or discomfort between what is broadly accepted as the single story that we should all embrace as the truth, and all of the other stories that make up the tapestry of American culture. While the concept of telling a story seems harmless, the power of the influence of the story that a person embraces is undeniable.

As a descendent of Africans who were kidnapped from West Africa during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, I am finding the stories of my ancestors, before they arrived in the Americas, more valuable than I could have ever imagined. Even with all of my Western education, I realized that listening only to the single story had disabled me.

There have been great efforts taken to hide these stories that included pillaging, destruction and blatant sins of commission. In fact, the tellers of the single story have gone to great lengths to ensure that certain people are always portrayed as good and others as evil, no matter what their deeds. These inconsistencies in what had been presented as universal truth caused a lot of internal conflict in me. Additionally, as I met new people and traveled to other countries I saw people existing in different ways that verified what I had begun to believe was true - that embracing the single story of the United States had required me to surrender parts of myself that were necessary for me to re-member who I am as a daughter of Africa.

While I have written specifically about its effects on people of African descent, the single story is harmful to everyone. Cognitive dissonance is a perpetual mental state for any person that accepts the single story of the United States as it is presented in school or mainstream culture. In many ways, it weakens the ability to reason and think critically about situations. Once individuals have been presented with additional information that shows that there are contradictions in the story, then there is a decision to be made. At that moment, the person has to decide whether they will accept the new information and allow it to alter

their perception of reality, or rationalize the new information away to maintain belief systems as they have always been.

When I understood my problem, I decided to attack it head on. I began to look for myself and African influence in everything. When I did that, it was as if I could see myself for the first time. There is literally nothing you can study that does not have an African influence, if you look for it.

What I ultimately found was that the cure for my cognitive dissonance was *cognitive justice*. Cognitive justice challenges the notion that the only viable story is the single story of the dominant culture. It asserts the right for diverse paradigms to co-exist. When considering romantic partnerships among African Americans, it is of vital importance that we have more than a single story or paradigm as a model for our lives.

This ebook represents cognitive justice in relationship education where African Americans are concerned. It represents an opportunity for individuals, regardless of ethnicity or background, to resolve some of their cognitive dissonance by expanding some limiting perspectives about the historical context of Black people. For African Americans, resolving cognitive dissonance is an opportunity to free ourselves in a different way that is necessary to fully embrace self-determination -- the ability “*to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves*”.

If you identify as Black/African American/Diasporic African/Person of African Descent:

I understand that unless you have been taught about our history in your family or your community, you most likely do not know our history. While we are not a monolith with the same history and experiences, I also understand that in many cases some have been taught to be ashamed of our African ancestry and, for many, Africa is viewed in the same negative perspectives as those who first trafficked our ancestors to this land. While some people travel for missionary work and contribute to benevolence operations, many still cannot fathom what Africa could have to offer to the descendants of the Africans who were enslaved here. I hope that this ebook will offer the additional perspective necessary to see yourself as one with a proud history that extends beyond the single story we have been offered through Western culture.

If you identify as Bi-Racial/Mixed Race:

I understand that your experiences are distinctive and that the diverse heritages represented in your families are all worthy to be explored and honored for the unique perspectives they offer to your life and understanding of the world. I understand that you may be a person who has been challenged about race and ethnicity throughout your life or even been “othered” by people, making it challenging to know where you fit in. I encourage you to allow this ebook to add to your understanding of who you are and your appreciation of your African ancestry.

If you identify as one who is White/Caucasian/ Person of European Descent:

I understand that this topic may be challenging because it seems to promote division between different races of people. I also understand that if you are in an interracial relationship it may seem to speak directly against your relationship with your partner and any children that may be born of your relationship. In the context of this book, #BlackLove represents more than how Black people relate in romantic partnerships. Black Love first begins with love of self, which Western culture does not promote for people of African descent. If your partner is a person of African descent or you have children that have African ancestry, this ebook will surely enhance your knowledge and appreciation for the diversity in your family and equip you to help those you love celebrate who they are.

If you identify as a Person of Color/Other Ethnicity:

I understand that most people of color and cultures have histories of discrimination interacting within dominant white cultures. There is also a practice of creating hierarchies between people of color and diverse cultures, and these hierarchies often place people of ethnicities with lighter skin in higher social positions than people with darker skin. This can mean that people of color/culture have also been inundated with certain prejudices about people of African descent and found refuge from some external biases, solely based on their ability to assimilate and blend into majority culture. This ebook will offer cognitive justice that can also help you break free from the cognitive dissonance of a system that offers positions in society to you as a person of

color, while also treating you as a subordinate in majority culture.

