

# Affirmative action, women's rights and images



**BY IMANI WILLIAMS**

**A**s I sit and wonder and ponder, I close my eyes, try and imagine what this world will be like for my daughters, 17 and 19, in 2007 and beyond.

It is time we wake up and pay attention as the government and conservatives try and dismantle women's rights one by one.

It's the 21st century and I wonder about the plight of not only the two born of my flesh and blood, but the plight of girl children worldwide.

My sisters, cousins, and nieces, of all shades and ethnicities and races. Hard to imagine the future without remembering the past, those strong proud womyn who have come before me: the mothers, aunts, and

grandmothers who struggled, taught and fought for equality and the right to survive against tremendous odds and all the freakin' isms known globally.

The sexism, the you're too old, too young, too black, too white, too skinny, too fat, too meek, too loud, too bashful, too outspoken - too much damn wo/man.

The racism, the oppression that makes financial equality (same degrees intact) as evasive as the glass ceiling, is a reality that many will tell you does not even exist. *Do you want to keep your job or not? Play the game. He didn't mean it that way! You're just too emotional.*

The oppression, the abuse that can hit in so many ways (all negative): the physical, the verbal, the emotional, which slithers like a snake to snatch your spirit and silence your creativity. Your God-given right to thrive and be.

FGM: Female Genital Mutilation/ Castration; the painful cutting away, the removal of one's clitoris or whole womb, depending on how savage the freakin' mutilator feels on a given day. The castration that takes away all that we are to the very core. Oh, no more, no more.

The socialization that automatically places girl children in pink dresses, with Barbie as playthings. Barbie, that model

of all that is woman in the minds of many. Anorexic, pale and brainless - the pink and lace given early can lead to disgrace, loss of self-esteem, hopes and dreams.

Barbies, pink dresses and lace, fairytale dreams of love and mess "real and imagined." Not that I hold anything personal against love and softness, for these are good things, born of woman-kind in nature.

However, in a cruel, hateful, and hurtful dog-eat-dog male run world, we better be able mix and blend the soft with the hard - become chameleons.

Will the 21st century be kind to women? Hard to tell with all the subtle and often overt hostility that surrounds us.

Peace of Mind. Mind over matter. Self-love. Self-determination.

Knowing who you are - knowing that you are beautiful, that your womb brings forth life. Make sure that you are given the opportunity: unite and take it if you have to! To be all that you can be as a child of the Creator.

I'm not a man hater. This is just my prayer for the future for my girls and girl children worldwide.

Survival is key: the struggle continues. Peace.