

Catching Hell...

(Trying to Love a Black Man)



Andrea Oden

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DEDICATION

For Kayla,

Before you were conceived, I asked God for you. Before you were born, I loved you. By the time you had lived an hour, I knew I would die for you. You are my gift from God and I will always love you like the treasure you are.

Also For

Jestun, JaNelle, Chiquita, Saniha, Xavier, and Zorreon,

The Oden Legend of Love, Laughter and Purpose continues in You!

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Catching Hell

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago I had a conversation with a really great, single friend I hadn't seen in a few years. We spent an afternoon catching up. Finally I got around to asking about her love life. Her answer surprised me. "It's hell, girl. I am catching hell, trying to love a black man."

Fast forward to a year later when I was newly divorced and entering the dating scene again after being absent for nearly fifteen years. Very soon I realized the truth of my friend's words. It can be hell trying to love a black man. Now don't get me wrong, I love me some black men. I've got a wonderful African American king for a father and I grew up with three fabulous brothers. But dating had changed a lot in the years since I'd last been out there.

Since 2009 I've fallen in love with a wonderful black man but I've had more than a few misses. I've spent the last three years talking to women from all walks of life. I've interviewed over fifty women, some white, one Asian and lots of black women. I've also interviewed forty men – all black men.

Is it really hard to love a black man? Are all the really, good black men taken by white women? Are black women, catching hell...trying to love a black man?

These days black men are in the news. There seems to be several different types of black men. There are the black men who are ball players, the black men in Hollywood and black men who work a nine to five, some even owning their own businesses. Then there are the black men who are killing each other in the streets. There are the drug dealers, drug users and the infamous jailbird black men. How do you love a black man? How do you get a black man to love you?

There's a saying, behind every good man is a good woman. There's also another saying you may not have heard. Behind every failed black man,

there's a black woman. Ladies, it's time to let our brothers off the hook and take responsibility for our own lives and our actions towards our men. We have failed them!

Single women, me included, we have held onto a limiting belief system that often tell us there are no good black men or that all black men are dogs and they are the reason we can't have successful relationships. When in reality we, the women, are responsible for most of the trouble with our relationships. We are the problem and not the men. It's our fault that men do the things they do.

Women are the first nurturers of the boy before he becomes a man. This process begins in the womb. It then moves to how the woman nurtures and cares for the boy as a child. When the boy grows up, he dates a girl or a woman and that woman or girl sets the standard for how the man treats her. A woman decides what she will and will not accept inside a relationship. It always comes back to us.

When a man cheats, he often does it with whom? Yep, a woman. Why? Because somewhere there's a broken woman who has little to no standards and/or no self-respect. There are women out there who think it's okay to sleep with someone else's man. When men don't commit, there's a woman who keeps dating him hoping she will somehow love him enough to get him to change his mind. When a man abuses a woman, she convinces herself that he just needs somebody to love him and she will often often stay with him, to her own demise. When a man doesn't have a job, there is a woman out there who will date and take care of him, hoping he will see how great she is and decide to get a job and return the favor.

So you see, my sisters, it's us. It's not the man who hurts us, it's us. Men can only do what we allow. Men will only respect what we respect. Men will only love what we ourselves love. So let's stop the madness. Let's stop putting ourselves through hell. Let's get it together and do what's right in our own lives. When we do what's right for ourselves, we automatically do what's right for our men.

I'm definitely not saying we don't need men. Please don't misunderstand – we need men. Yep, I said it. "I need a man." My girlfriends can't do it for me. I need a big, strong, filled, with integrity black man. But before I could get the man, I had to do some work.

Sisters, you have to work on you so when your king arrives, you will already be his queen.

If the world were filled with queens, men would have to rise to the challenge and become kings. Men were created for this challenge. Men are looking for, searching for, the woman who makes him rise to the challenge of providing for her, protecting her and laying claim declaring his love for her. Your man is searching for his queen – his woman, his wife.

For he who finds a wife finds a good thing. I am striving to be a good thing. What about you? If the answer is yes, let's take this journey together.

Keep reading!

PART I
ONCE UPON A TIME

HOW IT ALL GOT STARTED

A recent census shows over 70% of African American women are single and nearly 45% of these women have never married. Historically, women who graduate from college are far more likely than any other group of women -- whether high school dropouts, high school graduates, or women with some college - to remain single their entire lives.

The same census shows that sixty percent of Asian women are married. Fifty-five percent of Caucasian women are married. Forty-nine percent of Hispanic women are married. However, only thirty percent of African American women are married.

These statics are mind-boggling. Why do you think so many women are single and what the heck has happened to our African American family?

Here's where I think it started. When our ancestors were slaves, the black family was literally ripped apart. Husbands and sons were sold away from their wives and mothers. When freedom was finally ours, we were never really free from that ripped apart family structure. As society evolved, the black family still remained broken as it relates to marriage relationships. In the 1950s and 1960s men and women were marrying but the example of a black, loving family was still a mystery. Family television shows didn't reach our community. We didn't see marriages that looked like us. Our husbands and wives were taught from their parents and grandparents. We were hanging on by a thread. By the time the 1970s arrived, a new dimension for the black family began to take shape. Women were becoming more and more independent. The black woman emerged into the 70s with her fist pumping, her bra burning and she was proud, black and independent. The happiest television wife we saw was Florida Evans who lived with her loving family in the projects. Things started to look up just a bit when along came the 1980s and who did we see? We saw, the lovely Claire Huxtable from The Cosby Show. Claire was married, had five children and she was an attorney married to a doctor. Claire ran her house, her children and lovingly and comically ran her husband. She was a beautiful career woman with a family and it was beautiful to watch. Somewhere between the proud black voice, but poverty stricken families of the 70s and the successful and having it all 80s, black women landed into the 90s. We went to school got degrees, we started careers and started doing it for ourselves. That brings us to today. Today, most black women are (drum roll please)...we are, single and we hate it. We are single and catching hell!

