

### The Origin Story of a Mad Black Woman

I usually start my essays off with an *I am* statement. But first, this is about where I am from. In a town known for gangbanging and gun violence, 13 miles away from Torrance, is the place I call home. Portrayed as a scary place in a large number of Black films. It's a city you don't even want to drive through. That is what I call home. I and at least twenty more members of my family lay our heads to rest while police cars speed through the night. One-story houses, befriending homeless people, and not being able to play in the front yard have given birth to a lot of different kinds of women. But just like Madea herself, it's ghettos like these that make me the woman I am today. A very mad Black one.

I don't look like I hold much anger, and I don't speak much. With the beautiful curves and tall stature of my ancestors, I was handed the short end of the stick. I'm skin and bones and bones and skin. I look like a fully clothed chihuahua. But I sure can pull off a mean face. It's a defense mechanism, really. When someone cuts you off in traffic, stare them down. Bumped into me in the hallway? I'll give you the look. You wouldn't mess with the 5'1 seventeen-year-old now. She looks like Tyler Perry in a dress. She looks like she bites. I was raised to not look like a victim, just as I was raised to be mad. Mad that I didn't have friends. Mad that I have to clean up the mess I made. Mad that I couldn't go to Washington, D.C., in eighth grade. Mad because it's my *job* to be mad. This job comes with a few downsides, like growing up unpopular. You can't have your defense up all the time or people will be too scared to talk to you. And in return, you won't be able to talk to them. You'll be so busy putting up a face to work on your social skills. Your smile is hidden behind your 4C curls. But for me, the Black woman in question, opening up a teeny tiny bit has gone a long way. By speaking my mind and sharing my strengths, I've been able to talk to more people my age than I ever could've imagined two years ago. During

quarantine, being a 10th grader doing school online made me incapable of speaking to other people. I yearned for someone who wanted to talk to me and would shoot me a text or an email. Feeling so alone, I had completely locked myself into an online world. Youtube had become my best friend and it had caused my grades to dip. I became irresponsible. I had receded back from a tenth-grade student to a seventh-grade little girl with a horrible posture. I had failed myself. In the race to have people talk to you and invite you out, I came in last place. But my ultimate failure made me into the powerful speaker I am today. I may not be the first in line to be a leader on school projects. But when the time comes when I'm truly needed I get the job done because I'm mad enough to do so. Pulling my hair back has allowed some people to enter my life that I may be glad to have. Showing my face and my features made me seem approachable. Not just being seen as a Mad Black Woman, but a glad or sad one. A Black woman who shows the same emotions that you do. People are finally able to see what I am feeling. Not just anger and fear. I am able to show that I am just like them. That I, too, am human. That is how I became the woman I am today—by finally letting myself be seen.