

The GRIOT

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Celebrating Black History Month

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Defining Black Beauty

Brittany Sango

Historically, black beauty has not always been perceived as beautiful. Since slavery, African Americans were taught that their hair was too kinky and unmanageable, that being light skinned was more valuable than darker skin.

In the words of panelist Gabrielle A., black beauty has often been **“unappreciated.”** But over the centuries, black beauty has become a prized possession, something unique.

When Ms. Bridgette asked the panelists to give their definition of black beauty, **panelists described it as “exuding confidence,” “radiating from within,” “coming to appreciate your flaws”, and it being the most unique in the world because there are so many tones and textures.**

Black beauty does n’t just include skin tone, as Ms. Bridgette says. It includes body size, hair, success and struggles.

Skin tone was never magnified until I attended high school. It was the light skinned girls against the dark skinned girls.

But I think skin tone was such as issue primarily because the guys made it an issue, and this was in part, I think, due to the media. Music videos showed what was desirable in the black community, which was being light skinned and/or mixed.

I remember the comments some dark skinned girls endured and ugly they felt inside and out. With the skin tone **issue, I think Ms. Tamara’s definition of** black beauty comes into play the most. She defined black beauty as appreciating and understanding those that came before us and loving who we were.

Black beauty comes in so many beautiful hues that it is impossible in my

opinion to state which skin tone is prettier.

Luckily though, I think many girls can thank their parents or other family members who tell them that they are beautiful.

Cynarra

remembered growing up and her mother making sure she knew she beautiful and being dark skinned was not a **sin.** Cynarra’s mother had a color complex growing up because she was dark skinned, but her brother was light skinned.



So does hair define beauty? Some people say yes. Some women say wearing their hair straight or having a perm makes their more manageable.

But others like Cynarra, Blanche and Gabrielle went through hair evolutions. Their experiences made them change hairstyles.

For Gabrielle it was the bad perm when she was younger that made her cut off all her hair, get another perm, and finally end back at totally natural.

Cynarra said she’s had natural hair for the past year and a half and with no heat. Blanche said she has always had thin hair, so some hairstyles did not work for her.

Wearing her hair natural when she was younger was unacceptable, therefore she tried a relaxer.

All in all, the defining black beauty discussion was intriguing and gave great insight into hair and skin tone.

Black beauty is:

“appreciating and understanding those that came before us and loving who we were.”

-Ms. Tamara

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Eric Thomas, Hip Hop Preacher Presentation

Ed Harlan



“The message that I was able to get out of this very moving presentation was that each and every person that was able to attend all need to make sure that we keep our priorities straight.”

Ed Harlan

I had the opportunity to go and see the opening keynote speaker, Eric Thomas, to come and deliver a message to students during the third week of **this year's Black History Month on Tuesday, Feb. 15th.**

Eric Thomas has been renowned as the **“Hip-Hop Preacher,”** I do not exactly know why, but my guess is he got his name because of the way that he can identify with our younger generation, which is known as the hip-hop generation, and also the fact that he is actually a preacher.

Much like any other preacher does when giving their sermon, he was able to give a very inspiring message to his audience about that which we could all identify with. He used what a lot of us hold dear which in this case was school, family and things that we may be dealing with in life in general.

The message that I was able to get out of this very moving presentation was that each and every person that was able to attend all need to make sure

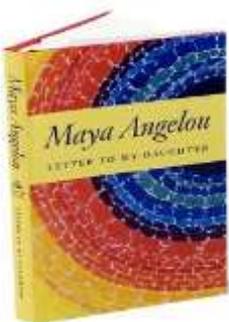
that **we** keep **our** priorities straight. Mr. Thomas mainly directed his words at those that he knew were students in the room based on a little poll that he took of us at the very beginning.

In my opinion, what made Mr. Thomas' lecture so powerful was that he used his own life experiences in a kind of “if I can do it than so can you” way, and it touched so many people including myself. It was like everyone in that room identified with at least one thing that he went through growing up whether it was growing up without a relationship with his father or being homeless at one point and time in his life.

All in all, I believe that this was a very rewarding experience for me and I got the chance to hear a message that I feel like everyone should have had the chance to hear.

Pillow Talk

Danielle McConnell



The Last Monday of the month a group of young women joined together to discuss the wonderful works of Maya Angelou in her book **“Letter to my daughter”.**

The book discusses the many situations Maya Angelou has faced within her life, while at the same time teaching life lessons to both Men and women.

Mrs. Bridgette Johnson, the Director of the B/AACC office came up with the idea of having a book for the month of February. She also hosted the Pillow Talk that Monday evening.

Women showed up in their pajama pants, hair all wrapped up, and prepared to talk about life. The group discussed what it meant to be courageous, being proud of their skin color, and the many aspects of the book that stood out to them as they read.

One student stated that courage meant, “having the ability to

be uncomfortable.” Another student believed that courage was “stepping foot on this campus everyday.

In regards to pride the majority of women believed that we should have pride regardless.

The piece that became the empowerment for the evening was a **poem entitled “So what if I am a Black Woman”.** Which reflects on the mentality that young black women should hold in regards to their race.

The program turned out to be a huge success and a wonderful opportunity for women of all races to come together and have simple talk about the things they face in the world, with some delicious treats included.



Black Beauty Panel Discus-

Letrisia Chambers



Today I attended a very powerful program put on by the **woman's advocacy center and also the Black/African American Cultural center.**

It opened up with a poem by Maya Angelou read by Olethea Brown. The poem said a lot about how black women should be comfortable and confident in her skin.

