

WHY WOMAN'S HISTORY MONTH MEANS LITTLE

[Col. Writ. 3/10/05] Copyright 2005 Mumia Abu-Jamal

Every year, the same quiet thoughts creep into my head.

'Here comes February, Black History Month.'

'Here comes March, Woman's History Month.'

Sometimes, I think of a story to write. Other times, I wonder about what these designations really mean, for the rest of the year.

As February is the shortest month, is that why it was chosen for Black History Month?

If we honor women in March, does that mean we have 11 months to *dis*honor them?

Just thoughts ... Thoughts about designations enacted by politicians under political pressure; often granting designations as a safe, cheap way, of doing nothing substantial.

I've often thought of these things as elite constructions, ways to entrap wealthy and middle class women into existing power structures, which, once done, heighten the war against poor and working class women -- the same dark repression, worse, because women sit at the helm of the repressive systems.

Is it "better" if women are presidents, CEOs, or senators if they merely reproduce the warlike imperial programs of the past?

How can this be the month of honoring women, while thousands of women are raped daily in the Darfur region of Sudan? While millions of poor and working women work longer hours for less money, for less dignity, for less autonomy?

At the very same time as television hawks its Women's History Month public service announcements or programs, Congress defeats a meager minimum wage bill, which raises the hourly wage about 2 bucks, further relegating more working women to more struggles for survival. As such working women lack a living wage, Congress works overtime to

treat the wealthy to more tax breaks.

Few countries on Earth truly honors women. They speak of doing so, they issue edicts, but few act in ways which truly honor women's contribution to society. Their efforts seem to be recruitment programs for Empire, for more *Un*freedom.

Years ago, activists Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James wrote of the unique contributions of women, to the working class, and indeed to the world. In the introduction to *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol, UK: Falling Wall Press, Ltd., 1972 [3rd ed., Sept. 1975]), James wrote:

Marx's analysis of capitalist production was not a meditation on how society "ticked." It was a tool to find the way to overthrow it, to find the social forces who, exploited by capital, were subversive to it. Yet it was because he was looking for the forces that would inevitably overthrow capital that he would describe capital's social relations which are pregnant with working class subversion. It is because Mariarosa Dalla Costa was looking for *women's* lever of social power among those forces that she was able to uncover that even when women do not work out of their homes, they are vital producers.

The commodity they produce, unlike all other commodities, is unique to capitalism: *the living human being* -- "the laborer himself." [p. 10]

It is no real honor to name a month Woman's History Month.

How women are treated during the rest of the year determines how women are really perceived in this society. And that means *all* women, Black women, aged women; mothers and crones; half the world.

For them, the war goes on, for their lives, for their health, for their families, and for their futures.

They remain nature's producers of people, the organic horn of human plenty, yet they are treated as social slaves, who are not intrinsically worthy of social wealth and support.

It is for this reason that a symbolic month seems so empty.

Women make history every hour of every day. For they bring forth life.

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[Check out Mumia's latest: *WE WANT FREEDOM: A Life in the Black Panther Party*, from South End Press (<http://www.southendpress.org>); Ph. #1-800-533-8478.]

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"When a cause comes along and you know in your bones that it is just, yet refuse to defend it--at that moment you begin to die. And I have never seen so many corpses walking around talking about justice." - Mumia Abu-Jamal

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