

By Erika F. Campbell
Editor

Dumbfounded, I turned off the TV. I had just witnessed the most zoot-like discussion of the rift between black women and men ever. The focal point of this discussion, which was held on The Sally Jesse Raphael Show, was a book entitled *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman*. The excerpts that Sally Jesse Raphael chose from the book were unbelievably horrendous. "Slap your Blackwoman soundly across the mouth?" Surely this woman sitting in African-type garb and referring to me and my kind as "sister" was not saying such things. Was she a pawn, as an opposing guest on the show suggested, for the Nation Islam? I vowed to read the book and to glean from it the real message that Ali was trying to get across.

Unfortunately, "Slap your Blackwoman soundly across the mouth" and other techniques on how to get your blackwoman to submit are the basis for Ali's book. I read and read, through frustration, anger and disbelief and I could not come up with anything that would help African-American males bridge the gap with their "God-given counterparts". Sure, Ali does pick out negative aspects that exists in the blackwoman. However, the point behind laying the real and imaginary faults of the African-American female squarely at the feet of the African-American male eludes me.

In the preface to her novel, Ali says that her book is designed to enlighten the Blackman and create a revolution of positive change in black



Black Ink

"The essence of freedom is understanding"

Forum

"The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman," by Shaharazad Ali

relationships". Enlighten the black man to what, exactly? To the fact that there are black women who don't clean their homes or possess one of the other hundreds of faults that Ali lists in detail? Surely the black man is not ignorant enough to believe that there exists an African-American female with all of the traits Ali heaps upon us, thus I will not deign to speak on her sweeping generalizations. Is she attempting to enlighten him to the fact that black women are a real force in the working world and can be economically self-sufficient without the aid of the black man? That couldn't be it. Any intelligent black man (and there are many of these) who know his history and has paid attention to various black females in his community knows that the African-American female has been working for a long time. He knows that during the times when it was hard or virtually impossible for the African-American male to support his family due to the strain the white society placed on him, the

African-American female often worked both in and out of the home in order to keep the family together. Thus I am still puzzled as to what truths Ali is attempting to enlighten the African-American male about.

Ali falls even shorter in creating a positive change in black relationships. How can one solve an argument between two factions by insisting that one side simply give up and submit. And submission is what Ali is informing the African-American man he should demand from the African-American female. Fortunately, if the discussion on The Sally Jesse Raphael Show is any indicator of the attitudes of African-American females in our society, it will take more than resounding slaps across the mouth to force us all into a drone-like submission state where all African-American females sit at home, cook, clean, take care of kids and sew their own clothes. Granted, Ali argues that it will be easy to mold us into this submission state due to the fact that it is in our ancestry to submit to the black man. After all, all African women willingly submitted to their husbands and thoroughly enjoyed living with their husbands many wives. Although I will admit to being very ignorant on the subject of African

History (I am taking Afric 61 and 62 this semester and hope to learn more), I am not naive enough to believe that the life Ali is suggesting all African-American females give in to is the one that existed in Africa, or if it was, African females were completely accepting of it.

Please do not mistake my earlier sarcasm for a hatred of affairs of the home. My mother stayed at home with me and my siblings until we were well into school and I have more respect for her than any other female I know. Later in life my mother taught school, earned her real-estate license, her master's degree and missioned in Mexico. My point is that the African-American female is a multi-faceted being. Her gifts and talents lie in many areas. We would be doing our culture, community and our man a great service if we limited ourselves to taking care of our family only. I look forward to the days when I will have a family and a husband and to when my life will be consumed with their needs. However, my sister African-American who has the desire and ability to be a brain surgeon rather than a wife is no less of a "good Blackwoman" than I. We are all needed. It has been the diversity of our sisters that has kept our race together for the past centuries and it will be this same strength and diversity that will take our race in the next centuries.

Thus, I am disappointed in Ali's decision to write such a novel. I do not want the sister to be banned but I am puzzled by her misunderstanding of her own sisters and wonder what horrible life brought her to see so clearly only the negative aspects of African-American females. Maybe through her writing she has exorcised what ever problems with the African-American female she has. I know that I have worked through my own anger with her publication and, unfortunately, I am left only with a sadness for this woman who could not see a better way to bring the two sexes of our one race together.

Give Shaharazad Ali a Chance, Read the Book Before Making a Decision

By Evelyn Toliver
Contributor

The publication, "The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman," has caused a major uproar in the black community and across the country. The author, Shaharazad Ali, talks about how the blackman can gain control and respect over his blackwoman and points out some of the negative characteristics attributed to the blackwoman. But, I believe that in order to make an informed decision about Ali's book, one must take the time to read and digest her argument.

In the book, Ali said "the black woman is out of control and must be put back in her place by soundly slapping her in the mouth." Although she indicates it would be wrong to beat black women to a "bloody pulp," she does believe some physical activity is justifiable "if she ignores the authority and superiority of the black man." Ali also says "the Black woman must be cleaned up, because bathing is not that important. Her heels may be dirty and crusty, the outfits may be soiled and the woman will have a foul body odor reeking from under her arms." It is comments like these that have the black community in an

outrage, and understandably so.

However, this book should be used as a guide by every blackwoman. Because I believe every woman can find something about themselves in this book. In fact, I found myself in the book, specifically when she talks about the games blackwomen play with our blackmen to test their faithfulness. While I don't agree with everything Ali says, I do believe she makes valid points and I think it is important that we as women look at this book and "take self inventory, of the woman and her glory and put the bad things behind." Which in essence means, look deep within self, admit to the negative and work towards achieving the positive. If you keep a dirty house and talk to your man in a negative manner, work to improve that part of you. There is no reason why anyone should be treated as an animal, male or female.

Finally, don't just take my advice. Go borrow the book and read it for yourself. Don't make a decision about this book until you have read it for yourself. Don't make a decision about this book until you have read it and taken self-inventory. Never make a decision without all of the facts. A wise person listens to both sides.

Excerpts from "The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman"

There is never an excuse for ever hitting a Blackwoman anywhere but in the mouth. Because it is from that hole, in the lower part of her face, that all her rebellion culminates into words. Her unbridled tongue is a main reason she cannot get along with the Blackman. She often needs a reminder. This does not mean that she needs, or wants, to be battered or beaten to a bloody pulp. However, if she ignores the authority and superiority of the Blackman, there is a penalty. When she crosses this line and becomes viciously insulting it is time for the Blackman to soundly slap her in the mouth.

Often when the Blackwoman learns something, completes a course or even reads an article she will attempt to sound wise. She enjoys the feeling she gets when she stumbles upon something she can wave in front of the Blackman and claims she knows more about it. This is particularly true of the economically elite Blackwoman. She believes her textbook knowledge enables her to be over the Blackman. The Blackman is not impressed with institutional education in the same way that she is. He would much rather hit the streets and learn things on

his own rather than take time out of his freedom to memorize a slew of misinformation which he doesn't believe will help him daily.

When a Blackman falls for a Blackwoman and begins to demonstrate that he loves her more than he loves himself, she recognizes this as a ripe stage for her to really let it rip. The more he professes his love the worse she will treat him. The more he tries to give her, the more she will demand. And the more he tries to bed her down, the more she rejects his overtures. The harder he tries to please her the more critical she is of his efforts. This is a perfect example that she does not know what to do when put in a position to rule the Blackman. When she is allowed to rule she thinks the Blackman must be weak or crazy or both. She cannot handle it. She abuses him instead of progressively enjoying him more. And the time is not far off when she will be looking for another man.