

The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,
analysis and investigations on issues affecting
African Americans and the African world.

www.BlackCommentator.com

January 22, 2009 - Issue 308

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

Ladies First From the Fringe By K. Danielle Edwards BlackCommentator.com Columnist

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Black women are accustomed to being referred to and treated as females and workhorses, but not ladies. We are at once the clean-up woman whose tenacity, independence and bull-headedness may render us manless, or increasingly taking care of them in an inversion of traditional gender roles, a la the latest head-nodding about-face to the sistas by super-pop R&B crooners Ne-Yo and Jamie Foxx, "She Got Her Own."

According to the song, black women should do for self, expect little to nothing in the way of material support or resources from the men in their lives, and pay for it all - monetarily, without complaint - each and every step of the way. This certainly doesn't sound like the behavior or standards of a lady, but it's one our womenfolk increasingly assume or to which they find themselves circumstantially vulnerable.

If that wasn't enough, an inventory of statements recollected from conversations with I've had with black men of various backgrounds - high school graduates and graduate degree candidates, upper class and working class, avowedly Afrocentric and with no cultural declaration - reveals the way black women are sometimes perceived by the very ones we believe should most be aligned with us.

"Sistas are too strong and expect too much from a brotha."

"White women are softer, prettier and more feminine."

"Black women are belligerent, loud and puritanical in the bedroom."

"A white woman is a lady in the daylight and a freak in the twilight."

At many turns, we are called too harsh and berated as too honest and demanding. We're told we're too tough, overly hippy and excessively lippy. We are accused of running off at the mouth and never biting our tongues. Folks believe we've never encountered a conversation in which we didn't score the last word.

For a moment, can these perceptions take a backseat, while a black woman catches her breath, takes a rest, puts her feet up and is treated and perceived as a lady, once and for all?

With Michelle Obama becoming head mistress of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue on January 20, 2009, with Barack Obama being inaugurated as the 44th President of the United States, black women may soon get that chance. Mrs. Obama, brown skin, wide hips, nappy edges and all, upsets the historic order. Accomplished in her own right yet proudly dedicated to focus on matters of home and hearth, she sways the paradigm. She is a construction in subversion by default. And her face and form being connoted with the highest station of ladyhood in these United States - as the First Lady - stands forever to alter how black women are perceived interracialy and intra-racially.

Perhaps black women will be revered more broadly, more dynamically and more accurately, as more than Aunt Jemima, Moms Mabley and Celie Johnson. We will be more than Shug Avery, Karrine Stephens and Buffie the Body. We can rise from the knees on which we have kneeled for so long, standing straight, shoulders back, chin up and eyes knowing. Black women may reclaim a title that has for lifetimes been bequeathed unto women of other races as their exclusive inheritance, a gift from which the daughters of the dust were removed as rightful beneficiaries.

Maybe we will then been seen as equal parts strong and soft. Perhaps we will be admitted for our socially acceptable sophistication and sultriness. Maybe we will be preserved in portraiture for perpetuity and have our features painted into porcelain dolls for posterity.

There's a reason I refer to my daughters as "my little ladies." It's not about doilies, fine china or playing dress up. It's not about coquettishness or fragility. It's about her birthright, her entitlement, to be affirmed in her beauty, acknowledged for her strengths and ever positioned on a pedestal of our own making and of her own proven worth.

[Click here to comment on any article
in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, K. Danielle Edwards, a Nashville-based writer, poet and communications professional, seeks to make the world a better place, one decision and one action at a time. To her, parenting is a protest against the odds, and marriage is a living mantra for forward movement. Her work has appeared in Blue Jean Magazine, Mother Verse Literary Journal, Mamazine.com, Mamaphonic.com, Parenting


Express, The Black World Today, Africana.com, The Black World Today, The Tennessean and other publications. Work from Edwards is forthcoming in Black Magnolias Literary Journal. She is the author of [Stacey Jones: Memoirs of Girl & Woman, Body & Spirit, Life & Death](#) (2005) and is the founder and creative director of [The Pen: An Exercise in the Cathartic Potential of the Creative Act](#), a nonprofit creative writing project designed for incarcerated and disadvantaged populations. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Edwards.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

Click Here To

CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To

CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002-2009
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved