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WHERE HAVE OUR
BLACK LEADERS GONE?

GAHREY OVALLE

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This book is dedicated to the wisest beings on the
face of the earth throughout all of her history . . .
children and their pursuit of social justice.

It is the wisdom of children that will one day
correct the many wrongs committed by men.

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A FEW WORDS BEFORE WE BEGIN . . .

This is a conversation that will serve as a deep reflection of self-inflicted wounds and systematically imposed limitations that affect communities of color. To get to that point, though, we must first deal with a major problem in America. Specifically, it is our tendency to have the wrong conversations—or at least *inaccurate* ones—which allow an issue to be talked *around* but never directly addressed. These issues often grow to be major contributors to keeping us at odds with each other. So much of our discourse comes down to *In your argument, you are right. In my argument, I am right.* Yet the needle of progress does not move forward, or if it does, only begrudgingly. We need to have proper and accurate conversations—the *right* conversations—to provide the solutions to our problems.

Recognizing the truth of this matter, *we must come to the understanding that disagreements, misinformation, and disinformation must not stop the rest of us from reaching out to each other.* We don't have to agree with each other all the time. Yet we can still stand together for a greater humanity. Not everyone is

the problem. Those of like minds and like hearts need to find each other and strengthen our bonds. We absolutely have the ability to shine a brighter light, be a louder voice, and stand as a beacon for those who want ourselves, our country, and our planet to be better.

One of the primary contentions to be understood is that there are no “races.” We are *one people*. And we stand with or against the intentional discrimination of others. Race is the primary divider that we have been taught since we were children, and it is simply untrue. It is one of those things that live in the *ether* of society; its constructs, its textbooks, and its lies.

There are many other lies, besides race, that have shaped how this country was founded. Quite a few continue to affect us in our current position. Today, we continue to define ourselves through the lies of European expansion/history and their descendants. We have allowed these lies to define who we are, our place in society, and our inability to do much of anything about it. As a result, our communities continue to be alienated.

Adding insult to injury, we have adopted certain mindsets that help to keep us in a constant state of struggle and confusion. Ultimately, we, the black and brown community, have adopted the lies, and we need to hold ourselves and others accountable for that. First thing to be done is to stop repeating the lies. There are many. One of the more sinister ones goes, “One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” As uncomfortable as calling that statement a lie may be for some, the truth is that it has fallen woefully short of being accurate for us. It’s a fine ideal, but it’s also been a lie in the context of this country’s history.

Throughout this conversation, we will reference some of the instigators that spread and enforce some of the most egregious of these false narratives. Religion and science, by far, are the biggest culprits. This is not a stance against science. In general, science is pretty awesome. But race-based pseudoscience? Not so much.

I will not say the same for religion. Religion has caused some of the greatest pain and suffering in the history of humanity. We will dive into this in greater depth throughout this conversation. Here, religion is discussed as the pageantry that one surrounds themselves with as they form their relationship with their God. In that sense, I recommend that you disregard the pageantry of your religion and move forward without those lines of separation that are keeping you apart from one another. Keep the best language. Keep the best intention. That which creates a better global humanity will be the best path forward.

The intentional lies of science, religion's co-conspirator in these matters, are tied to the advancement of white separatist ideology. In this conversation, we will dive into science as it has pertained to the miseducation of race in our society.

Some of the lies of our racial history will be laid bare to help us understand how we are impacted today. In the realms of religion and science, there are some teachings that are better characterized as guesstimation and storytelling disguised as evidence and truth, and one often has to take theoretical leaps and bounds in order to keep with the official versions of some of their ever-changing stories. Ultimately, there are many issues and obstacles that we face in the United States. Many of them are societal and structural restrictions. These are the systemic limitations that affect us. These are not in our control. We do not decide if, when, or why they affect us. The key to dealing

with them is to recognize their existence. Then we can plan around these issues so that they have the least effect on us.

You do not need permission to do what is right. Become the cycle breaker in your family, your community, and your life. Stop waiting for someone to clean up the mess around you. Stop waiting for the police to end over-aggressive policing tactics. Stop waiting for the government to find resolution in your life and for your life. We will struggle because we are waiting for things to get better. We are waiting for those who offend us to make things right. That is not happening. Not in any meaningful way and not in any realistic time frame. We must stand up and create our own happiness, freedom, wealth, safety, equality, and peace. The social justice movements we are seeing today are exactly that. Hold those accountable who have been able to hide in a system meant to protect them. Find a way to claim your right to exist and to be treated fairly.

Honest introspection is the only way to become a better you. Recognizing and being completely honest and transparent about your shortcomings is crucial. Identify your weakness. Shore it up. Make it a strength or, at least, make it no longer a liability. Welcome this approach and teach it to the next generation. They will be stronger for it. They will reach higher because of it. Remove that which holds you back and implement that which moves you forward. *Stop asking for permission.* Stop waiting for someone else to do it. No more excuses.

We must strengthen our bonds within and across our communities. It is the only way to create lasting, positive change for our communities, now and in the future. Take better care of yourself—mind, body, and spirit. If any part of you is not well or is out of sorts, you will struggle. You will become your own

impediment. In turn, you will become a burden to those around you. A clean and healthy mind, body, and spirit will keep you energized and allow for maximum growth. Stop talking about it. Start *doing it*.

A better you for a better us. Create peace where you are and then spread it from there. You have the ability to create generational change in you, your children, and their children. Do not be overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem. Do not attempt to change the whole world first. Instead, change your world and then share that positive effect.

We are moving toward an era of accountability. We can see this in the social unrest of the BLM and MeToo movements, the thinning segments of many religions (their numbers have been going down for quite some time), the recognition of instances of police brutality and misconduct, the increased conversations of white supremacy and white privilege, and the removal of racially charged monuments and remembrances. We can see this in the election of young black, indigenous, and people of color to Congress. They, especially, are a reflection of the desire and wish of the American people for young elected officials who will begin to replace the old vanguard and with it weed out those decrepit mindsets, policies, and structures.

This change does not just apply to political and social issues. This applies to us as well. *We cannot continue doing the same irresponsible things and hope that somehow things will get better.* We are just as responsible for the approach to our well-being as any external factor imposed upon us. The systemic limitations will always exist. The key is how we handle ourselves. How we respond and navigate that situation is the thing that matters the most.

If my words offend you, that may be the sign that you need to grow.

“Who the cap fit, let them wear it!”

—B. Marley

GHETTO LOTTERY

The Ghetto Lottery is the concept of giving our children to entertainment and sport in hopes that they become rich, famous, and one of the “chosen few.” This is something that exists in black and brown communities that want to better themselves and are hoping to find that winning ticket. It is a ticket that allows a person to leave the confines of their own “ghetto” and ascend above others, away from the poverty that they grew up in or near.

To play this game, however, one has to be willing to sacrifice their child to the Ghetto Lottery. Your child could be the golden ticket out of poverty—a poverty that has become a cycle which has claimed parents, grandparents, siblings, family, friends, and others. But remember, you have to be in it to win it, and just like the cash lottery, almost everyone loses except for a select few. Unfortunately, the opportunity to “get out” is so alluring that families are willing to resign their children to a life plagued by injuries and missed opportunities in search of a greater one that may not come.

There is an emphasis in our communities that tells children to pursue sports and entertainment as the preferred way out of their ghetto. It seems that every child wants to be a rapper, singer, or ball player. It is a consistent theme allowed to exist

because we are so desperate to remove ourselves from our financial challenges and social plight.

Your child has the ability to rise through the ranks and become one of those young superstars that get lauded and sought after and eventually find their way to college and possibly into the professional ranks. Some go into the limelight right away. That's the dream, isn't it? That is the golden ticket. And if you have one of those athletes or artists, that's exactly what is going to happen. They are going to turn pro or become a star and your life is going to change and it will be amazing.

The problem is that so many don't win this game. While there are many who have transitioned successfully from playing their sport and pursuing their dream, many more have not fared as well. We see a world of athletes and artists that are left behind and aren't equipped with the resources or capabilities to move on and retain a very productive life. They are being ushered through, used and abused in the name of sports and entertainment. Ultimately, there are so many who don't make it. They never acquired the necessary tools to navigate society and end up struggling with their own poverty and limitation. They are left battered and bruised as they go through this journey and experience. Ultimately, when they have children, they repeat the same steps and yield the same result.

What drives this blood sport is a lack of resource. Put simply, people do not have. They come from generations of not having. They are perennial middle- and lower-income families. That is not to say upper-income families don't do it as well, but they do it in lesser quantity and with a different outlook. The lack of resource, in most ghettos, will allow you to sign your child up for the potential to have. It's a worthy endeavor. What is not

considered, or more often is ignored, is the long-term negative effect on the individual through childhood and into their adulthood and then their resulting likelihood to rinse, wash, repeat the same mistakes with their own children.

This is seen more in middle- to lower-income communities. They are more likely to give their children to these industries in an attempt to become one of the best entertainers in the theatre or in the field of sport. The child's life becomes a series of never-ending trips to practice, games, recitals, and other venues in an attempt to become a star. During this insane and grueling schedule, often their bodies get worn down and begin to succumb to injuries that normally would not happen until they get older. This is due to the way sport has changed into year-round activities.

In entertainment, the odds are just so slim. There is nothing wrong with pursuing a dream but, long term, that time may have been better spent doing something that still brings you happiness but also allows for a living wage and a quality of life. Aside from the lottery chance of it all, there is the reality that in many cases, children are left to the underhanded business side of the industry and the predilections of the adults who are supposed to guide them. All too many times these children are taken advantage of—financially, contractually, emotionally, physically, and sexually.

Using a child to escape poverty through entertainment and sport is the easy way out. It lets the parents off the hook for raising their children properly. It is a long shot bet hoping to avoid the hard work. It absolves the parents from the responsibility of caring for and cultivating responsible human beings who will one day walk this earth and make decisions on behalf

of themselves and others. They will have to make decisions about their future and the future of this planet. Many will be ill equipped because a large portion of their time, too much of their time, was spent playing with a ball or dancing or singing or acting. Many of these children will have never learned valuable social and communal skills. They will have not attained the knowledge needed to navigate the harsh world in front and around them *without adding to the problem*.

The problem in the pursuit of fame and fortune is that so many have to be sacrificed for the few to make it. Whether through the collegiate route or by skipping it altogether, the path to stardom is littered with so many children who are left by the wayside and miss so many opportunities as a result of pursuing these things. If they do go through college, the impetus is to keep these young people playing sport and entertaining people. Some may attain a degree; some are merely given easy classes so that they can play ball and entertain the crowds. All of this is for entertainment. The truth is that many of these athletes skate through the system without obtaining a true education. They are faced with a stark downhill reality in terms of their ability to seek high-paying employment later on in life.

The child is encouraged to think about becoming a professional entertainer or athlete rather than a blue- or white-collar professional, an entrepreneur, an inventor, author, scientist, etc. When the child eventually gets to the point of realizing they will not be a star, it is often too late to make up for the lost time, wasted resources, and lack of etiquette and grooming in more suitable areas of expertise. These children are passed from class to class and grade to grade without ever becoming a very good student. Many of these students are placed in special

education classes because it is easier for them to get through school without a strong education. This is obviously not just an issue that affects those who pursue sport or entertainment. Children from impoverished communities deal with this same reality, whether they are an athlete or artist and regardless of their color. The slow track that yields few results is made easy for so many.

Just like the cash lottery . . . You have to be in it to win it.

Just like the cash lottery . . . The odds are heavily against you.

Just like the cash lottery . . . You were never designed to win. You're just throwing away your money wishing to have what you most likely will never attain.

*And this, too, becomes the fate
of your children.*

THE FATE OF OUR CHILDREN

These are the odds when playing with our children as a whole, within our communities across the United States. This is how we sacrifice our children in an attempt to get out of our ghettos. A major problem with this approach is all the missed opportunities and lost lessons incurred by playing the Ghetto Lottery. The child is taught to hold this one-way, very limited opportunity as the most important thing. These goals, their parents' dreams, are placed on a pedestal as a reminder of what the child should be dreaming of, thinking of, working toward, and practicing for. It is the epitome of what the child should be striving for.

That said, there are many valuable lessons learned from these pursuits. However, the lessons lost or missed are more important for so many children. Actual schoolwork is abandoned in the pursuit. Being able to use that time, energy, and resource to make a better person is lost. Spending more time with your family is lost. Helping others in life is lost. Learning empathy is lost. Thinking about life and your place in it is lost. Developing an understanding of the rules of engagement is lost or never attained. Realizing the many tips and tricks to become a better student is lost.

It is not a color-coded lottery either. This affects blacks and whites and all in between the same way. Communities who have very little are most susceptible. These communities are willing to take more of a gamble on their child's success through stardom than through hard work and continued development. They were products of the same dynamic, and many of them do not have the "know how" to teach their children to continue to build off of their own success in academics, athletics, and real-world skill sets. Communities who lack affluence often lack education and developmental understanding, which they are therefore not capable of passing on to their children. More so than racial distinction, economic class is the deciding factor for so many. And the landscape is littered with people of all colors and backgrounds.

At this point, I would like to clarify ghettos. This is not just a reference to black and brown communities. It affects all colors and many degrees of affluence. So when I say Ghetto Lottery, you don't necessarily have to live "in the ghetto." It refers to

any community that practices the behavior of giving their children up, hoping to strike it rich with their potential success. There are just as many white communities that engage in this behavior. Some may be more affluent but are not so well off that they do not hope for their lucky break as well. You can live in a nice suburban community, still trying to find your golden ticket out of the poverty you live in or the poverty that you live near.

These are the ghettos I speak of. Not divided by color but rather drawn together due to socioeconomic reasons. These communities, whether middle or low income, only live one or two financial calamities away from poverty themselves. They are blue- and white-collar families that live paycheck to paycheck and manage to get by. Some manage to save and afford themselves some protection, but the vast majority just gets by, enduring their poverty. They skip a pay period and they are struggling. They skip two pay periods and they are in real trouble. The widespread economic hardship of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has made this even more obvious and undeniably true.

That's the reality of a lot of people who are middle to lower income. They are able to live and able to survive as they are, without catastrophe, without calamity. Many of these people are getting priced out of being able to play sports. Others are spending all of their money and resources to pay for one or two children to be able to play at a high level because that might be their ticket out. Meanwhile they are struggling at home and in other areas of their life.

The prospect of having a “get out of the ghetto” card in a family is just too enticing. The child is encouraged and supported

mentally, physically, and financially during their athletic and entertainment careers. Often times, private trainers and competitive travel sports require a significant portion of the family's income. It is not uncommon for a family to spend money equivalent to college tuition or the very scholarship they were pursuing in the first place.

On top of not getting the education is the possibility of long-term chronic pain due to injury from the pursuit. This ultimately creates a growing segment of the population that moves into their middle and elder years severely damaged, banged up, and bruised with all kinds of knee, ankle, ligament, back, and neck injuries. These things are also totally avoidable. These activities often incur a lifetime of injury. For example, we can see this in the current debate about head trauma like CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy) and TBI (traumatic brain injury). Men, women, boys, girls, professionals, and amateurs suffer from this.

Chronic pain is what lies in store for these children as they become adults. Years later the athlete/artist suffers the pains of so many years of practice and play. Surgeries, arthritis, and inflammation are the gifts of playing sports like it matters more than living life.

Children and young adults don't have to be used and abused for sport and entertainment. Look at all those who have suffered and continue to suffer as a result. We do not have to sacrifice a few million people so that we can be entertained by a few thousand people. This does not negate the positive that comes from sport and stage. It's just a different conversation. When approached appropriately and expectations are set, sport and theatre are a great experience for everyone—for all young people,

not just a few. Not just those who can afford to pay and not just those who make it to the professional ranks. However, in our communities, there is more encouragement for our children to become athletes or entertainers than to become entrepreneurs or professionals in a strong industry and this is definitely part of what plagues our growth.

Today we see fewer numbers in youth sports. People are recognizing the risk and reward of it. Do I really want to risk the health of my child playing some of these sports? The budding conversation about the long-term brain development and damage incurred while playing sports has brought to life the reality of parents not wanting to put their children in harm's way. And it is not just brain injury. Do parents want to have their child suffer from knee

and ankle ligament damage for the rest of their life? Do parents want their child's shoulder or knee to click every time it is bent past or over a certain angle? Do parents want their child to have back pain that will only get worse as they enter the work force, because so many jobs are sedentary, which can cause or exacerbate existing injury? Do parents want their children to suffer a seemingly minor injury early in their lives that may require a major surgery later on? The answers to these questions are a resounding *no*. Yet parents continue to place their children in harm's way, making these examples a likely reality.

Football, baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball make the top 10 list of sports and activities that accrue the most head, joint, and ligament injuries. These are the same sports that most of our children play.

These are real and serious problems. The long-term pain is a problem. The lack of education is a problem. The prioritizing skills of entertainment over life skills and education is a problem. The spending of much of your resource on a slim chance is a problem. These are terrible propositions, and I've only named a few. Instead of spending 20–30 hours a week learning hard and soft skill sets and educations and wisdoms and languages, our children are encouraged to *throw ball, kick ball, or catch ball*. They are learning to sing, dance, act, or perform. The expenditure of time pursuing these things seems harmless; however, take note of the disparity in wealth between BIPOC families and white families. Their children are focused on growing and maintaining generational wealth. Meanwhile, attempting to “strike it rich” with children has routinely yielded poor results for our communities. This does not negate the reality of those who have done well. But I am drawing attention to the other side of this conversation.

If we as a society started to redirect that focus to things that actually benefit us, we would be much better off. Is time not better spent encouraging the child to become a builder of society and generator of happiness and wealth? Introducing language, music, arts, and sciences and truly developing caring, sharing, and healthy individuals to go forth in this world is a much better expenditure of our resources.

We do not see this in our ghettos. Instead this is the model that the upper class employs (minus the caring and sharing and, sometimes, happiness). They encourage sport and theatre to engage and challenge their children, both physically and mentally. However, they recognize it as an activity to be enjoyed while lessons and leisure are to be gained. This is not an end

game to be pursued by the vast majority of their children. They are taught to enjoy these activities but to always keep in mind their responsibility to generate and safeguard the wealth of family. Build and protect wealth. The primary function of white wealth is to be passed down through the generations. Those children are taught to value that above all else. This is one of the greatest differences in our communities. This is not a racial division. It is an economic divide. Black, brown, and white suffer the same delusion of sacrificing their children in hopes of escaping their plight with poverty.

Encourage each seed to be as strong as possible. That strength will prove invaluable when we come together.

We have to stop giving our children to sport and entertainment. If you should happen to have a bright young star on your hands, then cherish it. Feed that child's athletic prowess or artistic desires and abilities and watch them grow and possibly succeed in breaking into those industries. However, be realistic and honest with yourselves as parents or guardians. Make that observation based upon true talent and potential and not your hopeful desires. Regardless, the vast majority should be pushed toward individual success that can be shared with the collective.

Our focus on that which is temporary and limited to so few has become the national standard. It is killing our children's ability to succeed in life, and most are assured to never win this lottery. Instead they will return to their "ghetto" or "ghetto of

choice” and continue the cycle of non-advancement or very slow advancement. People endure their poverty. This is the greatest of all shames. It is totally avoidable. Time and effort should be spent preparing our children to be successful in life. Resource and time should be given to them, to understand the world they live in and how to navigate it, so that success is the outcome regardless of the path they choose.

Question: When do people learn to stop sacrificing their children?

Answer: When their children are already resigned to failure. This way another generation can grow up to do so little with themselves.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS: RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF WHITE SUPREMACY

At the root of most things in the United States is racism and yet, racism is a bogeyman. Remember the *ether* that we discussed earlier: construct, textbook, and lie? Racism has no genetic or scientific basis. It is totally made up and designed to define and separate people, creating a system of advantage for a select few. This is the space where it comes to life, but it is still untrue. I call it out, not to define it but to help you see through it.

We are one race, and that is the human race. And there is only one human race that exists on this planet. We come in varied sizes and shapes and colors, but we are still only one human. Racism cannot exist within a single “race.” Instead it

has to be some type of bigotry or prejudice that is being exhibited by one group against another.

Racism, as we know it, is a problem that exists because of men—very sinister, and often times, very white men. It is a fantasy and outright lie for us to call ourselves different races, but it is very useful when leveraging that notion for personal advantage. “More for us, less for them,” said the evil genius that devised this construct.

The idea that we are different races is part of humanity’s social training. So we can commit, or give permission for, or be complicit in much worse acts against each other. Our training tells us to repeat and then defend the lie. This allows us to consider others as less than, so we can now treat them inferior. And if we intentionally hold the lie as so powerful it cannot be denied or approached, we create a space where we can hurt others unapologetically (this is a major American dilemma, but it is not unique to our country).

By accepting racism, we do not allow ourselves to be concerned with the welfare of others because we are accepting a difference. And because they are different, their problems are theirs and our problems are ours. It is in this space that we can begin to deny their existence or right to exist. It is an age-old problem, and it continues to plague us. It appears to have begun, coinciding with and leading up to European development and expansion.

Language is a major part of this problem. To be more exact, the misuse of language allows us to be confused about some of the truths that exist in our society. Racism is one of those misused words. Used incorrectly, it leads us to have the wrong

conversations. We continue to define ourselves and use language inappropriately throughout our society and our ethnic culture. It allows us to intentionally not see or not recognize certain truths that exist about ourselves or others. There is an intentional inaccuracy of these conversations that allows chaos to exist in its midst. And it is in the chaos of confusion that power is usurped and wielded against one another.

There is a certain level of white supremacy and white ideology that creates, maintains, and agitates the dividing lines in these conversations.

Racism, as we know it, is a belief system created to keep in place the worldwide benefits of white advantage or white privilege. Neo-Nazi, nationalist, KKK, white nationalist (whatever they prefer to be called)—these are all groups that benefit from keeping racism alive. And when we stand in unison with any one of these groups, we stand in support of all of these groups as they collectively pool their influence to keep the system of racism in place (directly or indirectly).

The evolution of white supremacy could not have happened without religion and science. Many iterations have been seen throughout history in the United States and on the global stage. It started with kings and queens, clergy, pilgrims, cowboys, hooded clan costumes, which are now being trading in for judges' robes, doctors' coats, police uniforms, certain aspects of the online gaming community, etc. It is possible to follow the lineage of these benefactors of natural selection and manifest destiny right through their doctrine of discovery to their European roots. The landscape of white hate groups in the United States is littered with many factions. Each one has their

own personal mandate, but all hold the fundamental understanding of “white is right.”

Race science was thoroughly studied during the 1700–1800s to prove the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color. Scientifically, they divided humans into “races,” a notion regarded as popular opinion in European crowds to differentiate and ultimately discriminate. European and American scientists—through confirmation bias, popular white opinion, and outright lies—created a body of work that would help to justify white supremacy and usher it into hundreds of years of existence. Some of which continues to exist into our lifetime. It was Darwin, however, who became the proverbial “cherry on top” of a very white frosted cake.