It quickly moved on to the next thing, which was asking the panel questions; the first question was did their mothers help them love the skin they are in today? And I felt this question was very interesting to see as some peoples parents are not always pushing to tell their children they are pretty or that they are perfect the way they are.

Parents play a huge role in their children's lives. Whether its to make them confident in the skin they are in or to just make them confident in anything the do choose to do.

When the panel was asked to talk on hair that caught my attention to what some of the mixed black girls did have to say just because I am mixed. I was surprised how many of them have had perms **in there hair because I have never had one, and I feel they really didn't need one and went off the social construct of black women.**

All hair is manageable in my eyes, and I feel even people that have courser hair should not try to fit the social construct, and then that would make more young black women love them selves that much more. **It starts at home, and if your mother doesn't love her hair you're going to look at your hair and compare it to her's. Most likely they're the same textures, and your going to want to do whatever mommy does.**

Lastly skin tone. It has always been light skin versus dark skin as I was growing up. That breaks my heart because in my eyes every black women is beautiful no matter what skin tone she is. When Gabi talked on skin tone it made me smile, not only was she darker toned but she wanted to be a deeper chocolate tone because she seen the beauty with in it.

Black beauty is deep with in, and like Kenisha said its very much undefined.

Reflecting on Black History Month: African Drumming,

Edward Harlan

The African drum group, Kudzidza, that came for Black History Month turned out a great performance. I enjoyed hearing a different **culture's music, really for the first time.**

What made it so great was that each of the performers radiated good humor that really made the crowd comfortable. Furthermore, I was happy to see that everyone else was able to enjoy themselves even though they were not familiar with the songs that were played.

I was also glad that there was a pretty good turnout to the show, **which I'm sure made doing the show worthwhile for Kudzidza**

I am pretty sure that it would be accurate to say that the performance that was put on by Mr. Patrick Simms was truly spellbinding. Everyone in the audience seemed to be captivated by the exquisite performance that was being given before our eyes.

Before getting to the play, it seemed like it would be an interesting experience, but the fact that it was a one man play made my experience that much more memorable. Patrick Simms played every part

in the character so well in my opinion.

Even though it was a one man play, I felt that the play's storyline was fairly easy to follow. I had to leave a short time before everything was over but, I have to say that I enjoyed myself and I am definitely grateful for the opportunity that I got to even see the play.

I believe that overall the concert was a success. As a member of **the United Men of Color's exec board I was able to get a behind the scenes** and look at the production of the concert.

We decided to bring an artist like Wale to do a concert to sort of put an exclamation point at the end of Black History Month. The other reason why we wanted to bring Wale was because we felt that a lot of people probably know who he is, some of his music and that sort of thing.

This gave us reason to believe that this could be a pretty successful event. Our wishful thinking became reality in a way to put a cap on Black History Month and I am glad that I got the opportunity to be a part of it.

Creative Corner

Davey D

WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
IS IT A DISEASE?

WELL, IF IT IS, I SURE HOPE IT'S CATCHING
BECAUSE THEY NEED TO POUR IT INTO A BOTTLE,
LABEL IT, AND SPRINKLE IT
ALL OVER THE PEOPLE ~ MEN AND WOMEN ~ WHO
EVER LOVED OR CRIED, WORKED OR DIED
FOR ANY ONE OF US.
SO...WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
IS IT A CRIME? ARREST ME! BECAUSE I'M STRONG, BUT I'M GENTLE.
I'M SMART, BUT I'M LEARNING, I'M LOVING, BUT I'M HATEFUL.
AND I LIKE TO WORK BECAUSE I LIKE TO EAT AND FEED AND CLOTHE
AND HOUSE ME, MINE, AND YOURS AND EVERYBODY'S,
LIKE I'VE BEEN DOING FOR THE PAST
300 YEARS.

WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
IS IT INSANE? COMMIT ME!
BECAUSE I WANT THE HAPPINESS,
NOT TEARS; TRUTHS, NOT
LIES; PLEASURE NOT PAIN;
SUNSHINE, NOT RAIN;
A MAN, NOT A CHILD!

WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
IS IT A SIN? PRAY FOR ME! AND PRAY FOR YOU TOO, IF YOU DON'T LIKE WOMEN OF COLOR
BECAUSE WE ARE... MIDNIGHT BLACK, CHESTNUT BROWN, HONEY BRONZED, CHOCOLATE
COVERED, COCOA DIPPED, BIGGED LIPPED, BIG HIPPED, BIG BREASTED, AND BEAUTIFUL
ALL AT THE SAME TIME! SO...WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
DOES IT BOTHER YOU THAT MUCH BECAUSE
I WANT A MAN WHO WANTS ME...LOVES ME AND TRUSTS ME, AND RESPECTS ME
AND GIVES ME EVERYTHING BECAUSE I
GIVE HIM EVERYTHING BACK, PLUS!

WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
I'VE GOT RIGHTS, SAME AS YOU!
I HAVE WORKED FOR THEM, DIED FOR THEM, LIED FOR THEM, PLAYED AND LAID
FOR THEM, ON EVERY PLANTATION FROM ALABAMA TO BOSTON AND BACK!

WHAT IF I AM A BLACK WOMAN?
I LOVE ME, AND I WANT YOU TO LOVE ME TOO, BUT I AM, AS I'VE ALWAYS
BEEN, NEAR YOU, CLOSE TO YOU, BESIDE YOU, STRONG, GIVING, LOVING

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March 2011

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