



The Miseducation of Ms. M

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Abstract: How do you navigate charted waters with an outdated map? Not only can you get lost, but you'll find that the environment has changed enough that you might need a new or better mode of transportation. I bumbled my way through my adolescence. Millions of people have walked that journey before me yet no one could give me updated directions. I just wanted clear directions on how to manage imposed identities and internal expectations. I just needed a leg up. Apparently I received one because I graduated with honors. All of the years of crying, of taking insensitive jokes, of feeling alienated, of waiting for the future paid off. The miseducation I received on "being" who you wanted, on having an actualized, whole self after you finished the best years of your life cost me 24 years of emotional scarring. Not bad considering I only put up 19 years of education! Adolescence is viewed as this "site to worry over" because of rapid changes in the body and in the psyche. However, the people who problematize adolescence are usually those in authority who stand to gain from infantilizing youth. Adolescence is a site to worry over due to the multiple interests out there working to keep it oppressed. In the womb, had I known that my identity moratorium was going to be as troubling as it was, I would have opted for a shorter moratorium. Côté and Allahar (1996) agree with Margaret Mead when she says, "education for choice" should be granted to all adolescents (xiv). In line with Dr. King's "The Purpose of Education," teach adolescents to be critical thinkers and agents. I wanted nothing more than to be educated, to be whole. Instead I received a first rate education on how to be fractured.

Since I was a little girl I wanted to be educated. Not just high school diploma educated, but Ivy League, meritocracy educated. I wanted the type of education that would help develop a unified, actualized sense of me—the Paulo Freire type of education that is a practice to freedom. I sought fiercely to align myself with an educational system that would help me understand who I was and what I was growing up into. I got my education alright. I received a quiet, yet frank education on the limited sense of self I was supposed to achieve.

I came of age during a decade that seemed to remain in a transitory stage. Growing up in the 1990s made me anxious. I was on the tail end of big hair and spandex, bumper caring my way through grunge, the Spice Girls, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, while approaching the beginning of a presumably scientifically frightening millennium. That is a lot of cultural movement for a young girl. Also, I grew up in the South, a region that was slow to change. As an Afro-American youth in the Sunshine state, I was aware that desegregation had not been fully realized. In spite

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of this ambivalence I was determined to navigate my adolescence.

My perception of identity constitution was compartmentalized. I wanted to develop the outwardly recognizable part of myself (i.e., the skater, the punk rocker, the tomboy), before developing the sexual, romantic side of myself. In *Generation on Hold: Coming of Age in the Late Twentieth Century*, Côté and Allahar (1996) speak of the period of time extended to youth in which they are exempt from engaging in adult responsibilities, a time when they are able to adopt multiple identities and roles that will form the foundation of their adulthood. They call this **identity moratorium**. According to Côté and Allahar, in theory identity moratorium “can set them [youth] on a life course that is rich and rewarding” (74). My moratorium felt so promising. I kept trying to reinvent myself. Any day now that actualized sense of me was going to emerge and I would be whole. It had too. Each day I moved closer to turning eighteen and it was at that juncture that I would need a strong sense of self in order to make it through college. My moratorium was my performance space. Identities are not static nor are they absolute. I saw the people around me shifting from one identity to another in efforts to understand their subjectivities. I noticed that their moratorium did not appear as interrupted or inaccessible as mine did. We were all young, so wherein lay the difference?

AIN'T I A WOMAN? NOT WHEN YOU'RE A TOKEN

“You are *so* smart.” “Isn't she *articulate*?” “You're going to go *far*!” I have heard these lines all of my life. It seems like every year since elementary school these types of comments have increased and have become near meaningless. People have made it a point to emphasize my academic abilities. When I was younger I was unaware as to

why this was. I thought that most children were smart, that I was not that different. Being smart, articulate, and having potential meant to my educators that I was an anomaly to be monitored. A young Black girl with academic capabilities could be disruptive.

In her book, “*Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?*,” Beverly Tatum (2003) explores the identity development process of Black adolescence with the conclusion that “We need to acknowledge that an important part of interrupting the cycle of oppression is constant re-education ...”, that teaching self-affirming knowledge will lead to better adolescent development (p.74). Hearing comments like those mentioned above, however, were not self-affirming. It was a way to manipulate who I was and what I should grow up into. I encountered **identity manipulation** via my educators, my immediate community, and oddly enough my friends. As an adolescent I was vulnerable to multiple types of exploitation which fostered identity manipulation. My academics were one type. Tatum highlights how Black and white students are academically tracked. She says that “Black children are much more likely to be in the lower track than in the honors track” (56). This academic division among racial lines is a perpetuated racist message that biologically, Black children are not as smart as white children. If that is true then why was I in the honors class?

