

# LULA



# SLAUGHTER

A LES MILLS SH'BAM CERTIFICATION WAS WHAT LAUNCHED LULA SLAUGHTER'S INTEREST THE FITNESS INDUSTRY. SHE WENT ON TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATIONS IN BODYCOMBAT, BODYJAM, BODYPUMP AND LES MILLS TONE BECAUSE SHE'D FALLEN IN LOVE WITH LES MILLS. THE STRENGTH BUILT THROUGH LES MILLS PROGRAMMING ENCOURAGED HER TO BECOME MORE OF A GYM RAT, AND IN 2016, SHE COMPETED FOR HER VERY FIRST PHYSIQUE COMPETITION. SHE COMPETED IN SEVERAL SHOWS, WINNING 3RD, 2ND, 1ST AND EVENTUALLY OVERALL IN THE BIG CAT CLASSIC. SHE WORKED HARD AT HER INSTRUCTOR CRAFT AND SECURED A SPOT ON THE LMUS TAP TEAM AS AN INTERNATIONAL-NATIONAL PRESENTER FOR BODYCOMBAT, BODYPUMP AND LES MILLS TONE. SHE IS A NATIONAL TRAINER FOR BODYPUMP. LULA ALSO HOLDS A DEGREE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION. CURRENTLY, LULA OWNS HER OWN PERSONAL TRAINING BUSINESS AND HEALTHY SNACK COMPANY, BITTEN.SNACKS. SHE ALSO TEACHES AT THE LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AS WELL AS HER LOCAL FITNESS FACILITY. SHE LOVES SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE AND WALKING WITH HER NEWEST 4 LEGGED BUDDY, HUGO BOSS.

## ON THE MULATTO PERSPECTIVE ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH:

Mulatto, first off, never say that word to anyone who is biracial unless you want to start a fight. Mulatto is just as bad as saying Negro presently, but most do not know that. Why? Because very little, in my opinion, is spoken about the contributions of those with mixed ancestry when it comes to Black History Month. But many of the profound contributions and achievements of black people in this country were given us by folks of a mixed race. I would like to express the profundity of a Mulatto's thoughts on Black History Month.

Mulatto. The origination of the term came from Africans that were transported by Portuguese slave traders to Spanish America starting in the early 16th century. Offspring of European Spaniards and African women resulted early on in mixed-race children, termed Mulatto. The word literally means young mule. But why not call them horses? Sheep? I knew very little about the mule, so I did some research.

Mules are the offspring of a female horse and a male donkey. Mules, are for the most part, infertile and thought to bring out the best characteristics in both parents. They get their athleticism from the horse and their intelligence from the donkey. Mules are said to be more patient, hardy and long-lived than horses and are described as less obstinate and more intelligent than donkeys. When spooked, mules just simply stand their ground and refuse to move versus their equine counterparts who buck then turn and run with no thought of their mounted rider. Mules have greater physical strength than horses for their size and that is why they were often the work animal of choice before the era of machine. They are less prone to injury because they have a good sense of self preservation. They are loving, docile animals,

**LesMILLS**

but don't be fooled, they will watch you go over a cliff rather than go with you. Damn. I have a great deal of respect for the mule now and can ultimately see why this term was used to describe people of mixed race. Sounds like the best of both worlds to me. But how does a "mule" play out in human society? And if you please, still don't ever call me a mule.

Usually when people think "best" characteristics as it applies to those of mixed race, they automatically consider their physical characteristics: light brown, tan skin all year round, soft, curly or wavy hair that seems to grow for days. Maybe eyes of a different hue, a deviation from the dark brown norm. I didn't get those. I got brown. I digress. Mixed race people have a European and African look all in one. So what's wrong with that? Sounds pretty amazing to me. But when you drag African people from their home and make them your slaves and tell them they are inferior to you, the concept of aligning the two just seems unacceptable, and for many years, it was. But what happened when the white slave master began to create mixed raced children with his black slaves? It created division among black people. For example, the lighter skinned slaves got to work in the house and sometimes were secretly educated by the children they took care of, or received special treatment by their slave masters, who were often in love with them. They were not subjected to the harsh realities of field work as their darker skinned counterparts who were often beaten and had calloused, hands and whip scarred backs. There were definitely situations where mixed race women thought they were better than their darker counter parts, as well as darker skinned women refusing to accept light skinned women simply because of their lighter skin.