Racism is a false narrative. Every time we have it, it’s akin to spinning our wheels in the mud. It brings us nowhere and there’s no end to the conversation because there’s no beginning . . . because the conversation doesn’t actually exist—but we all end up a mess trying to have it. What these conversations end up doing is help defend the lie of racism by keeping it alive. Racism, more accurately, is a bigotry, bias, intolerance, and discrimination based on the belief that one’s “race” is superior. Belief is, often times, the suspension of intelligence. It allows the individual to align him or herself with that which is untrue and, all too often, unfair and unjust. To this I say:

ABANDON BELIEF. TRUST UNDERSTANDING.

Belief is what creates the problem. Belief is what keeps the problem in existence. It maintains the status quo. It is in the belief system that one can maintain an abstract thought in contrast to the reality in which they exist. Racism is a belief system. One must believe it in order for it to be real. And once it is in your head, it takes on a life of its own.

When we discuss it, the lie becomes real and something that we have to deal with. This is one of the fundamental flaws when language is misused. Prejudice and bigotry exist. They are very real. However, we're not saying those things. Instead, we use language like racism. We are keeping it alive. We have to start defining it differently and speaking about it differently.

One of the things about racism is that it is a pseudoscience. It is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is brought to us as if it is factual and scientific. However, history shows us that the idea of racism was created in socioeconomic, political, and religious realms. Ultimately, it was just an excuse for slavery, servitude, and genocide of those deemed inferior to obtain what was rightfully theirs. Eventually, it was implemented into larger segments of society, in particular education. This is where the legs of racism started doing squats, and we all know what happens when you don't miss leg day!

The acceptance of race defined in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* is the catalyst that allowed racism to move from religion, through science, and into education. Although many argue that Darwin's words are misconstrued by others who would use them to incite hatred, his next book, *The Descent*

of Man, leaves nothing of the sort to the imagination. Here he explains his racial bias stating the “civilized races” (white) of man will exterminate and replace the “savage races” (BIPOC) throughout the world. Allowing Darwin’s theory to continue to narrate the conversations of the evolution of man without correcting the obvious lies continues to perpetuate the inaccuracies of his theory. Scientific racism continues to disrupt accurate and honest conversations and movements that would help us to grow closer to one another, as opposed to the separated and divided society we live in.

To understand racism is to acknowledge that it is simply a separation ideology. It is one of the more powerful ways that we stay disconnected. There are certain forces built into the word, and its understanding, that keep us disconnected. Racism is an abstract understanding of the few, imposed on the many. As much as it is not a real thing, it has been defined in a certain fashion, and it lives within our society. It exists to create difference and separation amongst ourselves. Separation where there is no separation. Where there *should be* no separation.

Once we start to recognize it as a separation ideology, we can start to walk away from it. We have the ability to say, “Wait a minute, I

The history of racism in science is long. Some of the more notable persons and practices include Samuel George Morton, Karl Vogt, Francis Galton, Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, Carl Linnaeus, eugenics, selective breeding and sterilization, vaccines (yup, they managed to sneak it into that too), apartheid, scientific medicine, and the list goes on . . .

don't want or need to be apart from people because they are different. I do not agree with that premise. All people are my people because we are all human. I wish each one of them well, as I hope they wish me well." Refusing to take part in the lie of racism is the first step to dismantling it.

We should be driving ourselves together, not apart. Racism is one of those things that attempt to divide us. Religion is another one of those separation ideologies. We will discuss that later. It is all separation ideology, and it all comes from the same lie. And that lie is most effective when putting men in power and allowing them to put a chokehold on the larger portions of society. It is imperative to recognize that racism and religion are created to separate us. They are not designed to bring us together. And recognizing the problem is crucial to seeing the solution.

BLACK-ON-BLACK CRIME

Real black-on-black crime is that of influencing generations of youth to subscribe to what will ultimately hurt them in the long run. It encourages them to adopt destructive behaviors that are fueled by ignorance. They are the aspects of ourselves that we keep alive and use to poison ourselves. They are generational wrongs that we keep in place. It continues to plague our communities, maintaining levels of self-inflicted pain, and is a consistent burden in our constant struggle.

Many things can fill this list, so I will only lay out a few of the more sinister examples. These also apply to *all* communities of color:

TOXIC MASCULINITY

- Men today exhibit a cultural behavior that can easily be classified as dismissive, intolerant, and/or hostile to women, children, and other men.
- It leaves emotional and physical scars. This is where most of the damage is done.

- Gang culture, violence, and prison intersect several aspects of toxic masculinity.
- Here we find the elusive search for *respect*. It still remains something to be desired, have bestowed upon, or taken. But quite to the contrary, respect is something like human rights, dignity, and love. It already exists within. One only has to realize that potential within oneself, and they will never find themselves without it. Certainly, they will never feel the need to fight or kill another to gain it.
- This continues to be a rite of passage and a badge of honor in communities of color. Many of these activities lead to prison, which is also still glorified in black and brown communities.
- It helps to enforce and embolden our rape culture.

Make no mistake; the vast majority of offense is from men directed toward women. Toxic masculinity helps to maintain the status quo surrounding and holding up misogynistic social systems, unconscious bias, and cultural norms. It serves as a guard of the patriarch.

Toxic masculinity entices our youth to engage girls and women with little regard or respect. It allows them to devalue others and tells them that *his* sexual development may occur at the expense of *hers*. It helps normalize the abundance of fatherless households, the tragic loss of life due to violence, and, all too often, the inescapable poverty in our communities. It fosters an environment where women and children are not safe from abuse and sexual violence. Toxic masculinity helps to keep in place a

rape culture that can be seen in moments when the curtains are pulled back.

IGNORANCE OF WEALTH GENERATION AND GENERATIONAL WEALTH

- Lessons of money management, savings, and credit are still an uncommon knowledge in our households and communities.
- We have terrible spending habits and make poor financial decisions. This is especially true when noticing how much money is worn around the wrists and necks, as well as in the mouths and ears. It is a cultural acceptance of ill-advised expenditures.
- Black and brown families and communities lack entrepreneurial education and opportunity.
- BIPOC often experience the same lack of education about buying power (consumer power). They do not know how to cultivate it, maintain it, or exercise it effectively. Individually and especially collectively, there are many missed opportunities to create power as consumers.
- There is a lack of fundamental investment knowledge—a *financial illiteracy*. Not knowing how to combine resource laterally and vertically within one's family is the greatest detriment.
- So many are living paycheck to paycheck with no plan to grow. They have little or no vision of retirement.

- Someone has to become the cycle breaker to bring the family out of poverty, violence, incarceration, single parenthood, and other generational issues.

HYPERSEXUALIZING OUR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

- “One has to be viewed differently, so they can be treated differently.” The act of devaluing someone is the step that precedes the actual abuse. This concept is routinely displayed through societal and media influence. Cultural acceptance and applied behavior keep it in place.
- Women and children are used to satiate the needs and wants of men in a very unhealthy way, often times criminal.
- This is easily seen when observing displays of power over “objects” supposed to be passive.

This is embedded in our culture and institutions. Inundated through media outlets, one of the more aggressive tools, it is practiced almost subconsciously. Women and children are expected to do what they are told. Speak when spoken to. Wait until they are addressed. Society and religion are the worst offenders of keeping this dynamic in place.

- Men and boys are encouraged to behave this way. This creates the environment that enables predatory monsters to grow in our society and ascend to the highest ranks of power.
- Being mindful of the media we consume and some of our “toxic” behavior (boys will be boys) will help to curb this

mistreatment of women and children. Relinquishing the idea of power and control of others and eliminating the second- and third-class status that women and children are relegated is a necessary first step.

PASSING ON THE ABUSED CHILD SYNDROME

- Beating of children—belt, cord, switch, hand, etc.

We do what we know; we know what we are taught.

This is a general reflection of one's own upbringing. Here we must recognize that what we suffered does not have to be repeated. Punishment through discipline is an American preference. We are encouraged to do it to others as it was done to us. It is viewed as a rite of passage, much like hazing. We must stop this cycle.

- Fatherless households and multiple babies by different men.

They both have a similar negative effect on the dysfunctional relationships and psyches between parent and child. This will ultimately have a negative effect on the relationship between child and the world. This also imposes a tremendous economic burden on the household.

- Sexual abuse of our children *must stop*.

Abused children become abusive adults. Only you have the ability to change you. Recognize the hardships of your life and vow never to make others suffer the same way you have. Find ways to heal. Find those who will help you. This is not something you can do alone.

TREATING OTHERS WITH THE SAME BIAS THAT THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED

- We can point to displays of bias and prejudice toward other “not accepted” people, similar to that which black people have suffered.

LGBTQs, Muslims, and immigrants—these are the latest examples of people who are treated as the “new ni**ers on the block.” I have seen bias and bigotry on display in some of the same ways that black and brown people have been treated. At times, black and brown people will discriminate against others with the same contempt that they are met with.

- Committing acts of violence toward ourselves. Inflicting pain within the community only compounds the pain that has been and continues to be imposed upon the community.
- Sexual assault of *anyone* should cease to exist.
- Recognize the wrong done to you and vow to never foster it through repetition. Do not behave like those who have harmed you. Some seek pleasure in treating others poorly in order to make themselves feel better. This is an American tenet that we must dissolve from our own behaviors and actions. Making dividing lines even deeper is not in our best interest.

HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA, GENDER PHOBIA

- Get over it. Live and let live.

- Everyone deserves the right to live their own life without discrimination. This applies to all LGBTQ individuals.
- Today we can see a tremendous movement of acceptance toward and from the LGBTQ community. We all share in the responsibility to make sure this community is able to enjoy the equal rights that all people deserve.

We certainly have been the source of our own pain in these regards. However, we must realize that each of these factors is also a systemic problem throughout the country we live in and its societal norms. Even if we are to clean it up amongst ourselves, which is the goal, it will continue to exist nationally and globally. One area that we have more control over is the next category.

ATHLETES AND ARTISTS

- The exposure effect: People develop a preference to things they are repeatedly exposed to. Those who have made it should be more conscious of the negative influences they are projecting onto their audiences.
- Stardom does not imply intelligence or sincerity.
The idea of an “unintelligent” athlete or artist does exist. Thrust upon the world stage due to skill and ability, they do not always have the acumen to understand topics or share appropriate opinion on matters of importance. Often, they are a “living stereotype,” a poor example for our children to follow.
- From all of the examples of self-inflicted pain, this is one aspect that we absolutely have the ability to control more of. We can shape the narrative in a positive direction.

Athletes and artists are by far the easiest recognizable black and brown people who actually make it onto a local, national, or global stage. They're seen and followed by so many. People will mimic what they say, do, wear, and like. This helps strengthen one of the more vicious cycles of black-on-black crime that exist in our culture, specifically when these stars disregard their influence and role-model implications as they pertain to our younger and older communities. Watching others has a lasting effect on an impressionable mind.

WHEN ATHLETES AND ARTISTS GET TO THE TOP

The show of all shows! Lots of fancy cars, clothes, late nights, bright lights, shiny things, while pursuing the lifestyle of the rich and famous. This is what they share with their fan base and world community, which are mostly children growing up looking to follow one of their favorite stars (although there are more than enough *adult-children* looking to follow as well). They see the inflated fantasy and want everything they see. They emulate these stars and see the obvious attachment to shiny things, so they, too, want shiny things. They see the party lifestyle and they, too, want the party lifestyle. These stars hook millions of children into wanting things they do not need and tempt them into chasing things that they will most likely never attain. The vast majority become underachieving children who become wasteful adults that fantasize about living outside of their means. Then they grow older and do exactly that. They live beyond their ability to afford that which they have and want. Some will spend their lifetime trying to attain these things. Many will pass on this ill-pursuit to their children.

The reality is that most people do not attain these things. They “mortgage themselves” to the hilt. Many are spending money on these things while the rest of their life is in disarray. Some are able to comfortably manage, but they are not able to get ahead. They certainly cannot help others. This is where the irresponsible star allows that cycle to persist. Many of these athletes and artists, when it’s their turn and they get to the top, help push that wheel to keep that cycle going. And these are the things we want to address because we want our athletes and artists to stop that. We want them to do better for us and not just themselves.

These stars encourage a non-sustainable lifestyle (oftentimes more than even *they* can handle) and kids want to follow. There should be a modicum of decency and responsibility when promoting such things. Even alcohol commercials tell you to drink responsibly. As much fault as that industry has in creating dysfunctional adults and families, even they give warning. Young children are lured into these fantasies and think becoming an athlete or artist is the preferred way out.

****Disclaimer****

Athletes and artists certainly do not have to be a positive role model, but if they are, we will see a positive reflection in the actions, behaviors, and choices of those who follow them. By all means, they can be as toxic or negative as they want. It is always their choice. We should implore them to do better.

DREAM A DREAM OF WHITE

It is what we do. When we envision success, it is exactly what a wealthy white person is or has: jets, yachts, late-night partying, tropical getaways, big houses, fancy cars, accumulating

We dream about living their dreams.

and burning through money like it doesn't matter, using drugs to escape or enhance reality, living a life free of responsibility and full of privilege, splurging on endless vacations, and so many more examples could

be used. We want the same things. We look to these things as validation of having “made it.” We define our success by attaining these things and behaving in the same ways, even when it does not serve our purpose, individually or as a community.

CHASING EMPTY THINGS

Purpose is the key word. Accumulation without purpose is the model we want for ourselves as a result of wanting what others have. The catch here is the hollow feeling that will always remain when chasing empty things. Even when we attain them, they just don't fill us up. We are most valuable when we are able to serve the best interest of ourselves and others. That is, after all, when we are most fulfilled—when we feel we are valued and are creating value for others. Understanding that wealth accumulation does not automatically equate to happiness or satisfaction helps us to avoid some of the pitfalls.

All too often, when athletes and artists get to the top, they are guilty of contributing to the problem. They live a life that is

totally over the top, unnecessary, and irresponsible. Their fans want to mimic them. So they, too, begin to define their success as having the same “things” that others have instead of what they may truly need and want. This dynamic is intentionally encouraged by the owners, moguls, executives, teams, and the money machine that creates and surrounds these artists and athletes. Successive generations will see it, like it, and want it. They will then pursue that which they, most likely, will never attain. And another cycle continues, one that disproportionately has a negative effect on lower-income and black and brown communities.

These are the harsh realities of so many of us held down, held back, or just not allowed to move forward. There is often an “almost unseen force” that interferes with the ability of us to get ahead. It is very difficult to see but not quite invisible. Just like science has shown us, when it is difficult to define an entity, we observe and study the fields around the entity to help us understand it better.

One only has to focus on the results of our society, which is plagued by discrimination, to help better understand the problems that exist. They can be seen in the campaign that keeps us within the confines of our own poverty. They can be seen in the policy and procedure that routinely keeps schools and children’s programs underfunded. They can be seen in the curriculum that ensures students gradually become less aware of themselves and their history.

They can be seen in the dumbing down of our children. They can be seen in the housing covenants that quietly, discreetly prevent people of color from living anywhere they may

want to. This “influence” also guides pro athletes and artists to live outside of any normal means (even by their own definition).

This dynamic creates the environment where people will go to extreme efforts to have the things their favorite star has, just so they can claim that same success as their own. The reality is that most of these people don't achieve this but become poor trying to. They remain poor trying to. The lessons of chasing empty things are passed down to the younger generations and *the cycle of poverty continues*.

Athletes and artists contribute to this because many of them do not live through their divine self (their heart and their conscientious mind). Remember, they, too, were young and were influenced by those before them in the cycle. It is a cycle sustained by our Ghetto Lottery. We must care enough about our children and successive generations so that we may be strong enough to stop these vicious cycles from continuing.

IS IT WORTH THE INVESTMENT?

Becoming a professional athlete or artist is the dream come true for so many who have become fortunate enough to “make it.” It is a pinnacle that few get to see from the top. Life transforms and with it comes your own personal transformation. You and your life will become someone and something very different. It is truly an amazing experience to be cherished and taken advantage of, in the best ways possible, for the individual and their tribe. However, in doing so, those reaching this level should be mindful of the influence they have on others.

Unlike those who did not make it. What happened to them? They spent the same countless hours dedicated to practice,

always pushing past their limits to become better every day. They, too, spent so much resource in their pursuit of the same things. All of that money, time, and energy spent on something that will (for the most part) never be used again and cannot generate any income or meaningful value.

Years dedicated to the field or stage that could have been spent getting ahead in class and life. Years planning for a future that most likely won't happen, and eventually doesn't happen, that could have been spent planning on a successful education and financial future. All of the money spent on sport and theatre that did not yield in return (or very little) that could have been resources used to advance their own current position (economically, socially, etc.). Much of that resource could have been spent on individual awareness and personal growth—areas of substantial drought in our society.

Why shouldn't we want our children to follow this dream? Because it is usually a dead end! Often times, those roads are so narrow and long, by the time the child realizes it is a dead end, they are stuck on that path. They don't see the return route back to prosperity and success using their own ability and choice. And if and when they do, they are years or decades past when they should have realized it. It's never too late but those wasted years are gone. Yet another unfulfilled opportunity in one's lifetime.

They continue to mimic those who they see, in an attempt to capture that which continues to elude them. Children should realize that there are other paths with just as much ability and possibility to succeed as the narrow paths that leave them by the roadside. Teach children not to be wasteful in their actions, disciplines, and thoughts.

AMERICA'S RAPE CULTURE

Now we will discuss a topic in which we prefer to see our communities, as well as our athletes and artists, provide a better example and a more helpful approach. Here is where the conversation becomes a little more uncomfortable. Let's be crystal clear about a problem that exists in this country. America has a rape culture. It is attributed to many things, and its existence is undeniable. It is a cultural phenomenon that finds itself in most, if not all, male-controlled societies and industries on this planet. It is a learned behavior. It is passed on, both subtly and obviously through generations.

Most would say they do not support rape or sexual assault, and yet they do not take measures to make sure these things move closer to eradication in their lifetime. Just as it is learned, so too can it be unlearned. People who work in industries that are notorious for allowing this rape culture to exist should do more to shine the light and keep it firmly affixed on those who could and should do better.

Our favorite stars should be mindful of when their actions, behaviors, comments, and actual work and performances help promote and keep in place a misogynistic view of females in the world we live in. With that said, clearly, this is not only a sports and entertainment issue. Everyone should make it their business to eliminate this from our culture. You can file this one under:

HOW NOT TO RAISE A RAPIST OR SEXUAL PREDATOR

1. Teach him to love himself and others. Equally.
2. Teach him to respect others, always. Everyone has the right to live free of discrimination and violence.
3. Educate him. Explain to him what rape culture is. Give him examples of what it looks like in our culture. It is not only characterized by physical acts of violence against women and children. It is woven into stories of male superiority over others. Teach him to identify the subtle conversations and language (locker-room talk) that promote rape or sexual assault. Tell him it is not OK to rape or assault anyone, ever, for any reason. Tell him to conduct himself in this manner and to not condone this behavior, language, or imagery in his presence. Make sure he understands that a woman or child has the right to their body and self at all times. Never trespass on that fundamental right and help protect their space, if needed.
4. “Boys will be boys” is a justification for unconscionable behavior. Do not let them believe this saying, because it allows for that environment to exist and persist.

Just as important is what we teach girls and women about rape and sexual predation.

1. Teach her to not stand down or remain quiet if or when she experiences these behaviors, actions, or attitudes in her life. Teach her how to respond and rebut unwanted advances toward herself or others.

2. Teach her to fight back, physically and mentally. She must know how to defend herself as she, one day, may be her own last line of defense.
3. Teach her to become intolerant and no longer acquiesce. It is not her responsibility to absorb the pressures of an unjust society or their archaic, sexist, violent views or actions.
4. Teach her that she can be the difference. She must be aware at all times. As unfair as it may be, she has the responsibility to protect herself by being mindful of where she is, who is surrounding her, and most important, what she is wearing, drinking, and drugging. Yes, it is completely unfair to levy the responsibility of other people's actions on her, but society is not fair or just. Because of this, she must learn how to mitigate danger. She must be capable of recognizing when she is in harm's way, even if she is not the cause of the harm. Deploying tactics of self-protection and preservation are invaluable tools for her.

If all young boys and girls are taught this from their beginning years and through their childhood, we will see a dramatic reduction in these horrible instances and customs. Eventually, we will also see this all but vanish in the world we share. These things are not difficult to teach or understand. There only has to be a willingness to adopt a stance that acknowledges that *everyone has the right to exist free of discrimination and bias and harm*. Most people can understand that this approach has the ability to solve more than just our rape problem.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS: HOW WE VIEW THE WORLD AND HOW IT VIEWS US

The high prevalence of black-on-black crime, as it pertains to the law, is a bogeyman much like the idea of racism. We are told that black-on-black crime is the most violent and most occurring. Yet statistics from various law enforcement agencies that compile this data routinely tell us otherwise. Black-on-black crime is just as likely as white-on-white crime. In fact, some studies show that white-on-white crime numbers are slightly higher. Those same studies will also show that white-on-white crime is more violent.

To be fair and honest, you are able to find studies that say the exact opposite. This conversation is often times designed to “muddy the waters.” All too often we spend so much time on meaningless debate. It intentionally diverts our attention and energy from discussing and solving real problems. A true conversation is to say that crime is an issue. Who commits a crime against another is a matter of proximity. Most victims of crime know their perpetrators regardless of color. We need to see through the intentionally biased or irrelevant conversation that has become the standard approach to the topic.

Why do we hurt ourselves? Why do we hate ourselves? It is mostly because we continue defining ourselves by the definition of others. We wish ill upon each other. We desire that which we do not have and simultaneously wish others would not attain these things before we do. Why are our communities described as “crabs in a bucket”? Why do we hate each other with such

disregard and intentionally hold each other back? It saddens me to see us in this state.

We are confused, not knowing who we are, where we come from, what our purpose is, where we are going, and how to get there. Much of what we have accomplished in history has been stolen, destroyed, misappropriated, hidden, or altered. Our cultural information is always just out of reach, while so much has been rewritten and intentionally misrepresented. Today, much of it is no longer taught and is actively discouraged.

We are discouraged from seeking the truth or understanding our true place in the world we live in. We are encouraged to remain uneducated and poverty stricken. Systems and strategies are put in place to keep us there. We can see this worldwide.

Part of the difficulty is because we are using language and ideas that are totally offensive and demeaning to us. It is how the world describes us and how we describe ourselves to each other and our children. When we have been described historically, this is some of the language used:

Lazy. Violent. Dishonest. Inferior.
Stupid. Smells funny. Too dark. Scary.
Scariest when they are together. Physical specimens.
Athletic. Savages. Big lips. Bad hair. Poor.
Curvy. Promiscuous. Too many kids. Welfare.
Dirty. Ugly. Undeserving. Uncultured.
Illegal. Poverty stricken. Criminal. Dangerous.
Less sensitive to pain.

These are some of the many ways the world hates us and how we hate ourselves. They are a characterization and demonization that have been applied to us by racist, sexist bigots. These

are terms created by colonists who washed upon the shores of the world during the European expansion, always carrying out violence as their natural language.

The cruelty of colonists can be identified throughout their history of interactions with others who did not look like them. Many have suffered at the hands of these people that visited our lands and raped, murdered, and pillaged their way to power and control. While doing so, a system of white advantage and control was implemented.

Although this system is not always easy to recognize, it is visible when studying the fields and waves that surround it. It is best seen when observing its effect on others. Remember, just as science has taught us, when an entity may be difficult to be seen by itself, study how it reacts and its behavior with other things to get a better look at it.

We must stop defining ourselves by their language and their standards—those which have been placed upon us and those that we strive to attain and continue to use. Things that they desire for themselves are not necessarily the best things for us. We can see multiple examples of how some of those things are detrimental to their own communities; the pursuit of money above all things, synthetic drug use, getting into that frat house or sorority, going to college for the experience and not getting a degree that translates to high-earning careers and instead burdens them with that “infamous” college debt, western beauty ideals like straightened hair, lightened skin, and the unnecessary and often over-done cosmetic surgery. We have been defining ourselves with the language and ideas of a people who continually show contempt for our existence and continued pursuit of

equality, fairness, and justice. The obvious dilemma has become the contempt that we have grown toward each other.

Understanding the world we live in, how we are viewed in this world, and how we interpret that information is critical knowledge. There are many aspects that help to explain this. I will cover some of the more important points here, and they are not color bound.

- **Implicit Bias**—The unconscious stereotype, attitude, and attribution of particular qualities toward a certain social group. It is created by how we are taught at home and through society.
- **Confirmation Bias**—The tendency to find evidence that supports what we already believe. We search for information that reinforces what we believe, even if it isn't true.
- **Cognitive Dissonance**—Inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes in relation to the reality in which a person exists. This occurs when we recognize information and evidence that contradicts our existing beliefs.
- **Dunning-Kruger Effect**—When people believe they are smarter and more capable than they are. It is rooted in the illusion of superiority and authority. This affects those who are not capable of recognizing their own inability or incompetence.

These are some of the more critical ways in which we misunderstand ourselves and society. They are all cognitive approaches that shape the way we see the world and those in it. Compounding these things are two vital components:

1. **Illiteracy**—This is a lack of knowledge in a particular subject; ignorance. It is characterized by an inability or lack of reading, writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
2. **Misinformation**—False or inaccurate information that is deliberately intended to deceive. The media we digest intentionally clouds the conversation, making the truth harder to see.

Combined, these things create our inability to understand the many problems we face in our society. It shields us from seeing our culpability in creating these problems. To this I say:

Trust understanding. Abandon belief.

WILDLINGS OF THE SERENGHETTO

These wildlings are our children—all of them, but especially those who are not raised properly and are allowed to behave with complete disregard for public norms of decency. Eventually, these unruly children become unruly adults. It can be described as antisocial behavior. It looks like blaxploitation, as a culturally approved and accepted representation of who they are. Often times, it is marked by a disdain for authority and for a history of discrimination, which can still be felt. They take on identities like

Violence	Belligerence
Ignorance	Loud and Obnoxious
Misogyny	Misandry
Criminality	Angry Colored Person
Disrespect	Poor Behavior
Profanity	Illiteracy
Gang Culture	Lack of Culture
Homophobia(s)	Selfishness

Unfiltered and uncut, they are public displays of stupidity and criminality, poor conduct, lack of manner, and poor speech. They are the parts of the community that terrorize those within the community. They commit acts of random violence,

murder, sexual assault, petty crime, robberies, and unprovoked assaults of defenseless people. They are also guilty of acts that simply abandon cultural civility and basic decency. These are people from a community that have chosen to create hardship for their community.

They define themselves through destructive behaviors when they interact with the world around them. They are often the result of a poor upbringing and terrible example. Children do what they know and know what they are taught. If one is to look *upstream* from the wildling, they would see the parents and the socioeconomic condition that created this particular misfit. Coupled with this individual is the unfairness of society, the constant drum of bias and prejudice, and the pains of the ghetto. They breathe life into the wildling. Poor choices and continued negative cultural cycles keep them there. Remember, children mimic what they have seen. If they have witnessed countless negative reinforcements over time, they will eventually adopt those same negative behaviors and practices. Problematic children will become problematic adults.

Harrowing as it may seem, it is something easily dealt with. The answer is to *raise children better*. Teach them to not tolerate such behavior or actions. Tell them to never participate in these things and explain how it only serves to weaken one's family and community. They must be taught that certain behaviors and actions are simply not acceptable. Children will grow up and become the expectations that are set for them. They require constant work and effort.

It is one of the single greatest responsibilities a person can take on. Some people are just not capable. Do not become a parent if you are not ready to take care of someone for the next

twenty-plus years. This is not to say that the child is not a responsible adult in their later years, but to identify the needed help into one's young adulthood to ensure the better result endures. We need a stronger effort by parents to better themselves, their children, and their communities.

Let children know that investment into self is of utmost importance. Love, protect, heal, and educate yourself. Then learn how to share that with your community. These are tenets by which children are taught to do right, as opposed to becoming the type of person who terrorizes their own people. No one wants that.

Wildlings need to move past and no longer participate in activities and behaviors that are destructive or have long-term negative effects on their communities. They need to be more cognizant of who they are, how they affect their communities, and how they participate in keeping certain cycles in place. Being a child of color comes with a different rule book. It's best that children are taught these truths and understandings early, so as to navigate through life easier and more protected. As of late, "the Talk" is popular among parents and their children of color in reference to engagement with law enforcement. The reality is that there are many conversations that need to be addressed with our children. We are covering multiple throughout this discussion.

These conversations need to be had regularly with children. They are to be reinforced over time. The child who grows from these will nurture herself and the community. Honesty and a mature approach to these subjects at a young age is in the best interest of the child. If a parent is not ready or capable to have these conversations, then they should seek help from those

who are. Discussing these things with those who may be better versed will help us have these conversations with our children.

To the wildlings who are past school age . . . get your act together or don't. There comes a point in everyone's life where they take charge and responsibility for their life and choices. Those who do not want to do better and be better, I understand. There is nothing to be done with them. Allow them to age out. It only takes the course of one to two generations to remove that particular "disease" from a people as a whole. You don't want to change? No problem. I wish you well. Continue to live your life and do your thing. This reading is for those who do want change and are willing to put in the work. This is for those who want to create a better life for all of us over the course of the next few generations.

We will start to see a totally different type of child coming up in our communities—no longer ghettos because we are going to redefine that. Remember, we are going to stop defining ourselves by the definitions of others. We are going to see young black and brown children getting along and successfully navigating the world they live in. Remember, we do not own the world we live in. We are simply borrowing it and caring for it until we have to pass it along to younger generations. With a concentrated effort, by the time we turn it over, we will have filled it with a wonderful bunch of young people who will be capable of caring for themselves and the world we live in.

We share in the responsibility for creating the wildlings of our Serenghetto, and we have to change some of the current outcomes. Why do we hurt ourselves? Why do we hate ourselves? It is because we have been *taught* to hate ourselves and others who look like us. These are things that we acquired

through social training. And just like we are taught, so too can the opposite can be taught. We need to stop being a source of our own enemy. Our real enemy is enough all by itself.

We do not have to aid and abet that which is already against us. A better educated and prepared child would create an immediate reduction in the falling apart of our communities. Communities would strengthen as two sides converge—fewer children engaging in these types of negative behaviors and more children becoming better human beings from a younger age.

Self-inflicted wounds can be remedied with a concentrated effort by the offending party. Systemic injury, however, is not so easily dealt with. Black and brown children face a significantly different existence and they should be aware. They have to navigate policy and procedures that are put in place and kept in place by antiquated laws, rules, and mindsets. One of the more sinister aspects is the criminalization of black youth. This also extends itself to many children of color.

Law enforcement views BIPOC children older than they really are (adultification). This allows for children to be man-handled and processed the same way an adult might be. Often this is overlooked as no big deal, easily dismissed or not even addressed. But for the child this is undeniably traumatic. This experience shapes their understanding of the world and their position in it.

An innocence is taken in these moments. There exists a culture of bias and prejudice against communities of color in many police departments. Ultimately, the overpolicing and aggressive tactics used in communities of color target children and lead to an early introduction to the criminal justice system. Often,

incidents that occur during adolescence in black and brown communities are heavily prosecuted at the outset. Meanwhile, these same acts of “youthful indiscretion” are being leniently and mercifully adjudicated in white communities. There is an overwhelming abundance of these inequities.

Schools have also proven themselves to *not* be a protective space for children of color. In fact, quite the opposite exists. The disparity in discipline is easily seen and has been long discussed and documented. Black and brown children go to school and fall victim to overaggressive disciplinary practices and biased educators and faculty.

Discipline, suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates are higher in schools that serve communities of color and for BIPOC children going to school in white districts. Recent incidents and reports show that the targeting of black and brown girls, for disciplinary action, is on the rise, perhaps more than any other group in elementary, secondary, and tertiary education. They are suspended at rates six times greater than their white peers for the same behaviors. Black and brown girls are now arrested at the age of six for throwing tantrums in school, being strip-searched in elementary school while giggling uncontrollably, and arrested in college while napping in common areas. This is not a matter of false pretense or accusation; it is simply a matter of being black or brown, which is a crime unto itself in this country. Couple this with the rise in sexual assaults of young girls

Girls of color are among the fastest growing numbers in the juvenile corrections system over the last 20 years.

of color, and you can easily see a group that is in desperate need of our protection.

Young girls of color are victimized by those who feel they can get away with it because the physical or sexual violence being committed is against a group that most people don't believe, if and when accusations are made. They are also victimized by the criminal justice system, as many of these young girls (minors) are tried as adults in the court of law.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS WE KNOW:

- Early contact with law enforcement leads to a likelihood of repeated contact later in life.
- Juvenile incarceration creates a likelihood of adult incarceration.
- Schools are using law enforcement on their campuses more abundantly.
- Schools are deferring to law enforcement to discipline children.
- The criminalization of black youth now occurs in school and the community. This leaves very little safe space for children of color.
- The school-to-prison pipeline is created due to these circumstances. For-profit prison structures and alliances are among the greatest benefactors of this dynamic. America is in the business of incarcerating people of color. And business is very, very good.

- BIPOC adopt policies that are initially offered as positive ways to make their communities safer. However, these policies often result in punishing, in excess, members of their own community, ultimately having a negative effect. Supporting the war on drugs led to harsher sentencing for communities of color. Supporting zero-tolerance policies has led to the higher discipline rates for children of color. Supporting the placement of student resource officers (SROs) in schools has led to an increase in black and brown children being over-disciplined and a greater likelihood of contact with law enforcement.
- Punishment is America's preference. However, rarely does it *solve* the problem. When we stand in agreement with this approach, we sometimes find ourselves as part of the problem instead of the solution.

Young people must be aware that they will have to navigate many obstacles. Pressures that are imposed upon them have to be endured. Pressures that are imposed by them should be reassessed and a different approach taken. If you have the ability to better your life by alleviating a self-inflicted obstacle, you should do so. Do not be the cause of your own pain and suffering. This is most obvious when observing that which you consume: your Food and Drink.

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES FOR US AND THE PLANET

Health and behavior are very much a function of what we consume and how we take care of ourselves. Looking at the

history of where that fails us across our communities, we can identify some of the areas that let us know that we are in distress. Things like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity are some of the symptoms related to the serious problem of poor nutrition and poor eating behaviors in our communities. This is so often coupled with a lack of exercise. Today, we can add heredity to those problems, but not in conventional terms. More so than genes, the heredity of bad eating and lifestyle habits is what plagues so many.