I cannot definitively say who started the creation of the academic star, but I can say with certainty who worked to maintain it. My family, community, and educators all had a stake in my academic star status. Similar to the way famed sexologist and psychologist Dr. John Money experimented on the psychology of his patients, they did me (see Colapinto, 2000). The need to socialize me, to create me was so intense. Like Dr. Money, it was done to prove a point. By exploiting what nature had given me, it appeared possible to manipulate certain

environmental factors to produce a young Black woman whom did not qualify as a statistic.

My cards were stacked against me differently than most young Black girls. In her essay, "Black Femininities go to school," Cecile Wright (2005) explores the ways in which Black girls negotiate their subjectivity within educational contexts. She notes that Black girls are often simultaneously viewed as high achievers and "problematic." Although her analysis speaks to the lives of young girls of color living in England, it can be extended to America. The visibility of more Black girls in the classroom and in college has not significantly impacted the stereotype of the "loud, naughty, confident, and overtly sexual" Black girl (Wright 104). The conflict between the educator's perception of Black girls and the way that Black girls' experience themselves is battled in the classroom. The success of an academic star meant that the learning ground had to be less hostile to me, that my educators not dismiss me because of my race. To help realize this, my gender became more salient for my educators. I was not lumped together with the "undisciplined" Black students (Wright 109). Nominally, I was allowed to be "one of the girls"; I belonged to be the white group of students who escaped severe repercussions of racialization in the classroom. Bensman and Rosenberg (1979) define **peer group** as "an association of self-selected equals" who are united by shared beliefs, activities, and perceptions (80). Although I was not totally self-selected or equal, these were my peers.

My academic performance created a division between me and my African American peers. To be educated meant that I had to create an **oppositional identity** against my Black peers. Instead of helping me to find a sustainable space that would allow me to negotiate the differences between me and my white peers and me and my Black peers, I was coerced into adopting a **raceless** identity. Assimilation into my white

peer group meant, "de-emphasizing characteristics that might identify [me] as [a] member of the subordinate group" (Tatum 2003: 63). Like Play-Doh I had to become shapeless and malleable. Tatum speaks of the ways some Black youth position themselves against the dominant white culture in order to "protect one's identity from the psychological assault of racism and [to keep] the dominant culture at a distance" (60). I was taught that I was not like my Black peers; I had determination and a high GPA. Black people don't read nor do their homework. "You're an exception." An exception. I was taught to define myself against my own racial/ethnic community. As exceptional as I supposedly was it did not afford me full honorary membership into white society. I was granted the distinguishing title of "Token"!

My newfound oppositional identity estranged me from my racial/ethnic group while emphasizing the blatant distance between me and my White peers. When I was in elementary school I was too distracted with being popular to observe or take stock of this phenomenon. As I rapidly shot through puberty in late elementary and early middle school my intuition began to switch on. The innate feeling of difference began to emerge. I was coming into what William Cross, as discussed in Tatum, calls the "encounter" stage within his model called the **psychology of nigrescence**. During intermittent times in my life race was salient to me. By the time I was in 7th grade I fully realized that my race was salient to those around me. I was bombarded with comments from my African American peers about my lack of "Blackness." My English was too proper and I listened to punk music. You'll never be one of "them," meaning white. At the same time comments from my white peers started to emerge as well. I was too smart to really be Black and I listened to pop music but I could never be white because it was nonsense for Black people to be punks,

Goths, or surfers. I was paying high dues to an exclusionary membership.