Does this play out in society today? Absolutely. Lighter skinned black women have historically been more accepted in the white world simply because of their more European look and less accepted by darker skinned black people, because it is believed that their experience has not been black. The above is my opinion and speaks from my experience. But ya'll know it's true.

Growing up, I did not fit in. I hung around with the black kids at recess because my identity was black as I was raised by my dad's sisters who were from Mississippi, so I identified as black. But I was usually the only or one of the few black kids in my honor classes. The black kids teased me because I was smart and the white kids were cool, but they weren't asking me to play with them at recess either. People would ask me what I was. What I was. How about a person? I got so fed up with the question I used to answer that I was grey. I felt very black and was only allowed in the black circle because I was athletic. Thank you horse. I was allowed into the white circle because I got straight A's, thank you donkey. Now I know what you're thinking. I'm in NO WAY saying black people aren't intelligent creatures. I am married to a black man who is an engineer and comes from generations of college educated, scholarly folk. I am surrounded by black teachers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, vets, pilots, engineers, clergy, and the list goes on. This was just my experience.

Things changed when I met my best friend, Celeste. She was darker than me and almost smarter than me. I was glad she was darker than me because it gave me balance somehow. But we had a lot in common too, we were both athletic, smart, female and had crazy families. But her family was very different from anything I'd experienced. Everyone was hyper intelligent and well read. They didn't even allow slang to be used in their home. No joke. They read all of the great authors like Toni Morrison, Frederick Douglass, Maya Angelou, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, the list goes on. I'd never seen so many black books or books period in one house! The day she shared Langston Hughes poem, "Crystal Stair" with me my life changed. You see, I never liked celebrating Black History Month.

Not because I didn't absolutely love hearing stories of the fighters, pioneers, great orators, those who had fought tooth and nail to prove their greatness while fighting for equality, but because I didn't feel like I was black enough to celebrate black greatness. I was ashamed of my white heritage. I felt as if in some way, it took away from who I was as a black person. But when she told me Langston Hughes was half black and half white, my pride grew ten feet that day. I respected her knowledge on all the black greats, and knew Langston was one of her and her family's favorites. And then I found out there were more! Josephine Baker, Thurgood Marshall, Alex Haley, Phillipa Duke Schuyler and of course Barack Obama, the list goes on. When brown people stood up and cheered when our nation elected 44, no one was more proud than me. He was a mulatto. Just. Like. Me.

I know as we celebrate Black History Month, we want to keep it as black as possible. But black is more of an experience and a state of mind. So to my white brothers and sisters I say, never discount the hardships I've endured as a black woman in America because of my fair skin. And to my black brothers and sisters, never forget this stubborn mule will always have your back if you choose to allow a fighter in your corner. And to all I say, do not discount my blackness because it is cloaked in light skin.

What if the mulatto wasn't mean to divide but to unite? A good friend of mine and scholar once told me, "Lula, what if your whiteness grants you a seat at the white table, to make room for everyone?" Maybe the strength, tenacity and steadfastness and undying resolve to get the job done much like the mule is exactly what is needed to uplift and shine a light on the black excellence and achievement both past and present, and continue to keep it at the forefront of people's minds each and everyday not just during the shortest month out of the year. This year, I will celebrate Black History Month with pride because I know I come a race of people who really weren't supposed to be but decided let their duality shine and refuse to be stuck in the middle. I'm black and I'm proud.

# LULA SLAUGHTER.

# LES MILLS