Valentine Series: 365 Days a Year!

February 10, 2014 By Rae Lewis-Thornton

It’s Valentine’s Day week and everyone is thinking about being, “Booed up.” You are either thinking about what you are going to do, what you are going to get, and how good the sex will be.

Or you’re thinking, “Why am I alone this Valentine’s Day?” This week we are all thinking red and I

don’t mean for AIDS Awareness, but for our hearts, including me.

It’s been years since I’ve had an actual “date” on Valentine’s Day. Shit, if I’m really honest, it’s even been years since I’ve laid in a man’s arms. Now, don’t be confused, I can get sex, but I decided well over 10 years ago that a man who didn’t appreciate my worth was not worth my innermost self. And if I really want to be transparent, this decision has left me lonely a many of nights, including well over a decade of Valentine’s days.

Now, I’ve actually been more O. K. with being alone on Valentine’s Day more so, than being alone on those nights after a long day when I’ve poured my soul out at a gig. Or like on this past Friday where I spent 13 hours answering questions on Social Media for National Black AIDS day. It would have been great to process that day with a man who supports my ministry and then can provide a

safe place for me to let go and let my guard down.

Now don’t get me wrong, it would also be nice on Valentine’s Day to have a great dinner and flirt across the table all night. I mean, don’t get it twisted, every woman wants to feel special. But years ago Valentine’s Day stopped being about what he does for me or with me, over and above how he treats me 365 days a year.

Now, this hasn’t always been the case. I use to run out and buy him the best gift no matter how young the relationship was. My thinking was so twisted. I just knew if I got him those Tiffany cuff links that he would love me forever. WRONG! Then as I waited on his gift my world would shatter when he didn’t have at least a card in tote.

I learned over the years, that men think differently from women. They tend to be a tad less

thoughtful of this “love” day especially if the relationship is young. Men don’t get that a card says, “I like you and I like where this is going.” I remember one year I tugged balloons in a Chicago snow storm to get nothing from the guy I was actually in a relationship with. It was a sad case of familiarly breading contempt.

My thinking is a man should be thinking that Valentine’s Day is important to women and that should make him want to make her feel special, but then again, he should be making her feel special all year long. He should tell her to put on her lipstick and heels and be ready for a night on the town, just because she is special to him. Date nights are important all year long.

For a long time I developed thick skin around the insensitivity of a man, then after much work on myself, I got enough balls to stand up for myself, *If I’m not worth a card and dinner then you are most certainly not worth my innermost self,*" not just on Valentine’s Day but throughout the year.

Give a card sometimes just because.

Now don’t get this twisted either, dinner isn’t an exchange for my body, it’s just an act of kindness that says I appreciate you in my life, no matter what stage the relationship may be. It took me years to stop accepting him between my legs late at night after spending an evening alone, but when I look back, Valentine’s Day was really no different from the other days of the year.

If I accept him between my legs without standards throughout the year, why should I expect him to do anything different about me on that one day out of the year. If he didn’t do anything about me the other 364 days there isn’t much that will make him do it on Valentine’s Day. Women, we set the standard for how men treat us. Men will typically accept your standard if they understand your value. Men who really respect you, will want the best for you and they will give you their best all year long.

All of these topics are important to women: dinner, cards, gifts and respect, but the lack thereof isn’t the main thing that shifted my thinking on how much weight I put into Valentine’s Day. Nope! It was a young pregnant girl in the AIDS Clinic. When I arrived to the clinic that day I spotted a young very pretty African-American girl who looked to be very pregnant. The moment I saw her my heart dropped and I couldn’t stop staring.

Finally, I waltzed over and spoke. I learned in the course of our conversation that she was 19 years old and 7 months pregnant. She had only known her HIV status for 2 weeks. We were talking and passing the time away as we waited to be called. Then out of the blue she said, “I know who you are Ms. Thornton.” I was shaken for a second, “Huh” was all I could get out.

“Yes, I heard you speak my freshman year of high school,” then she added, “you were sooooo good.” It felt like she had kicked me in the gut. I was standing talking to a young woman who heard everything I said, but didn’t listen enough to apply my lesson to her own life.

You know I had to go there. After I regained myself, I asked, “Baby you heard me speak, how did you end up here?” She looked at her feet and said, “I trusted him.” Silence swept over both of us, and she added, “Yeah, I will never forget it, I found out I had HIV on Valentine’s Day,” all I could say was, “neither will I, neither will I.” And I never have.

That was the day Valentine’s Day became less about what he does for me ,over and above the

value he places on my body, mind and spirit 365 days a year.

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