I remained academically strong throughout my teen years. That was one of the few areas I could remain strong in. Cross would argue that I was becoming Black during what Erik Erikson calls the **Identity vs. Identity Confusion stage of growing up**, the stage when adolescents attempt to build and maintain a sense of themselves. For young people of color this also means determining to what extent their racial\ethnic background becomes a primary factor in who they are. Erikson theorized that we humans develop through a “pre-determined unfolding of our personalities” in eight stages also known as the **epigenetic principle of development** (Boeree 2009). The unfolding of these stages is dependent upon the successful completion of the prior stage. My identity moratorium was now compounded by race. In a 1948 speech titled “The Purpose of Education,” Martin Luther King stated that, “the function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society” (Carson, et al 1992:124). Education he says is meant to be a “means to an end” and not the end itself. The purpose of it is to provide one the means to discern truth from fiction, to make one aware of oneself and the inequalities in the world. King goes on to say that education is failing to make that awareness happen; what people call and believe to be facts are going unexamined. Our education system is producing groups who uphold the status quo.

The experience of becoming Black was staggering. I found no relief in academia. I can recall several instances where I had to speak on behalf of the African Diaspora during Black History month. There was a collective agreement that I enjoyed reading Toni Morrison and that of all the students in the classroom, I could educate people on the meaning of Hip Hop. The praise of my

scholastic aptitude was often muddled by tasteless remarks about my heritage. “We’re only kidding. Can’t you take a joke?” Ha, ha. Within an institution that benefits from the academic division of students along racial lines I was supposed to understand that it was all in jest. Erikson’s identity confusion stage coupled with Cross’ five stages of racial identity development produced a distressing identity moratorium. To be such an educated young woman I could not figure out how to remain imperious to the inaccessibility of my Black or white peers.

SHE LIVES IN SPRINGFIELD AND SHE’S NOT PREGNANT?!

I was not a young girl with a “bad reputation.” The only stage whispers about me were how I had too many white friends. I suffered repercussions from attempting to infiltrate the world of the dominant society. By the time I hit high school I was fully developed *everywhere*. I had the body of an adult woman yet I had the sexuality of an early teenager. I was vehemently against puberty. I wanted the same opportunities as my other girlfriends. I wanted to pick on over-developed girls. I wanted to buy a bra without having to try it on. I wanted the slim hipped body of a boy. I was not ready to grow up into a woman.

In her fieldwork for *Pride in the Projects: Teens Building Identities in Urban Contexts*, Nancy Deutsch (2008) observed that the young girls at the East Side Club often typed premature and overly developed young girls, stigmatizing their adult-like bodies for maturing before its time. The young girls try to negotiate their sexuality via their bodies. The girls at the Eastside Club realize that presentation of self affects their peer’s perceptions of and interactions with them. Like the East Side Club girls I realized early on that my wide hipped body symbolized sexuality and adult femininity;

I too adopted what Wendy Luttrell calls “body smarts.” I acted slightly more juvenile than my grown up body. I wanted to be taken seriously, not sexually. Internally I yearned to experience myself as a developing young woman. I wanted to partake in the tumultuous, hormonal journey that binds young girls together. I wanted another reason to *belong* to a peer group, not be disconnected from it.

Time matters in adolescent sexuality. There is a quiet assumption that adolescents will not be able to understand the significance of the hormonal changes taking place within them. If they attempt to explore the feelings and desires that arise somehow, this will strongly detract from the reason they are given moratoriums. This is highly evident in the essay, “Shifting Desires: Discourses of Accountability in Abstinence-only Education in the United States” by Burns and Torre (2004). Personal and social success competes for the dominant desires within the lives of the young girls. For Sequoia, a young African-American woman, “to do right” meant that her sexual desires had to be absent from the larger framework of her goals. This is true for many young girls, especially young girls of color. Given the pressures to break the cycle of poverty, underemployment and lack of higher education, or a single parent household, it is no surprise that the site release is the adolescent body. My body betrayed my physical age. It offered the invitation to problematize my sexuality instead of helping me to adjust to the hormonal change. How can I be 16 within the body of a 24 year old? What should 16 look like for me?

I encouraged the normalizing of social age. It made sense to me that growing up meant growing towards a higher education and ultimately a career. Sexuality lay in the peripherals; like extra-curricular activities it aided your growth, but it did not preclude your educational goals from materializing. I had goals to meet by a certain deadline and nowhere in that timetable was there room to

explore my sexuality. My geographic location reinforced the institutions upholding social age. By the time I was biologically ready to explore my desires, I was already socially old enough to deduce the future material consequences. We were still growing up. Heavy petting and oral sex seemed too mature for 16 year olds. Most types of sexual acts seemed forbidden to me; that’s what adults do. I was not ready for that yet. I reframed from indulging in my adolescent sexuality in fear that I would grow up too fast and accept a responsibility that I was not ready for. There was an **expectant time** to grow up in and I was in no rush to move through that time.

