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BLACK
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**Michelle, Malia, and Sasha Cannot be the
Only Black Women Whose Lives Matter to Us in 2009
Unapologetically Young, Black and Female
By Jasmyne A. Cannick
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So I went to the scene of the crime yesterday afternoon that left a teenage girl dead and a 30-year-old paraplegic arrested for murder.

If I'd driven by too fast, I'd have missed the small makeshift memorial of candles and teddy bears that marked the spot where another Black person lost their life to senseless violence at the hands of another Black.

Why? Because it was business as usual.

Crackheads still looking for the next hit. Buses picking up and dropping off passengers. Parking lot kings and queens still reigning supreme, as if nothing at all had happened just 24 short hours ago.

I sat in my car for most of yesterday evening listening to the news on the radio and waiting to see if anyone at all from L.A.'s Black community or leadership felt as strongly as I did and had to come down to the scene of the crime to reflect personally.

But no one came.

Sure, plenty of people walking by on their way to wherever couldn't help but notice the candles arranged in a circle on the sidewalk. But that seemed to be the extent of the public's curiosity or concern for why a grown ass wheelchair bound woman felt compelled enough to challenge a 15-year-old teenage girl over a man that it resulted in her murder.

So then it hit me.

I wondered, if had the victim been gang related and male, would that have brought out the television activists?

I wondered, if had the victim been Black and the suspect Latino, would that have moved L.A.'s Black leadership to gather on Santa Rosalia Drive and decry the violence that rocks our community on a daily basis?

I wondered, if she had been killed by a police officer, would that have brought out the pastors who would then pray for the community?

I wondered, if had this been another case of an employee going postal over a lost job, instead of over a man, would it have warranted more attention?

I wondered, if had the victim been white, and a student at USC or UCLA and a member of a sorority, would her murder have been featured in the Los Angeles Times?

I wondered, if had the victim been a member of a professional sports team - would there be billboards up the next day conveying condolences?

I wondered, if had this killing happen on Monday, March 2, would that have brought out the Mayor and the city's other elected officials to stand silently reflecting on the small circle of candles representing two more lives lost - one to the criminal justice system, another to the morgue.

I wondered, had the parties involved been anyone other than two Black women, would someone give a (fill-in-the-blank)?

So I ask, do the lives of Black women matter?

Because I find it hard to believe that I am the only Black women in Los Angeles that is disturbed by what happened yesterday. I cannot be the only Black person around here who feels that while our educational system is failing our children, as adults we are doing the same.

I don't know all of the facts surrounding the incident, but then again, I don't need to. The fact that at 15-years-old, the victim had any man in her life who wasn't her father, grandfather, or some other relative is enough evidence to me that we aren't doing our jobs. Forget the exact details because they are irrelevant.

What is important and equally troubling is this trend of apathy on the part of Blacks where Black women are concerned.

R. Kelly made a video of him peeing on a teenage victim. It was her fault.

On national television during a slow motion replay, tennis commentator Roger Rasheed of Australia's Channel Seven on Venus Williams, "take a look at this now. Make or think as you will, ladies, but for me, that's a pretty good sight." Didn't bother us because we like looking at her ass too.

They were lesbians so they deserved what they got.

Rhianna took him back, so she's the fool.

And I could go on and on...but I won't.

It wasn't that long ago that Shontae Blanche, 22, was murdered on Slauson and Western after being run over in an incident involving 30 young Black women. Another incident over a man where a Black woman lost her life and another was sent to prison for the rest of hers.

And yes, I have to say it - I may have issues with the selective and seemingly orchestrated activism by some of L.A.'s "Black activists," but one thing I know for sure is that if Najee Ali were not locked up - he'd have been out there yesterday evening. And that's just being real.

Our brothas may be out there killing each other over colors and streets that neither own, but our sistas are doing the same and if we don't call attention to it, no one else will.

I mean really - what does it say when a teenager is dating anyone and an adult woman feels compelled to fight a child? It says that something went wrong at home with both of these sistas. Self-respect doesn't dictate that you fight over any man. But how do you get self-respect if you weren't raised to have any? And how could you have been raised to have any if your momma didn't have any herself? And so on and so forth.

We spend so much time focused on our young Black men that we're dropping the ball with our young Black sistas.

You can sit outside of any junior high or high school and look at the outfits female students show up in. Listen to the conversations and count how many times those same students refer to themselves and other Black women as hos, bitches, and the like.

And it's not just with teenagers. Where do you think they get it from?

I know how sensitive a subject this is in our community, just as sensitive as talking about a Black woman's hair or weight. But just because it's sensitive doesn't mean that it should go unaddressed and as long as it does, we'll continue to have these incidents of utter crazyness. Jerry Springer and Maury Povich have nothing on the madness that happens in the hood.

When we speak about a Black agenda, we immediately jump to economics, health, politics, etc., but perhaps we need to take a step back out of our middle class status and realize that we can't address those issues until we address issues like the ones above that are created and fueled by how we raise our daughters. Teenagers don't just wake up one morning and decide they're going to date anyone. Just like adult women don't just wake up and decide that they're going kill someone for sleeping with their man. No, that takes years of pre-conditioning - sometimes 15, other times 30.

What I do know is that as Black women and people, Michelle, Malia, and Sasha cannot be the only Black women whose lives matter to us in 2009.

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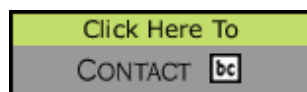
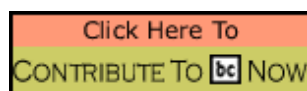
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Jasmyne Cannick, is a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, and politics as it relates to the African-American community. A regular contributor to NPR's 'News and Notes,' she was chosen as one Essence Magazine's 25 Women Shaping the World. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Cannick.

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