At astonishing rates, younger people are being diagnosed with disease and disorder that, not so long ago, would generally affect one's health in older age. It is seen more often because of the heavily salted and sugared food and beverage and a serious lack of education of proper consumption habits that are shared with children.

Ultimately, much of what they consume are look-alike and feel-alike products. Heavily processed, these are things that are advertised as food and beverage, but really are a molested version of the real thing. Many processed food and drink fit into this category. They are often bad for the body and bad for the mind.

The chronic disease and disorders we see today are overwhelmingly attributed to poor lifestyle and eating habits. Even when a genetic disposition is present, it is well understood that one has the potential to overcome that by eating healthier, getting enough sleep, exercising, expressing a positive outlook on life, and surrounding yourself with a strong support network—this is best understood through the study of epigenetics.

The environment we are surrounded by and the one we create have the ability to alter our gene expression. It is a direct

result of our actions and behaviors as to whether that expression is positive or negative.

We should be eating healthy and living happy. These things are not at odds with each other. There is nothing wrong with eating well—just don't overindulge. Gluttony is America's inheritance. How we eat is just as important as what we eat. Smaller and healthier portions are actually a good thing. Embrace it. We are responsible to better ourselves with the more knowledge that we acquire. *The problem of knowing is the problem of doing.* And that is a good problem to have. Caring for the health of ourselves and our community is always a good thing. Doing this responsibly, we can better ourselves and have a positive impact on the world stage.

We are already in the midst of one of the next great revolutions—plant-based living, vegetarianism, and veganism. The growing support for alternatives to meat culture can already be seen in the United States and on the global level. It will help evolve the world to a more sustainable model that no longer chooses to eat living beings while allowing fellow human beings to live with food scarcity.

This movement will help to heal the pain of animals sacrificed for human consumption. It will help to heal the effects of deforestation across our planet, done to create pasture and housing for these animals. It will help to reduce the unbelievably wasteful practice of

Conservative examples tell us that 1800 gallons of water and 10 pounds of grain are required to produce 1 pound of beef in the United States. This is the unsustainable truth.

using the very large amounts of water and food required to feed the animals that are feeding the humans. Movement toward veganism and vegetarianism will reduce greenhouse gas created by the animal agriculture industry, which is greater than the greenhouse gas created from the transportation industry, globally. Animal agriculture is among the largest contributors to human-made air, land, and water pollution, all of which tie onto our next problem.

Climate change—another inaccurate conversation (climate pollution is more accurate)—cannot be solved by electric vehicles, renewable energy, and reusable water bottles alone. One-off actions are not enough to reduce the impact on a polluted planet. Each one of us has the ability to reduce our environmental footprint. Each one of us has the responsibility to leave this earth healthier for future generations. That responsibility relies on our choices of how we consume and conserve energy, water, and food. Nothing says, “I want change and am willing to create it” more than adopting a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle.

The fastest way to address climate pollution is to reduce meat and dairy consumption because of its effect on the animal agriculture industry. This lifestyle change is the single most effective way to reduce your impact on the earth (aside from deciding to not have children, but that is a conversation for a different time). That includes greenhouse gases, global eutrophication, acidification (land, water, and air), CO₂ footprint, land use, water use, and so many other ways that man-made pollution and extremely wasteful practices continue to have a negative effect on the planet. Reducing all of these things will help address the climate crisis that we continue to discuss incorrectly.

Ultimately, a healthy, plant-based diet will help to reduce the risks associated with heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stroke, cancer, and so many other chronic diseases and disorders that negatively impact human life. These movements are a tremendous win for the environment and our health. The planet will heal as we see the convergence of two sides: creating healthier human beings and contributing less to the pollution that is causing our climate crisis.

A plant-based economy is evolving and with it an existence where animals are no longer required for food, clothing, or entertainment. It is a movement of caring. It is caring for the health and well-being of ourselves, our animal neighbors, and the planet. It is through movements like this, that people will find their connection back to the natural world. Currently, we behave as if we own it. That is, until the natural world becomes irritated enough and flares up in the form of a hurricane, drought, tsunami, flood, wildfire, or some other natural disaster that is *egged on* by our indifference or intentional behavior. This commitment of caring is something that must be taught. Wildlings must be taught better. They should understand that their well-being should not come at the expense of others.

Many have been failed by their parents and the adults who surround them. They have been allowed to grow up following poor examples, surrounded by conditions of austerity and poverty of varying degrees. This leads to the wildling not being able to grow out of the conditions they are born into. Let's address wealth as one of the problems facing wildlings. Wealth is not determined by what you do or how hard you work. Wealth is about the position you are born into. So many families have not been able to secure wealth for themselves. As a result, their

children are born into impoverished or less-affluent conditions. These families do not know how to achieve certain levels of success and, like so many often-inheritable diseases and disorders, they pass this defect down to their children.

Wealth is an indicator of economic security and well-being. It allows for the ability to

- Cover daily expenses without worry or delay.
- Finance education.
- Access capital to start a business or investment.
- Finance better medical coverage and treatment.
- Purchase better homes in better neighborhoods.
- Contribute to making your neighborhood or community better.
- Exert political influence.
- Attain better legal counsel.
- Withstand financial hardship due to emergency.

Wealth is just one example of what is lacking in BIPOC communities. Lack of wealth has profound impact that will affect the wildling in a negative manner.

This in no way dismisses the fact that systemic obstacles remain in place that make advancement and growth difficult. This also does not align with the false narrative of “poor choices” creating the inequalities that remain in place. The results of inequality and bigotry should never be used as reason to continue to keep inequality and bigotry in place. America’s default choice of “racist white man” ensures systemic

obstacles endure. Poor choices committed by people of color just make it easier for us to stay in the same place or make incremental advancement.

Today, however, there exists a sentiment of refusal amongst our young people. They recognize many of the things that have a negative effect on them and the world around them. They are angry and want it to stop. They protest at colleges and high schools. They have taken to social media to announce to the world that they are against these things. They are walking out of schools and protesting in the street demanding accountability for the environment. They are engaging the larger public about issues like gun control and police brutality. They are angry and want to be heard. To these young people I say, you are seen, and you will not be ignored. You are angry and your anger is justified.

Grass roots protests at the college and high school level are vital to create the change you so desire. Remember that you are the next great voting mass. Stay connected and aligned with your current positions. For many of you, they are based on an honest and unbiased understanding of what is right, just, and equal. Remain vigilant to not adopt the stances that align with selective advantage. As you decide the fate of those who you would cast vote upon, remember to get rid of those who do not align with your interests. Get rid of those who prefer to maintain the imbalances which exist in our society.

Find ways to support those who support you. Do not support those who routinely keep in place the pain and suffering that so many are affected by. Any and all of our next Great Revolutions require you to move forward. We are in a time where the old vanguard is dying out. Some changes can

already be seen and felt, like the election of young BIPOC to congress, movements of accountability, and erasing the lines of racism. You are not alone. The elders who came before you are a wealth of information and guidance. Look to them to help steer you in the right directions and help avoid some of the pitfalls. Our wildlings are not just rage. They need focus and direction. They need to know they are supported. They are a tremendous force that will help to right the many wrongs of our past and present.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS: RELIGION IS SEPARATION IDEOLOGY

In keeping with diseases that affect us and plague us within our communities, there is a sickness of the mind which we also have to discuss. It is the ideology of religion. Specifically, the dividing lines of religion. Religion is a problem because it is the manmade separation of one group of people from another. Historically, it is very easy to see religion as a form of power consumption. While that is very useful for a few, it is catastrophic for the many. Your spirituality and your understanding of your emotional connection are a beautiful thing. Keep them close and grow from them. Your religion, however, should be kept at arm's length.

Religion can be a very incestuous thing. This one begat that one, and yet all are cut from the same cloth. Of the majors, each one of the religions is related closely. Christianity is the bastard stepchild of Judaism. Islam is the disowned

step-brother of Christianity. Collaboratively, they all come from each other and use many of the same texts and stories to define their individual religions. Their tailored scripts and defining practices create division and categorizes people by the millions and billions. Religion separates people and aims to keep the divide growing.

Over the course of time, religions have amassed huge numbers. Throughout their history, they have pitted one side against the other. It has often resulted in war and bloodshed. Other times it can be a simple acknowledgement that we are here together, but we are not the same. In reality, they are opposite sides of the same conversation. *Religion is the greatest civil war humanity has ever seen.*

The question or assertion that “my God” is more important and powerful than “your God” is absurd at best. It is intentionally deceiving at worst. This is one of the stronger reasons there is a unity problem. People can never be as close as they should be if they allow religion to fill their minds. I say “minds” because religion is an ideology. Why should I want to separate myself from any of my brothers and sisters? We are born to this world exactly the same: vulnerable, needing the love of others to help nurture us so we can grow. Maintaining this understanding serves the best interests of everyone. Unfortunately, at some point we are indoctrinated into some form of religion or discipline that can be summed up as ideologies of separation. From there we grow apart.

If you need religion to be a better person, then you may want to reconsider your approach to religion. A deeper look inside of yourself will eventually reveal an awesome power and ability. You would eventually recognize your connection to everything

and everyone around you. And you would be overcome with appreciation and respect for all things. You certainly do not need religion to come to these understandings.

Going to church doesn't
make you a good person.
Just like not going to
church doesn't make you
a bad person either.

However, I would never come between a person and their religion because I understand that it may be part of the very foundation of some people. To unsettle or disturb the foundation of anything can be dangerous. It can prove even more dangerous for the individual. Their world may collapse with their falling ideology as religion is a defining characteristic for many. Much care and patience should be given to those who are the most influenced—the devout believers.

Ultimately, there really is no need for religion. It is something that could or should be abandoned. However, your spirituality and your understanding of the world you live in and what you are connected to, as well as knowing and practicing what is right instead of what is wrong, are highly recommended. Your relationship to the earth, which has given birth to all the living beings on it, is something to be nurtured and cultivated and respected. As human beings we have the ability to recognize that, where religion doesn't necessarily care about it. Religion cares about identifying its own faith, its own history, and jacking up the numbers. Religion as a whole has had a very negative effect on human history. I'm talking about in

terms of violence and death, slavery, war, and the mistreatment of women and children. Look at religion across the world and observe how much violence and death has been committed in its name, its creation, and in its continuation. We still see that happening today.

Individually, we all want peace and equality. Individually, we all want the world to be a better place. When peace and equality are in contradiction to that which your religion wants, then maybe religion is not a good thing and you shouldn't want it. Religion is a problem. Religion isn't looking to bind everyone. It's just looking to bind those who follow a particular doctrine.

UNJUSTIFIED

This one word can easily describe the treatment of black and brown people in the United States. The list of things biased and prejudiced is long and wide: schools (particularly in matters of discipline and lack of resources), housing, politics, overpolicing, unfair treatment and use of lethal force by law enforcement, racial bias and discrimination, health, bank lending bias, employment, environmental discrimination, incarceration, and more. We could spend hours talking about the many ways colored existence and their poor treatment is unjustified.

That is our experience here, as a culture, across the board. Being a person of color in the United States is reason enough for most probable cause. Even class and wealth distinction will not provide 100 percent immunity from the pain of discrimination. Those who have and those who do not have are viewed through the same racist lens that views all of society. White nationalism, white supremacy, and the structures in place to ensure white privilege are at the heart of the matter. There is very little safe space for black, indigenous, and people of color where they are not inhibited by this plague. And just like all other plagues brought to this country by European expansion, it only requires cleaning up (mental hygiene) by the offending

party to eliminate the problem. Just clean yourselves up. After all, it is your disease.