In *Act Your Age!: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence*, Lesko (2001) asserts that “teenagers may hang onto atemporality as a psychic salvational dream,” as a means of divesting themselves of social responsibility (131). Living in a world of “one day” was not off putting. Remaining suspended in the “best years” of my life meant that I could place the blame for my mistakes on my immaturity. It also meant remaining suspended in a state of anxiety, as my body began to disconnect from my childhood features and prepare for an uncertain next stage. As an academic star I was expected to pursue chastity while becoming a sexualized being. I think that like most confused teens in expectant time, I asked the inevitable question of “now what?”

My immediate community feverishly worked to make sure I understood the youth timetable. They had the privilege of determining my progress through **panoptical time**. Panoptical time is a framework that Nancy Lesko theorizes as what those in authority use to monitor adolescents. It is development which is being watched, monitored, and controlled from a privileged position; it is power about how other people observe and measure adolescents. Through my community’s consumptive lens, they understood that my overdeveloped body signaled a conflict within the pubertal

process. My body had reached the final stage of development; new measures had to be constructed to make sense of my adolescent reality. I think a fear began to arise that because my body developed before its time, then I would sexually mature before my time. How do you keep a fully developed teenage girl sexually naïve? I was sensitive to the reactions of my community. I empathized with them. I was afraid of the possibility of exiting adolescence before I was supposed to.

A part of that feeling to control my body did not arise from abstinence-only education. Quite the contrary. I received a comprehensive sex education program. By my mid and late teens the consequences of stunting my sexuality began to surface. Unlike the teenage mothers Lesko mentions in her book, I did not end up pregnant, but did feel an urgent need to explore my self-imposed latent sexuality. I felt more overwhelmed with my sexuality since I was trying to understand it all at once, because it arrived all at once, instead of in pieces. I had to work much harder to incorporate my budding sexuality into a framework that would not destabilize what I had socially worked to build.

Once again I felt overwhelmed with my tangled sense of self. I had difficulty in constituting an identity that truly conveyed who I was. I was bright, outgoing, bold, and now sexy. Like the girls at the East Side Club I understood what my body projected. I did not dress provocatively so my peers did not talk, but that did not stop my friends from questioning or their parents from assuming I was loose. My sophomore year of high school I met the father of a friend. I learned the next day that he remarked to my friend that he was surprised that I lived in the downtown area and was not pregnant or slutty. His assumption that because I was a young Black girl living in an urban area I had to be promiscuous surprised me because their family was Latino and the Latino community has also had to bear the

brunt of gendered racial stereotypes.

To know that my gender, race/ethnicity, and geographic location could easily afford me the title “**slut**” disturbed me. The tensions from the desire to indulge in my sexuality and the maintenance of adolescence hindered me from truly validating what I was feeling. In her book, *Slut!: Growing Up Female With a Bad Reputation*, Leora Tanenbaum (1999) highlights the fact that if girls are “perceived to have a casual attitude about their sexuality,” that they are called sluts (88). Tanenbaum explains how the word slut operates as a means to control women’s sexuality; “slut” affects all women regardless of their sexual activity. Before I was sexually active I worked to uphold my “good” reputation. I knew the harmful effects of slut-bashing because I was a slut-basher. To protect myself, I refrained from forming friendships with anyone who would purposefully circulate material damaging to my reputation.

I was not a slut. Internally I wanted nothing more than to be a teenager although my body betrayed that feeling. By dressing casually and de-emphasizing my womanly curves I typically avoided rumors. It helped that I was selective about whom I shared personal information with and that I tried to navigate my sexuality outside of school. By participating in slut-bashing I created an Other to uphold my self-esteem. I had already been trying to survive living with an oppositional identity to Blacks and whites. Now it was complicated by defining myself against those Others who clearly looked and acted as if they did illicit activities. Sometimes this meant defining myself against my friends.

