

00:00:26 Ama-Robin Lofton

Hujambo, Beautiful people! and Welcome to Espresso Talk Today. I'm your host, Ama-Robin, and I'm having my Turmeric coffee today.

Turmeric Coffee today - for this special and final episode for Black History Month.

Today we embark on a reflective journey, a reminder, and a call to action for all of us. Our focus is not just to celebrate the past, but to light up the path we're paving into the future. Today, we remind ourselves that we are history makers! I'm going to repeat that - we are history makers! shaping tomorrow with the actions we take today. And that's what we're going to discuss on today's show. You know, I always love, love, love quoting Angela Davis. And here we go, she said.

00:01:29 Ama-Robin Lofton

It is essential to resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals. In order for people today to recognize their potential agency as a part of an ever expanding community of struggle, resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals.

Wow.

This profound statement lays the foundation for our discussion. History, as we've learned, is not just a collection of stories about the past, but a continuous living tapestry woven by ordinary people just like us, Just like you and me, whose everyday lives, struggles and triumphs contribute to the narrative of our time. So today we will discuss how you can make and how you are making history today, this very day. But before we dive in, hit that subscribe button if you haven't already. And if you're feeling this topic and this show, share it with your fam, your crew, your circle, your gathering, your sisters, your brothers, everyone in your community. Now grab that espresso or tea. Yes, tea drinkers are welcome here too, and close that door behind you.

00:03:11 Ama-Robin Lofton

We're going to get deep and we're going to get real. And I hope that y'all are ready for this.

Akwaaba! Welcome my dear brothers and sisters and beloved gender-neutral and gender-non-conforming folks to the Espresso Talk Today podcast show. As I was saying, Black history is the story of the collective action and the resilience of countless individuals. Who, in their own unique ways, fought against racism and oppression. They were activists. They were inventors, writers, artists, students, and people from all walks of life, every discipline, every age group, every race, every gender and every class. They were family members, community leaders and unsung heroes whose contributions, big and small, have shaped the world we live in today. And we are standing on the shoulders of these giants. It's important to remember now that the baton is being passed to us and to the next generation. The question now is what kind of future do you want to create?

00:04:44 Ama-Robin Lofton

What changes are you willing to fight for? What are you doing to improve this world? How are you being of service to others?

You know we have tools, platforms, and opportunities that our ancestors could only dream of. Social media, technology, and global connectivity have empowered us to share our stories, mobilize for change, and challenge injustices at an unprecedented scale. But remember, we don't have to do big, huge things. We have to do little things, you know, but let's get back to it. But making history, you know, isn't just about leading protests or being in the spotlight. It's about excelling in our own fields, being compassionate community members, and making informed choices that align with the future that we want to see. It's about getting in good trouble, as John Lewis urged, by challenging the status quo, advocating for justice, and uplifting all of those around us.

00:06:02 Ama-Robin Lofton

To my beloved sisters and brothers and gender neutral and gender nonconforming listeners tuning in today, Know this. You are powerful beyond measure. Your actions, no matter how small they may seem, contribute to the larger narrative of black history and the global struggle against oppression, as well as the fight for justice right on our own, St. in our own backyard. Whether you're an artist expressing the, you know, complexities of black identity.

That's right, and it is complex. A student pursuing education against all odds? An entrepreneur creating opportunities for your family and your community, or an activist demanding systemic change? You are making history right now. OK, I'm suspecting now that you're thinking, but what can I do?

00:07:05 Ama-Robin Lofton

What am I doing that is such a big deal? I'm going to answer with a lot and anything you want. The only one who can really stop you is you. Remember you are powerful beyond measure and I think that you might need right now a good example and I got a few for for you. But we are going to take a short breather break our first one of the of the show, and this gives both of us a chance to breathe for a minute when things get intense. I like to breathe, and I hope you do too. I'll see you all in a minute and you know that I love this song.

Song Break**00:08:23 Ama-Robin Lofton**

We are back. It's Ama-Robin. So let's talk about a few history makers in this first one. This first person is actually from way back in history, but I think it's going to make my point really, really well.