We are baited, charged, abused, jailed, and killed on a regular basis throughout the history of the United States. This is not just “old news,” as these incidents can still be seen. Violence and discrimination are part of a long, historic thread that has remained intact and is easily visible today across many areas. That sentiment is just as true throughout the world. It is often dressed in different garb and goes by many names, but the true nature of bigotry and prejudice continue to exist throughout history and our society. In recent years, “far right” and “right wing” have become synonymous with regimes and groups that lean toward bias and prejudice, which allows an environment where violence against others can take place. These countries, whose body politic and supporting groups identify as such, are realizing an uptick in hostility toward groups historically deemed non-desirable—mainly women and people of color.

That level of pressure, violence, unkindness, and unfairness is completely unjustified. Yet that is our experience from the beginning of this country, throughout its growth, and into our current existence. This is not to say progress has not been made.

The Global Terrorism Database reports that there were 350 white extremist terrorist attacks in Europe, North America, and Australia between 2011 and 2017.

In the United States, these incidents started to climb with the election of Barack Obama and surged during the ensuing presidency.

However, after more than five hundred years on this land and in this country, white America still cannot put aside their bias and fear to live in harmony with those whom they have attempted to genocide, enslave, and imprison.

After five hundred years, white America remains divided among itself. There are those who recognize the truth of their immigrant story and the overwhelming cruelty of their racism and bigotry as a cornerstone of their historic advantage. Many of them are on board with making amends for creating a long-standing history of disadvantage for others. Then there are those who recognize that same history and yet prefer that disadvantage to remain. Their benefit is more important. This divide is killing us and to white America, I say, “You are the only ones who can do something about it. *Only you have the ability to clean up your own house.*” The ideology of racism and a well-designed system to enforce it are as American as apple pie, misappropriation, theft, and attempted eradication (literal, social, economic, mass incarceration).

Lately, it is the spate of racially charged murders perpetrated by law enforcement against people of color. It is the increasing calls to 911 because people of color are in public, in areas that Americans feel should be “whites only”—you know, like back when “America was Great Again.” That campaign slogan has always rung strange to me since I first heard it. Please point to a time in America’s history when it was “Great Again,” and I will then redirect your heartfelt, reminiscent stare to the ongoing atrocities and the exploitation of that specific time for black and brown people, which allowed white Americans to feel great about themselves.

Certain Americans want to go back to a time when America felt like it was a giant on top of the world, without realizing or addressing the tremendous level of unfairness that existed for it to feel that way. They felt so high above others because they were standing on the hopes, dreams, happiness, and the bodies of those they deemed inferior and unworthy.

What is the source of this continued and consistent mistreatment? *White fear*. There is a dirty, little, secret fear that exists in the mind of White America:

“As we grow equal, I grow less.”

Now, of course this does not pervade the minds of all white people. It’s really a concept for those who prefer the politics of separation. They use the fear of being outnumbered or overpowered to strengthen and converse with like minds. There is a fear of losing one’s position in the America their forefathers built. And this fear is legitimate.

America will be a non-white majority within many of their lifetimes and this scares them. Texas will have a non-white majority in just a few years. With that comes a flood of emotional fears and responses. Here is where it is so critical to remember that the responses we see are rooted in insecurity and fear. Intimidation, assault, and mass shootings are the language of these weak-minded cowards who call themselves patriots and nationalists. They are willing to kill or maim citizens of their own country during acts that, they claim, stem from the love of their country. It is during these insane gestures that we get a glimpse of the mental disease called racism.

How does one protect white losses? Make whiteness a zero-sum game—us or them. Gains for people of color are losses for

whites. It is with this mindset one can create the need to protect oneself or what one deems as belonging to them. It is in this environment that groups like the KKK were born—defenders of white America. Looking through the history of the United States, one can easily see the incremental growth of the Klan over the years to the exponential growth of more “sophisticated” hate groups that currently litter the American landscape.

We can see the use of racial and religious bigotry as a common ideological foundation in any time period. Today’s groups seem to focus on a renewed white identity and purpose. However, it is their newfound international brotherhood and kinship that is proving to be most dangerous. Acts of domestic and international terrorism linked to white extremism, white nationalist, white supremacist, or white international groups are on the rise again . . . sounds oddly familiar. Unfortunately, in America we are not able to hold them truly accountable and call them for what they are: domestic terrorists. Domestic terrorism is not even on the books as a crime to be charged. The American government, judicial system, and law enforcement entities are responsible for that travesty of justice.

It is fear that causes them to be more savage and violent than most groups in the history of mankind. Their fear is what causes their violence and greed. Fear of not having. Fear of being poor or disenfranchised. Fear of retribution for past atrocities and present maintenance of discriminatory environments. Fear of *becoming extinct*. Fears are what drive them. They are a fear-based people. They ratchet up their own fear and then place punishment on others to help settle it.

Historically, they were met with kindness at many of the shores they landed upon and yet still managed to massacre most

people they encountered. What drives this type of fear? Hate and a misguided sense of self-preservation. White hate is the tool used to help harness that tremendous negative energy and direct it into movements of support or opposition for their favor.

Here in America, their favor is better known through their construct of racism, which is kept in place by white privilege. The whole point of it all, is the system of advantage that allows white America to feel Great Again, or, at the very least, better than those around them. If we are to look at some of the more stressing issues in the United States, we would find housing, wealth, health, education, employment, and mass incarceration to be highly segregated. This is not just “old news,” but a reality of the country today. *When America is left alone, it reverts back to its automatic default: racist white man.*

This is the viewpoint and source of direction for America when left to its own devices. It is one of the reasons that the country has once again moved toward segregation and in many instances never left it. To understand this is to understand why programs like affirmative action were put in place to begin with. It is a measure that white America had to put in place to police itself. Today we can see they are tired of holding themselves accountable, which is why we see attempts to walk these measures back. Discrimination and power over others are their preference.

We do not only see this in terms of racial discrimination. We also see this same dynamic playing out in regard to women’s rights and equality. Today, specifically, we see that same discrimination against a woman’s right to her body and America’s attempts to undo *Roe v. Wade*. Here, again we see the continued assault against women. How dare she want to control her

own life and body. No one has the ability to tell a woman what to do better than white men. And to be more specific, no one has more authority than religious men when making these decisions. After all, when they speak, they are doing “God’s work” to heal this country and make it a better place. As with most cases of discrimination and bias, we can identify two consistent factors: men and religion.

MASS INCARCERATION

We now live in a time where POCs are being mass incarcerated at unbelievable rates. For-profit prisons and detention centers have guaranteed the alignment of the prison industrial complex and their mandate to fill beds with the federal, state, and local law

enforcement and judicial resources.

Mandates for these private correctional facilities and detention centers acknowledge that crime rates and sentencing patterns are vital to their growth. As such, their lobby impedes decriminalization and leniency in convictions and parole standards. Our governments, state and federal, work to ensure these facilities keep their occupancy full. This is where police, prosecutors, judges, and politicians all get on the same

page. In most legal jurisdictions, this would be considered gang assault. As the systems of racism, white privilege, and white

Since 2000, the for-profit prison population has grown five times faster than the total prison population.

Private immigration facilities rose by over 400 percent.

advantage are kept in place, they also create and maintain the system of chronic disadvantage for POCs.

Remember, you cannot have advantage for some without disadvantage for others. This can be seen most easily and accurately when observing the policies, procedures, and results of activity between law enforcement and communities of color.

HIDING BEHIND THE SHIELD

- There is a culture of racism in blue; it is a long-standing culture of bias and bigotry in law enforcement.
- Policing was shaped by slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow, and that influence can still be seen today.
- There is a consistent and aggressive approach overpolicing BIPOC communities. Police use a very different approach to policing white communities.
- The blue wall of silence protects those who are guilty of a crime or misconduct. There are bad cops who commit the crimes, but what do you call those who remain complicit with their silence? Are they the good ones?
- There is a culture of retaliation against police officers who have spoken out against members of law enforcement who are guilty of crime or misconduct. This is well documented, and any officer who has spoken up can attest to this reality.
- Current approach: If you do not do as I say, then you are a threat.

- Current approach: I am here to enforce and lock people up.
- Current approach: Police them and protect us.
- During 1960–1980s, federal money was funneled into local law enforcement to create police practices that would yield positive results for expanding the prison industrial complex by targeting black people and other POC in urban communities. This approach has led to the mass incarceration we are witnessing in our lifetime. These policies are still in effect.
- Over a billion dollars have been paid out as a result of civil payouts related to bad policing—paid for by tax payers. The public should not have to pay for the bias and bigotry of law enforcement officials.
- Innocent people are arrested and jailed far too often. Black and brown communities carry the brunt of this burden. Various innocence projects shine a light on this reality. Law enforcement does this because they can, and only when the curtain is pulled back can we see that no one is holding them accountable.

Some of the earliest police groups in America were slave-catching units. That is not a far cry from what they are doing today.

There is a strained relationship between communities of color and law enforcement. A real mistrust is at the center of the rift. The structural racism that exists in so many areas of this country can also be seen firmly rooted in America's police departments. It is this underlying theme that helps to influence the ways in which police engage the

communities that they work in. Combine that official approach with the implicit bias that individuals adopt over their lifetime, and one can see how easy it is for an officer to initiate and escalate police contact with black and brown people. Add racially segregated neighborhoods to that, and the likelihood of unarmed shootings of black and brown people, use of force incidents, and unnecessary interactions increase.

The conversation about “rogue cops” and “bad apples” is a deceitful one. Even though it is true that there are individual “bad players,” the real problem is the many other officers who do not say anything about the existence of bias and prejudice that they themselves do not agree with. They stand alongside their guilty partners and fellow officers and allow their silence to agree with that which remains so unfair. All too often, an officer finds him/herself in the spotlight of overaggressive policing. Meanwhile, the surrounding officers are ushered away from absorbing the responsibility of having allowed the unlawful, illegal, or discriminatory act to take place in their presence. On rare occasion the offending officer is charged and sometimes convicted. However, their partner and other observing officers who stood by and didn’t stop or curtail the action of the offending officer are rarely ever held accountable. And when they are, it usually results in a slap on the wrist and empty words about sensitivity training.

When known offenders are allowed to remain within police ranks, it is easy to see how that individual and their behavior become more commonplace and accepted by those around them. This is the culture of many police departments across the country. The only way to fix this problem is from within and top-down. The policies, procedures, and attitudes

stem from the highest-ranking officials in charge. They have the ability to eliminate these problems, and yet each and every one of them has failed to do so. So after more than one hundred years of service to our communities, the problems they continue to have with POC communities are the problems they want to have. We suffer because they refuse to get over their bigotry and bias. Overwhelmingly, there are two types of law enforcement officers: those who are the problem (the bad ones) and those who are willing to look the other way (the other bad ones).

This brings us to the very much needed *video revolution*. Already underway, we know and understand the imperative to record all encounters with law enforcement. All too often, the account of law enforcement is found to be inaccurate or even a complete fabrication when placed upon the backdrop of bystander video. Accusations of misconduct are usually she/he said versus what the police said. The criminal justice system will side with a version from law enforcement ten out of ten times unless there is evidence to contradict the stance. And even then, they still might defer to the police narrative.

Citizen/bystander videos have revealed that members of law enforcement have lied and attempted to cover up misconduct or criminal actions while performing their duties. Videos have shown attempts by law enforcement to wrongfully arrest, injure, and murder black, indigenous, and people of color because they thought their version of what happened would be uncontested. It is through these videos that justice can actually be attained, even when misconduct, intimidation, or collusion by police, prosecutors, and judges are being implemented. Please remember, your video may save the life of someone or

prevent a crime from being hidden. Your video can contradict obvious false statements made by law enforcement officials.