In *Pride in the Project* by Nancy L. Deut-sch, the young girls at the East Side Club adopt similar methods in order to reinforce their sense of self. They use the visible young teenage girls with children, the girls who appear more “loose” with their bodies when around boys or the girls who publicly have a “bad” reputation, to establish an

Other. I think that because I was the most developed out of my friends, there was an assumption that I would be the most sexually active. I powered that knowledge into defining myself against my friends who were active. Like the dichotomous Virgin/whore, I both admired and detested them. As a teenager, I was far from conservative but I did hold some traditional beliefs about adolescence and sexuality. For my friends who engaged in sexual acts beyond kissing, I made sure to check off the "slut" box. I was aware of how the media portrayed exploring and indulging your sexuality, but we had a time to do that and I did not think that we were ready. By slut-bashing and creating an Other, I helped to police the boundaries of adolescence. Life was hard enough with academic expectations. Having the added expectation of being a mother at sixteen because I lived in Springfield did not bode well with me.

I EARNED THAT DEGREE

More times than not, my moratorium felt endless. Yeah, it was my identity moratorium and I could be who I wanted to, but it did not always feel that way. I wanted to merge those hundred versions of me together to produce a single, whole me, but that unity seemed hard to come by. Those around me compartmentalized me, enjoyed or despised those aspects of me at my expense. As I reached my mid teens the question of "what am I going to do with myself?" continued to arise. I figured that I could re-invent myself when I got to college, but I did not want to wait that long. I wanted to bury the academic star and date without feeling afraid of my sexuality.

Your entire youth is spent preparing for adulthood. Those supposed best years of your life are spent in frustration and anxiety. Identity moratoriums are cluttered with other people's expectations and hands in constituting your identity. My academic success meant for my educators, commu-

nity, and family that I would transform from a working class *sista* into a middle class professional. Unlike the Latinas in Julie Bettie's article, "How Working-Class Chicas Get Working-Class Lives," (2005) the educational system had more confidence in me. They created an exception to the rule. My complicity in helping myself to succeed fostered an atmosphere of hope.

I was a beneficiary of the **tracking system**. In Bettie's article Yolanda recounted the counselor advising her to take the non-required classes which ultimately put her behind in math and English. I attended a visual and performing arts high school. We did not meet with counselors. We met with the department heads who advised us on charting our way through the program and on to college. I was pushed to take the AP courses, honors if the AP courses were filled. What was different between me and the working class chicas was that I had a better grasp on what it took to get to college. Being an exception or a token meant that I frequently had access to information that as a regular, working class African American I may have had to come by in other ways. I did notice that some of my peers of color were tracked into regular classes and advised on going to state colleges while I was advised on attending a private, four year institution (preferably out of state).

Often in their conversations Las chicas would refer to "**acting white**" with contempt. There was something inauthentic or "fake" as Lorena put it (Bettie 459). Not a year of my adolescence went by when I was accused of acting white. The Black students could not understand why I hung around white people so much, why I talked the way they did or dressed the way they did. It was my moratorium. I wanted to live how I saw fit. Lorena has a point in that "acting white" is fake when it feels disingenuous to you. I knew that I would never be totally accepted by white society. But, I was aware of the opportunities it could afford me. I was

going to be an outsider regardless of the group I belonged to. On some level I understood that trying to fit in with every group was impossible because there was too much conflict between groups to make that happen. So I had to play with the cards that I had. And my cards meant acting a role until I prospered. And I did. I went to the best public schools, took vacations and ate restaurants most working class people of color could not afford, and I went to a private four-year college.

The price I paid for those opportunities was staggering. I experienced what Kathryn Herr develops and expand upon using what Van Soest and Bryant termed **violence of alienation** (Herr 2004: 243). When an individual “is deprived of the opportunity for emotional, cultural, or intellectual growth” and it “influences one’s own identity or self-esteem” he or she has experienced violence of alienation. For me this manifested in my White peers failing to see a spectrum of diversity among people of color. For example, many of the white students I hung with accepted me and another Black girl because we were unlike the “other” Black people. I interpreted that as the uncouth, uncivilized, sitting together in the cafeteria of Black people. It did not help that most of the works we read by African American authors were not set in contemporary times. Not having even a character to relate to was difficult. It was assumed that I would be comfortable or not too sensitive about slavery jokes or mocking Black speech. When there is no visible, outward safe space one has to turn inward. For so long I tolerated the absence of multifaceted Blacks in the curriculum and I allowed my so-called friends to view me and the “other” Black people as one-dimensional. I kept telling myself that when I grew up things would be different. I just needed to get past my adolescence.