Let's start with Elijah McCoy. He was born in 1844 to parents who had escaped slavery via the Underground Railroad. Elijah McCoy became one of the most prolific black inventors in history. I'm sure that you all have read about him in your history books and all of that in school and Oh

well, maybe not. Let me tell you though, he faced racial barriers on every front. McCoy's innovations changed the landscape of the industrial age.

00:09:16 Ama-Robin Lofton

His inventions for steam engines drastically reduced wear and tear, improved efficiency and improve their longevity. That reduces cost. That expands the whole, the whole system of industrialization. Whether, whatever you think of that, Elijah McCoy's inventions were so superior that buyers began asking for in quotes. Can you guess the Real McCoy? And that's a phrase that has become synonymous with authenticity and high quality. Yes, named after a black person. His story is a testament to the impact of perseverance and innovation in the face of a lot of adversity and a lot of obstacles and just and also just playing out racism. And yes, it's a true story. Well, I don't know if you've heard the term The Real McCoy.

00:10:13 Ama-Robin Lofton

Perhaps not. But And perhaps you want your own term, Perhaps not. But Elijah McCoy was an ordinary person who made history, and now there's a term made after named after him. This is pretty cool, ordinary person. I know you're thinking that you got to be old or grown to make history, and sorry, but you're wrong about that too. You remember I talked once about Ruby Bridges? Remember her story? Well, if you missed that show, I really encourage you to go back and listen to it. But I'm going to tell you a little bit about Ruby Bridges right now. In 1960, at the age, the tender age of six years, six years old, Ruby Bridges became an iconic figure in the civil rights movement when she became the first black student to integrate an elementary school in the South.

00:11:13 Ama-Robin Lofton

This little tiny girl and escorted, she had to be escorted by federal marshals, you know, because of the hostile protests. Ruby attended William France Elementary School in New Orleans, LA. She only wanted to attend first grade at an integrated school. She just wanted to go to school, and that's exactly what she did. But she faced so much abuse, mostly from white parents, and you ought to see the pictures. And she couldn't even go into the plate, into the yard to play. Parents would throw black dolls with a noose around their necks at her, but she stayed at school and with the courage of her parents and the help of a white teacher there, a very kind white teacher, she completed first grade. And yes, she was escorted to school every single day by federal marshals just for her own protection. Her brave walk immortalized by Norman Rockwell's painting. The Problem We All Live with stands as a testament to the power of youth in challenging systemic racism and segregation.

00:12:27 Ama-Robin Lofton

By the way, that picture, if you haven't seen it already, that picture is going to be up on my website on this special Talk Today website. So you can go see it there. And it really does say a lot. You know, Ruby's story continues to inspire generations and it highlights the impact of one child's courage to face advancing want courage to face such terrible things. And that had she actually really was just a courageous activist. I really encourage you to read her book. It's on the

website. It's in the in my bookshop. So you, you'll see it there, you'll you'll recognize it when you see it, I promise. And you'll see someone six years old change the course of history.

00:13:13 Ama-Robin Lofton

Well, here's another person. At the age of 11 years old, Marley Diaz became frustrated with the lack of black female protagonists in the books that were available at her school. Yet in response, she started the hashtag 1000 Black Girls Books campaign in 2015 in that aim to collect and donate 1000 books featuring black girls as the main characters. The campaign quickly surpassed its goal, collecting over 12,000 books. As of now, it is continuing. Marley's initiative not only filled a significant gap in children's literature, but also in spite of movement towards inclusivity and representation in publishing. That's what happened in 2015, started by the 11 year old girl. And I hope that now you go back and find this and that you're reading, you know, books that have representation and protagonists of black boys and black girls. Here's another one. OK, here we go.

00:14:20 Ama-Robin Lofton

DeRay McKesson, born in 1985, is an activist, a former school administrator and a leading voice in the Black Lives Matter movement. Yep, Black Lives Matter. He came to prominence during the protests in Ferguson, MO. Remember that after the murder of Michael Brown, he was using social media to document the events and police actions. McKesson has focused on issues of police accountability, the education system, and broader racial justice issues, contributing significantly to national conversations on reform and social equity. Someone doing this right now, One person doing this today. But wait, we have that saying, but wait, there's more. And yes, there is because I said the one person, right? Well, you don't always have to do it all alone. Black community groups have played huge and important roles in societal change throughout history.

