

## **Tale of the Black History Monther (2008)**

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### **Extravaganza**

Spending an interesting evening at the National Maritime Museum at the opening of the Atlantic Galleries in 2007, there was optimism in the air that historical issues of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade will be addressed. Here was a new gallery in a National Museum acknowledging the Slave Trade. The Maritime Museum was in Black History Mode, even if the chairman of the Museum hinted that the Slave Trade was simply just another type of Empire and Maritime trade.

At the tail end of the evening, amidst discussions of Black History Month (BHM), a curator at the Maritime Museum suggested there ought to be an International Black History Month, so all countries could celebrate Black History Month at the same time. It took some time for the dust to settle and for me to get off her case, but it did set me thinking. Things are really bad when an International Black History Month is suggested.

Can anyone imagine a Black History Month in Chad? Visualise special dedicated cultural displays in Algeria? Can anyone conceive of a deliberate collation of books by black writers in Canary Islands libraries? Okay Gran Canarias may be a special case considering it is still a Spanish colony, but I digress. Existence had been severely unbalanced to the point that Western views of itself has become the meter by which history will be constructed. Of course history is written by the victorious, and this moment has the West winning, so I needed to ponder on this.

More thought of Black History Month and I realised that it does have a place in the West - where it appears difficult to acknowledge the bonafide place of black people in their midst, and the achievements of black people require proclamation, lest it be assumed that not much good comes of blackness, and it (blackness) is best eradicated for the benefit of all.

Thinking of BHM as an artist, it has become a conduit for some, rationale being: 'any press is better than no press at all'; and a curse for others Reasoning here being: 'now that I have Black History Press I will never get mainstream Press'. There are always schizophrenic relationships to the polemical elements of a career, BHM is no different. It is a stupid thing