In getting past my adolescence I had to adopt as many identities as necessary. How could I know who I was if I did not try *being*

that person? In that sense my identity moratorium was a performance space. I had to *do* a character in order to decide if it was for me. Identities were disposable. I could financially afford one with relative ease. Côté and Allahar would locate my consumption of identities within a disadvantage of advanced industrial society. As a youth and like current youth, I was targeted to be a **consumer**. Côté and Allahar (1996) assert that as economic doors are closed to or made limited for youth, other means of constituting their identity have to be found. Youth become prey of the media and other institutions that wish to control and shape society.

I did not want to *be* anyone in particular; rather I wanted to be *like* particular groups. I liked the skater kids and I enjoyed the moodiness of the Goths. Stores such as Hot Topic and Gadzooks made it possible for me to look like whomever I wanted. The clothes were not a commitment. When adults are telling you that you can be whoever or whatever you want to be in life, you start to take them seriously. Of course, members of a particular group do not take you seriously. Some of the various groups I tried to align myself with realized or understood that I was a product, a product whose heart was not into doing kickflips to Indys or reading Edgar Allen Poe. Youth as consumers are vulnerable to cheap, commodified identities. They are like temporary tattoos: they are made to temporarily enhance your image. Consumption serves the dominant interests. Côté and Allahar (1996) posit that the mass media has a “vested interest in creating and maintaining a certain consciousness among the young”; that the marketing of cool, of youth, is a form of social control (148). To an extent they are right. As a teen my reality was what was happening locally. The complicated dating process, the shifting identities, trying to find a ride somewhere ... those were important issues for me. Whatever that was happening nationally or

globally didn't concern me. If politics did not immediately affect my life, then I could care less what happened.

That attitude of apathy fed into the **manufacture of consent**. Côté and Allahar (1996) speak of the manufacture of consent as a "concept used to show how the mass media filter information so that interests of political, military, and economic elites go unchallenged" (105). The idea that adolescence is a moratorium makes sense for those in power. My frustrations with most limitations I faced did not always feel tied to a system of power. That is not to say that I was ignorant of institutional practices that disadvantaged certain groups of people, but rather, the extent of its pervasiveness and who managed these systems did not occur to me. Like the *X Files* I trusted no one. Authority figures were almost never to be trusted and if it came time to riot, count me in ... after the fact!

As a teen it did not make sense to be worrying over events that did not concern me. NAFTA or the wars in Kosovo were adult worries. Any effects on my future would be handled when I was an adult. For those years extended to me, I wanted to belong to the youth culture and fret over the near trivial things that mattered. I was the dominant interests' dream. I was not going to take to the streets to protest my discontent over inequalities or suffering. I felt that being punk *and* Black was subversive enough.

It was easier for me to be complicit in manufacturing consent because I did not feel productive. Finances and employment were not relevant to me until I graduated high school. Being school president or doing student council did not interest me. Although I was in technical theatre in high school, I felt under-utilized and under-worked. My labor had value, it helped to build sets and rig the lighting system. But in many ways I was an active consumer versus an active producer. **Youth as producers** have something to offer society whether it is

youth culture or meaningful employment. Like the factory workers, I often felt estranged from my work.

How do you navigate charted waters with an outdated map? Not only can you get lost, but you'll find that the environment has changed enough that you might need a new or better mode of transportation. I bumbled my way through my adolescence. Millions of people have walked that journey before me yet no one could give me updated directions. I just wanted clear directions on how to manage imposed identities and internal expectations. I just needed a leg up. Apparently I received one because I graduated with honors. All of the years of crying, of taking insensitive jokes, of feeling alienated, of waiting for the future paid off. The miseducation I received on "being" who you wanted, on having an actualized, whole self after you finished the best years of your life cost me 24 years of emotional scarring. Not bad considering I only put up 19 years of education!

Adolescence is viewed as this "site to worry over" because of rapid changes in the body and in the psyche. However, the people who problematize adolescence are usually those in authority who stand to gain from infantilizing youth. Adolescence is a site to worry over due to the multiple interests out there working to keep it oppressed. In the womb, had I known that my identity moratorium was going to be as troubling as it was, I would have opted for a shorter moratorium. Côté and Allahar (1996) agree with Margaret Mead when she says, "education for choice" should be granted to all adolescents (xiv). In line with Dr. King's "The Purpose of Education," teach adolescents to be critical thinkers and agents. I wanted nothing more than to be educated, to be whole. Instead I received a first rate education on how to be fractured.

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