00:15:29 Ama-Robin Lofton

Black people work together. You know, our efforts, their efforts have spanned, have spanned civil rights, education, economic empowerment and even beyond that environmental justice. All of that. Remember the N Double ACP and we're SNICK the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in a Black Panther Party. These were all community started and funded and and operating organizations and today there are still really great groups doing incredible work. You've heard of Color of Change, right? And that was founded in 2005 and Color of Change is the largest online racial justice organization in the United States. It's goal is to move decision makers and corporations and government to create more human and less hostile work in world spaces for black people. I mean, yeah, that's organization going on right now. Then we have the Equal Justice Initiative.

00:16:34 Ama-Robin Lofton

I've mentioned this book, mentioned this organization before and I'm going to keep mentioning it because they do such great work. They all do. Founded by Bryan Stevenson. Yeah, he started this alone. The Equal Justice Initiative for EJI is a nonprofit organization that provides legal

representation to prisoners who may have been wrongly convicted, to poor prisoners without effective representation, and others who've just been denied a fair trial. And you might be surprised. That happens a lot in America, but there are lots of other ones, too. These organizations, we're started by ordinary and passionate people just like me, just like you, And they are all powerful and persistent, and they are making history. Today. You can start your own organization.

00:17:27 Ama-Robin Lofton

You can work on your own, You can work with them. Either way, any way you do it, you'll be making change and making history. And this one, last one I want to mention Campaign Zero 'cause. This is a really interesting and important organization and that was launched in 2015. Campaign 0 focuses on police reform. It aims at the end police violence in America. Now that is a huge, huge, daunting task. If you want to work with someone, you can work with them too. They need the help. Yes, all these these organizations were started by people just like us who had a vision for change.

00:18:03 Ama-Robin Lofton

And then they got to work and there was lots of work and they had a vision and they keep working to make that come to life. We are going to take another breather break here. It's going to be a little bit longer so you can breathe, you can think, stretch, do push ups, grab some coffee or tea, whatever speaks to your soul. This is some great stuff we're talking about here, but we all need a short break. I'll see you in a minute.

Song break

00:19:00 Ama-Robin Lofton

Welcome back. Thanks for sticking around. Let's get right to it. Let's ask ourselves, what legacy do we want to leave for the generations that will follow? How can let's personalize it? How can I use my talents, my voice, my platforms to contribute to a world that respects, celebrates and uplifts black and brown people? What can I do? How can I be a history maker? And I'm really, really, really glad that you asked because that shows that you accept that you can be a history maker, that you are making history right now. What you do effects tomorrow.

00:19:56 Ama-Robin Lofton

What I'm doing today is going to affect this planet, my life tomorrow, now. We can't change what we did yesterday, you know that is in the past. But you can start today, right now to be and to make the change that you want to see in this world. You really are powerful beyond measure, and you're playing small does not serve this world, and your silence will not protect you. You know, I often come back to Audrey Lorde, and she was saying your silence will not protect you. And I've seen that over and over and over again. Let's recognize that every decision that we make, every action that we take, and every voice that we raise contributes to the history that we're making together today, right now, so that you could start small or start big. Let's start somewhere. Engage with your community. Share your story.

00:21:07 Ama-Robin Lofton

Stand up for what's right. Use your talents to foster change. Whether it's through art or activism or entrepreneurship or daily acts of kindness or daily expression of courage, your contribution matters. Let's make a pact. Let's make a promise to be intentional about the legacy that we're creating. Let's pledge to live each day with the awareness that we are the architects, we are building the future, and that with the custodians of our ancestors, goals, and dreams. Hey, they're counting on us. And you know what? They're right here with us, helping us along every single day. So I ask you, what steps are you taking today?

