

## Barefoot in the Kitchen (Planning a Successful Valentine's Day)

BY KACIE DUNCAN

**T**HE YEAR IS 2015, One Direction is still together, Hamilton is the newfound hit, and Drake just released Hotline Bling – the world is good. It's also the year little fifteen-year-old me dipped her toes into the world of love (and by "love," I mean infatuation). I had my first real crush on a boy named James, and you can imagine my heartbreak when he didn't like me back. So began the journey of being aware of how single I was. When Valentine's Day came and I had to see photos of happy couples while all I had were my daydreams of me and James, I thought I was going to die of despair.

When I first chose to write this piece, I had it in mind to write towards both singles and non-ingles and how to plan a successful Valentine's Day, but then I realized that I have absolutely no expertise in anything to do with couples. So, for this article I will stick to writing about what I know best: being single, specifically, being single on Valentine's Day.

Last month I had a revelation. It was while I stood barefoot in the kitchen baking cinnamon rolls. It was midnight and I was singing along to Hamilton in my oversized flannel with flour on my face. This is when it hit me: I am living one of the best parts of my book. Let me explain what I mean...

I have read hundreds of corny romance novels, and one of the best parts has always been the beginning of each book as the girl (or boy) lives out some scene to show the readers just how single she is, e.g. screaming Hamilton at midnight while baking cinnamon rolls. Until this moment of realization, I had never taken

the time to appreciate that I was living one of my favorite parts of a book right then in my own story.

Listen, fellow singles, don't lie to me. I can see right through your façade. Don't tell me that you've never thought about being in a relationship. We're only human after all. Every now and again we're going to wish we had someone when we're feeling unlovable. Around the holidays when our family asks us if we're dating anyone, we're going to wish we could say yes. When we see our happy couple friends, we're going to ask ourselves why don't I have that? These moments will happen, and that's okay. You can have 10% of your time be spent daydreaming about a relationship as long as the other 90% is spent living and enjoying your barefoot, baking in the kitchen scene.

This year, instead of worrying about being single on Valentine's day, remember that you are simply in a chapter of your life. And despite what you might believe, this chapter of being single is just as important as the next. Take a deep breath. Think of your life as a book. The ending chapter won't mean anything without all the chapters that come before.

Do you want to plan a successful Valentine's Day this year? Plan to be happy, and you've already succeeded.

P.s. If you have a crush who's single, shoot your shot this Valentine's day. I will remain too chicken to do so, but you've got this. If you're looking for a sign, this is it. Go ask that cutie out. Who knows, maybe it'll lead you to your next chapter.

## The Importance of Black History Month

BY HAMZA ISMAIL

**B**LACK HISTORY MONTH is approaching soon, and it's importance has never been higher. With civil unrest over issues like police brutality growing, the need for a remembrance needs to grow too. Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The past is to serve as a moment of reflection. If we repeat the same mistakes over and over and expect a different result, the world will turn into insanity. Black History Month is important because it's main goal is to celebrate the achievements of African Americans and to highlight the importance of Black culture.

African Americans in this country have gone through many hardships. Slavery took African families off the West Coast and brought them to plantations, but not only did it rob African American families of their freedom, but their culture was stripped from them. However, in the 1920's, Carter G. Woodson created Negro History week in the second week of February, in between the birthdays of Fredrick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, to celebrate and highlight the importance of preserving African American culture. The purpose of the Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month, is to celebrate African American culture and important figures, like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. among countless others. This is the month to go back to the history books and reflect upon the legacies of great African American men and women.

The most underrated aspect about this month is the exposure that Black authors and creators get from this month. African Americans are severely underrepresented in the media. However, within recent years, there has been a push to add more diverse stories to the mainstream media. Books like "They Hate U Give" have won multiple awards and have been adapted into a film. "Children of Blood and Bone" is another YA book that has received praise for its unique take in West African mythology. This is a month that allows young Black creators to receive the notoriety they need to take their stories into the mainstream consciousness. How else could we forget to mention the late Chadwick Boseman? He played Jackie Robinson and Thurgood Marshall, two influential men that not only shaped African American history, but shared the overall flow of American history forever.

This month is an important one for various reasons. To me, the most important reason is the reason as to why it was founded in the first place. A month to celebrate and revisit the legacies of affluent African Americans: writers, athletes, actors, doctors, civil rights leaders and many more. I believe we should all, especially fellow people of color, use this month and try to learn from the past so we can build a blueprint for the future.

## How the use of social media helps spread awareness of problems happening around the world

BY KACIE DUNCAN

**C**HANCES ARE, you have heard of the ALS ice bucket challenge, no shave November, or Dresember, mostly because of their hashtags. #BLM, #LoveWins, and #RaidArea51 all produce distinct images in your head. Some hashtags are memes. Other hashtags are calling for social change. Either way, social media has helped bring awareness to various societal issues and brought people together. The ALS ice bucket challenge was a fundraising campaign, like most internet challenges tend to be. These fundraising campaigns blow up, and suddenly everyone is aware of whatever social injustice is trending on Twitter that week.

On January 6th, people got shot-by-shot updates about what was happening in Washington, D.C. at that very hour. Twenty years ago, we would have waited to hear about these events by word of mouth or by reading the newspaper the next day. People all over the world knew what was going on in the United States. They could weigh in with their opinion as it was happening. Social media allows for us to connect with all kinds of people and allows us to learn all kinds of things.

Someone living in the Ukraine, Indonesia, or anywhere else in the world has a vastly different life experience than us. Connecting with people around the world gives us more knowledge and awareness. Trends, challenges, and hashtags bring awareness to problems we might otherwise not know exist.

This amazing advance in communication has its downside. Every time you log into your preferred social media, you are bombarded with hashtags begging you to care. You are overwhelmed with posts saying "Why isn't anyone talking about \_\_\_\_\_?" You are called to care about every inconceivable problem in the world you didn't know existed. It is exhausting. It is impossible. In addition to this overwhelming amount of problems, those issues that do become "popular" die out fast. According to PEW Research, Black Lives Matter support among adults in the United States decreased from 67% to 55% from June to September. Social media makes performative activism easier. Pretend to care while the hashtag is trending, and forget about it in a month, because a new problem is trending.

Social media gives us access to all of the world's problems. One person cannot take all of that on without burnout in a month. Allow yourself rest, and advocate for what you can.