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Letter to the Editor | Black History Month is More Than Dashikis and Head Wraps

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Dear Editor,

A few days ago, my wife and I ran into a few good friends over dinner and entertainment by great local musicians. They recently returned from Africa where they visited “The Door of No Return” in Ghana.

According to historians, from about 1450 or the beginning of the Transatlantic slave trade or what is called the Middle Passage, until about 1850, kidnapped Africans were taken by force one by one through "Doors of No Return" just like the one they visited in Ghana. They were force aboard ships bound for the Caribbean, South America, Central America, North America and elsewhere, into lives of generational slavery, never to return to their homeland or families.

The realism of these "Door(s) of No Return" provides for me moments of deep introspection and thought provoking examination. What are the chances of survival for a young African, taken against his or her free will to be held prisoner in dungeons for months before forcibly taken through a door like the one just described, onto a ship to be packed like sardines in a can, for a voyage into the great unknown, including a life of enslavement?

Scholars estimate that for over 400 years approximately 20 million Africans endured this experience. The chances of surviving those horrendous conditions were extremely slim, causing approximately 4 million Africans to die at sea. Of those who survived the Middle Passage, many millions died from the oppression of slavery. So, the chances of survival for those who did are miracle chances.

The fact that I am here today, that my family and other families, who are descendants of African men and women who passed through the many "Doors of No Return", survived the horrors of the Middle Passage, as well as hundreds of years of a dark period in our collective humanity, is abundant evidence that our existence is the result of those miracle chances.

As Black History Month closes out, I am reminded that this month must be a period of deep introspection and thought provoking examination, a time to rejuvenate our spirit and to collectively sojourn for truth. That we and our children exist is testament to the miracle chances called us. You see, we are the latest chapter in our book of Black History; our children are the next! Though symbolic and cultural, Black History Month is more than dashikis and head wraps. Stay truthful; stay conscious and above all else, stay blessed!

Submitted on Wednesday by: Moletto Smith, a St. Thomas resident

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