If you identify as one who is not heterosexual and/or in a monogamous relationship:

This ebook was inspired by research that sought to fill in the gaps of studies that had already been conducted about male and female gender roles with regards to African Americans. While much of what is written in this ebook is useful for general information, it is specifically focused on monogamous, heterosexual romantic partnerships. I expect that you will see other gaps that can be addressed through additional research. Please let me know if my work inspires you to continue to expand this conversation or if you use it to support some research that is already in progress.

Finally, this ebook is an informal extension of my formal research titled *Non-conventional gender roles in relationship education curricula for African Americans: A content analysis*. For ease in reading, I have only included hyperlinks to useful resources about certain topics. If you desire to read the formal research with the results and complete reference section , please follow [this link](#).

Throughout this ebook I have included opportunities for you to offer real time comments about what you are reading. Use the link in the graphic to share your thoughts about **“What’s BLACK LOVE Got to Do With It?”**

What do you think about what you have read so far?
[CLICK HERE](#) to share your thoughts real time.



WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOU!

THESE PAGES NOT
AVAILABLE
IN THE PREVIEW

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“GO TO FREEDOM!”

“Eat the fish and spit out the bones...”

I feel the need to repeat this: ***Every country, society, and culture has unfavorable practices that you may not desire to be associated with. Take what you can that can add value to your life and leave the rest.***

However, I will say this as well... If you cannot look for the good or appreciate all of the contributions that come from the African continent, but you *are* able to forgive the role that the Western Christian Church has played in the oppression of Africans and people of color all over the globe, then I would wonder... Why? How is it possible for you to overlook Western and European countries' role in the Maafa, the colonization of the African continent, and the continued abuses of African people, but it is not possible to see beyond the challenges that exist on the African continent to its greatness in the past and promise for the future. That ought not be so.

There is an African proverb that says: “Until the lion tells his story every story will glorify the hunter.” Not only is it time for us to ROAR and tell our own stories, it is also time for us to determine for ourselves what our stories mean.

If you remember nothing else from what is written on these pages, please remember that my greatest admonishment is for you to **GO TO FREEDOM!** My Zulu sister said that to me once when I was having a hard time processing how I felt about being a daughter of Africa and

expanding my relationships with those who were born on the continent, and it set me free! Whether you are considering ways you can reconnect with the African continent or thinking about how you can transform your romantic partnerships... **Make a decision to GO TO FREEDOM! Don't just think outside the box... CRUSH THE BOX!**

I believe that **BLACK LOVE is elusive in our culture because our time is consumed with trying to fit into others expectations for us** that are most often not designed to work toward our highest good as people of African descent in this country. Just as we have external freedoms, we must contend to gain and maintain **freedom in our minds**. Don't be afraid to analyze how your life and society impacts the way you desire to function in certain gender roles. And don't be afraid to do something different.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

Inspiring, thought provoking and brilliantly explained. This book should challenge all people of African descent to take a deeper look at their personal romantic relationships and build a lasting legacy for their descents that watch them navigate through life.

DeAndre and DeLynn Hudson
Board Members, Harmonic Connections PLUS

What's Black Love Got to Do With It is a timeless treasure in a space where Diasporic Afrikans are waking up to who they truly are. This work by Dr. Mason is prolific, and will go down in annals as the match that starts the fire of paradigm shifting for the children of the Maafa. She writes with honesty & integrity on each and every page. Her commitment to not only ask the hard questions, but to diligently walk her own Sankofa to unearth the answers is to be applauded. Using her steps to “walk back & retrieve” from the Motherland, and the easy applicability of her PIES Dimensions of Romantic Partnerships Model, will serve well those of Afrikan descent as they learn to see themselves through their own eyes instead of the eyes of others. This work encourages the practice of Kujichagulia and the gaining of a deeper “inner standing” to Afrikan love relationships for generations. If you are planning to marry, already married or in counseling to save your marriage, this book is for you. The Ancestors Asé is all over this work as it is truly PHENOMENAL! Modupe

Iyaláwo Angela Yaa Oyafunmike, MACM
Author of Unapologetically Me: From the Diaspora to the Motherland, One Wombmyn's Journey to Becoming

Dr. Mason deconstructs and reevaluates the familiar yet questionable notions concerning people of African descent and committed romantic relationships. In doing so, she does not neglect tradition. Rather, she investigates the customary aspects of religion and gender roles, all while presenting an unconventional but credible knowledge in their regard. Speaking as someone who aspires to get married, I appreciate having a source that espouses an African perspective. It's apparent to me that the Western outlook does not necessarily correspond to my experience as a black man. The community I'm in is matriarchal. I am accustomed to the majority of the women in my community being highly educated and able to lead. It's because of this that I've sought and found a different approach to marriage in this book; one that recognizes that it's okay to operate outside of the status quo.

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