Somewhere in the late 90s a shift took place. We got all the education, careers and money but we ended up alone, absent of black men. Today most women are lonely and we have started to settle for any man. Women, particularly African American women started doing whatever it takes to get a man -- any man. Most of us are dying to get married. Somehow thinking if we get married things will be great. We believe if we could just get married we'd have a better relationship. This led us to start sleeping with men we weren't in love with. Dating, men who didn't measure up to our standards. We even began sleeping with men who belonged to other women. Black women all over, started sleeping with men hoping they would love us. We've made a career of sleeping with the wrong man.

Ladies, we lowered our standards, and we're broken – our hearts and our spirits are broken. I think our grandmothers, mothers and aunts have taught us to live with our brokenness. We have become a society of strong women but in the midst of that strength is brokenness. This brokenness has caused us to be desperate and we continue to settle for less than we deserve.

And our men? They have given us just what we asked for. They have lived up to our standards – or lack thereof. Men have given us less because we have been requiring less. Our poor men have been struggling trying to be nurtured by, loved by and have relationships with broken women who have little to no standards. Men are doing whatever they want, whenever they want and with whomever they want. Men don't even have to work hard to get a woman. He doesn't have to take us out on dates. He doesn't have to call. He doesn't even have to show up regularly.

Today, in the year of 2014 we are angry, broken and distrustful of the men we created. I hear women all the time tell me the following limiting beliefs:

- All the good black men are taken
- All the black men are in jail
- All the good black men are married to white women
- All men are dogs
- All men cheat
- Black men are intimidated by me
- I can't find a man who makes as much money as I make
- Black men are afraid to commit

Have you said any of those statements? Well, I'm here to tell you the truth. All those statements have some truth to them. It's like counterfeit money – it looks real on the surface but it has no value. There are some good men who are already taken. There are a lot of black men in jail. In fact, Ohio State law professor, Michelle Alexander has been quoted as saying, "More African American men are in prison or jail, on probation or on parole than were enslaved in 1850, before the Civil War began."

Yes, there are a number of men who are married to women outside of the black race. Black men have options. They are stepping outside their race and dating other women – women who have set standards. They are dating and marrying women who are not living with bitterness. Sometimes those women are found outside the African American race. Men are committing to women who allow them to be men. They are marrying women who have resolved the issues of their past, women who are not bitter and angry.

Yes, there are some dogs out there. There are men who cheat. There always will be some of them, in every race. There are some men who will see a successful, black woman and not feel up to the challenge

of pursuing her. He may, in fact be intimidated by you. It is unfortunate but in today's world, a lot of African American women are earning more money than African American men. There are some men who can't deal with that. It's ok. He's not the one for you.

Finally, there are a number of men who are either afraid or have no reason at all to commit.

Now, I ask the question, whose fault is that? Whose fault is it that men are exploring their options? Whose fault is it that men are not treating us with respect and honor? Whose fault is it that men are not committing? I know women are going to hunt me down for this one and some of you will stop reading the book but I'm going to say it anyway.

Most of the above mentioned limiting beliefs, true or untrue, are the fault of some black woman somewhere. Whew!

I know that pissed off somebody but hear me out if you dare.

Take an honest look at the limiting beliefs and ask yourself what woman could have contributed to the man being that way. Could it be his mother, his ex-girlfriend, ex-wife, sister...could it be you?

Are you bitter about the last man? Are you bitter about the man before that? Some of us are still living with every man we've ever dated. I know women who are still living with, hanging on to the issues of their past relationships. She's dating Fred, but still hanging on to issues from Willie, Tyrone and Joe. Poor Fred goes out every Friday night with his girlfriend and the three men from her past. That's some expensive dating!

I don't want to spend a lot of time looking at the man. I grew up with three brothers. I've been examining men my whole life. I want to spend some time talking with women. I want to talk to the ladies who, as my girlfriend would say are, "Catching Hell... trying to love a black man."

CATCHING HELL

Long before Beyonce's anthem raising the roof saluting, Single Ladies, Natalie Cole sang the single woman's anthem of truth. She starts out telling women to be careful of breaking up with a man you might miss later on. She says it's the little things you'll miss about him...helping with the groceries, helping in the yard, painting, repairing, huh paying the bills. Her heart breaks as she says, "...now all I have is memories and regrets..." She bursts into the hook of the anthem..."I'm catching hell. Living here alone..."

I've felt this feeling and I'm sure most single women have. The reason I've stayed in several relationships is to avoid this feeling. However, I've discovered, the hell of being alone is not nearly as bad as the hell of being in the wrong relationship – a bad relationship. And trust me, the relationship is bad, if you are not happy.

Contrary to popular belief, there are some good men in the world. There are even some good, single, black men in the world. In order to get one, women have to do seven things.

1. Figure out what went wrong in the past
2. Discover who you are
3. Determine what the heck you really want
4. Learn to let a man be a man
5. Honor your true self
6. Patiently wait while enjoying your life
7. Let him love you when he comes your way

These seven steps have put me on the path to success as it relates to getting and holding on to the man of my dreams.

The scripture says in Proverbs 18:24, *He who finds a wife, finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD (NIV)*. I'm a good thing and I am woman enough to bring the right man favor!!!! What about you?

Are you a good thing?

Ladies, you can't be good if you're broken. You can't be good if you're bitter. You can't be good if you're still hurting and angry about the last man. And... you can't expect a man to fix you!

So let's look at what went wrong in the past!