Separation of Opportunity: Reflection on Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

May 1, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

Today marks three years that my membership in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as an honorary member was rescinded. I'm not going to rehash any of those gory details you can read all about it here and here and here. The pain that I felt three years ago seemed insurmountable. Even last year I was still hurting far more than I would have wanted to admit.

I look back over my removable from Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority and think it a blessing that I can now fully embrace. For sure, I'm wiser, stronger but most importantly it sent me on a journey of self understanding that had been waiting in the wings to happen.

Three years ago this was a crisis that consumed my life, every part of my being, my body, heart and soul. Yet reflecting today, it also presented me with a opportunity. Sue Monk Kidd in her book *When the Heart Waits* would have seen this crisis as a "separation of opportunity." The greek word crisis derives from the Greek word Krisis and Krino which means "a separating."

This separation made me reexaime myself. The woman I had become and the woman that I’m seeking.

At the end of this road, through all the hurtful tweets, facebook discussions, comments on my youtube and my blog, from women who once called me sister and praised my advocacy in HIV/AIDS , who stood at official meetings when I enter the room, I learned, in spite of what was said about me, I like me!

I mean, I really really like me. That would translate into loving yourself. When you can say you like who you are, what you do, how you do it, what you wear or don’t wear, how you live your life,

without limitations on what others think of you, you have reached that place of self-love.

Delta helped me to be even more unapologetic about who I am. My authentic self has grown by leaps and bounds. It recently gave me the strength to walk away from my leadership positions at church without defending my right to do and live as I please, in spite of what people may deem "proper" for an ordained minister. It has made me live out loud without regard to the issues of "respectability" that I highlight in my book, The Politics of Respectability. My life is uniquely mine and to live your life for the validation of others would be to deny who God created you to be.

Delta, even created space for me to move through this profound spiritual journey that I just began with

confidence that my "seeking" does not conflict with my Christian beliefs but enhances them. Sue Monk Kidd would say "In order to follow the inner journey, we need to leave behind those things that are deadening the loyalties that no longer have life for us," When I read that I said yesssss, my separation from Delta released me of loyalties that hindered my authentic self.

When I look back over the sacrifices and loyalties I kept to "belong" all the money I spent on red St. John Knits to "fit in" with the upper crust of leadership. All the times I spoke for Delta events for a potion of my speakers fee, so that I could be the "liked" honorary member and show that MY sorority was doing something on HIV/AIDS. Even coming to one convention {because I was told

repeatedly that honorry members “never show up”} instead of staying with my mother who was in the last weeks of her life, I know that I am released from loyalties that hindered my authentic self.

This has been a long three year journey, but I can look back and say, that Delta did for me what I was unable to do for myself. In Delta I was still the “little Rae” seeking approval half/in and half/out of my authentic self.

Those tweets that day was my authentic self, but the rejection that I felt over being my authentic self was "little Rae."

As I reflect, I had to examine what was it in me to cause me to be so wounded by Delta’s rejection? But the larger question and most importantly, why would I want to below to any organization that could not validate and support my authentic self. Why would I want to belong to women who one day called me sister and the next called me demon? I had to take a long look at myself, not at Delta Sigma Theta for those answers.

This separation from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, was a *Separation of Opportunity* for it sent me on a journey of reexamination. It helped to heal the “little Rae” always seeking approval, always half/in and half/out of my authentic self.

Today, What I know for sure, I’m the authentic version of me, living out loud in the spirit that God

create me to be.

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