00:21:57 Ama-Robin Lofton

How will you use your power to contribute to our collective story? So share your commitment with us. Join the conversation. Let's build a community of action and purpose, and together we can make history. And we are making history today, tomorrow, with this action, with with the next action, with this voice, with these voices, we are making history. And remember, please, history is not just about the past, because no one ever lived in the past. We only live in the present, right here and right now, and it's about what we do today to shape tomorrow. Let's make our mark. And I cannot, I cannot and I will not forget that things are happening today that deserve our attention and our energy. There's white supremacy, the systemic racism, colonialism and occupation.

00:22:58 Ama-Robin Lofton

Black and brown and indigenous people are struggling in areas around the world and close to home. It's Haiti, Sudan, Palestine, Yemen, Congo. the United States express of talk today stands in solidarity with all oppressed peoples fighting for self determination and justice. We don't have the privilege of passive disengagement as black and brown people. Our strength is our collective engagement and our solidarity in the global fight against white supremacist systems of oppression. Those systems rely on and are empowered by our disengagement and division. And now that we know better, we can do better. Remember Maya Angelou said that Mama Maya, when we know better, do better. We can envision and work towards a different global structure, and our work can begin right here in our own community, in our own city, in our own country. Remember, too, that the stories we just heard of ordinary folk stepping up to the plate and making history are real.

00:24:16 Ama-Robin Lofton

These are ordinary people. We are ordinary people who are powerful beyond measure. Let's make good trouble and make a better day and a better history for our kids to learn and feel empowered by and to feel so proud of. We are going to take one last breather break here. Then we're going to wind it down and I'm going to give you some information that I think you're going to want to know. And I hope that you all are ready for this. Well, you're back. We're back. We're here together, Great. As we conclude Black History Month.

00:25:23 Ama-Robin Lofton

Let's not view it as the end of a chapter or the end of a month or a time period or anything, but let's see it as it really is. It's a continuous journey. It's a time for reflection, action and

empowerment. And that time doesn't end. It continues on all year long. Let's commit to being active participants in our communities near and far, advocates for justice and creators of a future that honors the sacrifices of those who came before us, those of us in the past, and that lays a foundation for those who going to come after us. We are the point, honoring the past, building a future. But it begins with actions we take today. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

00:26:32 Ama-Robin Lofton

Asante Sana for joining me on this journey today. Thank you so much. As we move forward, remember we're not alone. We are part of an ever expanding community of joy and power, as well as striving A struggle. Together, we have the power to make history, and we are. And let's make it a history of progress. History of love, history of triumph. That's going to inspire generations to come. And I'm going to repeat Angela Davis's wise, wise, wise words. It's essential to resist the depiction of history as the work of heroic individuals in order for people today to recognize their potential agency as part of an ever expanding community of struggle.

00:27:22 Ama-Robin Lofton

Resist that depiction of history, that these were heroic people, people. And yeah, they're heroic people. I mean, they they were. And looking back, they were. But that's not how they started off. They started off with the mission, and that's what we all can do. I hope you got this, because it really is true. And remember, my fellow warriors, know this. Deep in your soul you are powerful beyond measure, and together we are invincible. Asante Sana to all the black history makers, past and present, who keep the vision for a powerful black future.

00:28:06 Ama-Robin Lofton

Asante sana to you for being in the building and showing the courage to talk about these issues. And if you want to keep discussing them or reading about these issues, and I hope you do, then you should definitely subscribe to my weekly black empowerment newsletter, the No More Beat. We got lots of different issues there, so get your dose of black empowerment every single week. Never a dull moment. Get your dose of Black liberation every week. Lots of powerful, uplifting and liberating moments.

You can subscribe at the Espresso Talk Today website at espressotalktoday.com or on Instagram at Amma Robin L That's Amma AMA_Robin_the Letter L Join me on Instagram to discuss these issues, share your thoughts, and find an uplifting and safe space where you are valued and heard.

Find me on Instagram at Amma Robin L I'm Amma Robin for Espresso Talk today and I just finished my turmeric coffee. And remember, now more than ever, strength, soul and reparations ashay Community.