Although police are employing dash cams and body cams at higher rates across the country, that information can be manipulated, interpreted, and disclosed at the convenience and advantage of law enforcement and the criminal justice system. The reality is that even though more officers are being outfitted, not all police departments have cameras for all of their personnel, and not all departments are enforcing the absolute need to use them. Citizen footage can make all the difference when law enforcement conspires to protect themselves.

An added benefit to the video revolution is that people are more likely to be on their best behavior when they know cameras are rolling—the police and members of the community alike. We know that use-of-force incidents are on the decline since dash cams, body cams, and citizen footage are on the rise. When people know they are being watched, they tend to not break the law or commit misconduct. The other lesson to recognize is that the inverse relationship existed before law enforcement was forced to be more transparent. If these incidents are on the decline now that they are reported via technology, then they must have taken place at a higher occurrence when there was no threat of being held accountable. This only acknowledges what so many of us know already: the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color has always been contentious, and a different handbook is applied to how we are treated. It is no longer her/his word versus the police word anymore. There is also the unbiased evidence of the bystander video that will help maintain justice. With that said, video evidence will not always help provide justice against an unjust system, but it

will always remain a record of the growing disparity between the official police version and the truth of certain matters.

Citizen video will often capture official misconduct and the willful acceptance of that misconduct by other observing members of law enforcement on site. Remember, the “bad apple” is not just the one committing the act. Those who stand by and watch are also guilty of creating and allowing that unaccountable and unacceptable environment to exist where their team member would commit misconduct or a crime. We have seen countless times where bystander video is the only evidence of police misconduct and the ensuing effort to cover it up.

How many times do you have to catch a liar before you stop giving them the benefit of the doubt? We continue to observe law enforcement operate with a reckless disregard for the rights and well-being of BIPOC communities. They should not and cannot be trusted to discipline themselves or be completely honest with the public. This is why we remain vigilant. This is why we must continue to protect ourselves and each other.

To be clear, video of all police encounters is a win/win situation. They also protect officers from false accusations and protect the public from police misconduct, criminality, or cover up. Most video evidence has gone on to acquit members of law enforcement of incorrect accusations, disproving misconduct, excessive force, or criminality.

As the video revolution continues, it is important to recognize certain measures of protection that should be implemented should you decide to record law enforcement, as with most things that may put you in danger:

- *Know your rights.* The First Amendment allows you to record while you and others are in public. But be aware that not all states have the same rules governing the recording of law enforcement while they are on duty. Do your research for the state you are in.
- Always have your phone locked with a password or code. Never share that password/code information with law enforcement.
- Use an app that allows for immediate video streaming, sharing, and/or saving offsite. Police have been known to damage or destroy devices that have evidence that may refute their official version of a story.
- Record all encounters in an obvious manner. Don't try to hide it. Be ready to turn off your phone if they attempt to confiscate it. With your password/code enabled, they are not able to access the evidence.
- Do not share the video with law enforcement. Do not willingly give them access to your phone under any circumstances.
- Be prepared to be arrested. Civic duty and civil disobedience are required when attempting to correct or hold accountable the unjust. Keep calm. State that you will comply but will do so under protest. *Do not physically resist.* You have the right to remain silent and to an attorney. You should always exercise these rights if being arrested or detained for recording police in public. Remember, many police do not know the laws they are charged to enforce. Many of them are

only doing what their supervisor or training officer has instructed them to do.

- *Do not get in the way of them performing their job.* Record incidents from a safe distance. Do not interfere. Do not engage law enforcement. Allow them to do their job. Do not create a threatening situation by menacing them.
- Contact legal representation if recording law enforcement escalates into arrest, detention, or appearance ticket. If you have become part of the incident you were recording, do not upload the video to public space without first consulting legal advice. It could have implications on the ability of the video to be used to protect yourself or someone else in the court of law.

With that said, do not allow this to create a space where all police officers are branded as bad. Instead, use this to help identify the real solution. Reminders from outsiders are always nice and helpful, but *one can only clean their house from within.* Problems that exist within law enforcement must be addressed and resolved by law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and any mechanism set in place to provide oversight. Outside observation and complaint via mechanisms like a citizen review board are absolutely necessary but can only help to recognize the problem or provide insight to possible resolution. The actual work of fixing and resolving the issue(s) must come from within.

Blue culture needs to extract the undesirable racial elements that exist within its own rank and file. Do not allow it to exist. *If an officer breaks their oath, then they should no longer be an officer.* That part is pretty simple, and yet so many of those “bad apples” are allowed to remain. If you do not fix that which is

broken in your own house, then those of us who are watching can determine that you do not care enough or do not have the will to create that change. I am not interested in what you say. I only care about what you do.

Interactions between communities of color and law enforcement should be healthy and supportive of one another. We are not far from that now, some places more than others, and it is something that can be attained to a greater degree everywhere. This relationship should be used to strengthen and help make beautiful and make safe neighborhoods across America; safe for those policing and, more importantly, for those living in these communities.

There exists a sentiment where the lives of officers are held in a higher regard than the communities they work in. I would like to remind you, an officer is an “oath taker.” Law enforcement is not just some job, like a cashier or custodian. Their duty is performed for the benefit of others. This is not to say that blue lives do not matter. It is to clarify that blue lives are to be given up for the betterment and safety of others, if need be. Blue safety is not paramount to civilian safety.

If this is offensive to you, then do not become a police officer. Remember, police officers sign a social contract that states they may not come home from duty. No citizen of any community has ever had to sign such a document. As such, their right to go home supersedes that of the oath taker. This is similar to the oath taken by military personnel. In the same way, if you are not ready, willing, or able to possibly lay down your life for your country (or for law enforcement, for your community), do not enlist.

We live in a world where truth has taken a back seat to alternative facts and fake news. Information is intentionally ambiguous, misleading, or false. Alternative facts and fake news are the collection of misinformation, disinformation, and propagandized information on any particular subject. A fact is a truth—something known or proven to be true. The alternate of a fact is a lie—a falsehood or derivation thereof. For the purposes of this reading, alternative facts are used in dog-whistle politics, tropes, and other coded language that allows for a perverted white understanding of people of color as well as their own “perceived” place in the world. Their rhetoric tends to downplay acts of domestic terrorism, racism, bias, and bigotry. They play on themes like “Things are not as bad as they seem,” or “Slavery is a thing of the past.”

At face value, these statements have some truth. But pressed up against the backdrop of America’s history through its present racial bias and continued resentment are still very much alive. White America would hope that these things could stay in the past, but until resolved, they will continue to rear their head and to be a source of pain for this country. We must have a real and honest conversation, followed up by acts of remediation to help reconcile the pain and suffering of old and those that continue to exist today. Reparations are only a part of that solution—a very necessary part of it.

Alternative facts and fake news have led to conflicting ideas to exist in the mind. A cognitive dissonance that says things are OK and getting better, while simultaneously recognizing acts of harassment are becoming the norm and racism is not a thing of the past. White America is enriched by its strong immigrant history, yet it does not want to continue that history if it means

that immigrant POC will benefit too. White America needs better healthcare and unobstructed access to it, but not if that means people of color will also get it. Remember, whiteness is zero sum. In their minds, when losses are perceived, it can lead to the manifestation of physical and mental ailments.

Here is where the emotional and physical toll of whiteness becomes visible. American medicine professionals are witnessing an increased number of white Americans who are showing signs that diseases and disorders are getting worse due to the stress of maintaining social structures they want to keep in place. *Dying of Whiteness*, by Jonathan Metzl, describes how certain segments of white America feel the tension as it builds up from the need to protect oneself physically and to protect one's place in a social hierarchy.

The role of safeguarding white privilege and advantage takes its toll over time. So many suffer in silence as the pressure of ensuring this advantage for future generations leads them to discover or, more likely, admit that the broken American dream is central to so many who feel hopeless. The embarrassment of not being able to succeed in a system that was designed for you and maintained by you is often too much.

If you can't make it here, then perhaps you don't deserve to make it anywhere. Hard work and determination should be enough to rise to the top of a country meant for you. But it's not that easy, and instead the "easy way out" (although we all know that it is never the easy way out, especially for those left behind) is just too alluring. The mental anguish that builds up in these moments are enough to drive some to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism. But we all know that alcohol

and drugs are never the answer. Unfortunately, they are usually the catalyst.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, suicide in America is the tenth leading cause of death. Almost fifty thousand people committed suicide in 2018. Almost 70 percent were white males between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four. A firearm was used in almost 50 percent of those deaths. The past two decades have shown that suicide by gun has become quite the epidemic among white men. Perhaps they recognize the pressure of performing within and maintaining such an unfair system is, at times, more than they can handle.

Perhaps this is just the old vanguard dying out. Maybe the pressure of maintaining such a poisoned system has finally caught up to those who feel most responsible for keeping it in place. Some may just be seeing through the lies of America. Losing privilege. Becoming a minority. Maybe it's all too much. Treating people inhumanely has a way of affecting the tormentor as much as the tormented. It is a psychological pressure that manifests itself physically. Extreme stress, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts are just a few of their daily struggles.

That tension builds the level of stress, fatigue, and inflammation on already sensitive organs in the body. That same tension has caused white America to vote to repeal the healthcare insurance for themselves and millions of others just to make sure POCs can't have it either.

White America is killing itself. It is worried that the gains of POCs means active losses for them. They only have to understand that resource and opportunity are more than abundant for

everyone. However, in the minds of certain segments of white America, when a POC baby takes its first breath, an old White person simultaneously dies . . . zero sum. (Yes. This seems comical in nature but the mind infected by racism is often childlike and foolish in their reasoning). In turn they prefer to keep policies and politics of separation in place. Their cognitive dissonance tells them that the American dream says that the road to success is wide, long, and possible for anyone . . . but whites are first in line, and whatever is left over, POC can divide among themselves. White Privilege is a poison that they hope we suffer from but only they are drinking. It is killing them just like it is killing us.

We must no longer tolerate the pressures of an unjust society that exploits the many for the benefit of a few. When we start to recognize and hear the lies that they chant, trying to protect what they say or do, we need to call them out. When we see agencies and corporations that are applying pressures to our communities unjustly, we need to call them out. We have to make sure that we root them out and let people know that certain things are no longer tolerated. When it is necessary to confront individuals or groups, we must do so with intelligence, wisdom, and compassion.

We have begun to see justifications created in the form of lies, creatively being called alternative facts, other truths, fake news, or whatever kind of language they are using for it. A lie is a lie is a lie. It does not matter how you want to cover it or rationalize it. We must charge ourselves to be better and no longer tolerate it. Do not allow it to exist in the space you occupy. Challenge these assertions every time they are made.

Do not allow people to be comfortable speaking falsehoods in your presence.

Keeping with the theme of not tolerating an unjust society, let us now introduce the “lethargic white whale.” These are the people who “believe” they are “not racist,” even though their participation in society continues to produce racist outcomes and segregated lives. They often have a difficulty understanding racial undertones and overtones in society. Many of them claim to “not see color.” I would imagine this must be a tremendous hardship when approaching traffic lights.

They have trouble following the racist thread from slavery, through reconstruction, into Jim Crow, during the civil rights movement, throughout the war on drugs (black and brown people), into our current paradigm of mass incarceration, and the sudden infatuation with the shooting of unarmed black men and women. They have difficulty in understanding the historic and systemic economic penalties and burdens for people of color, while they benefit from America’s economic growth, throughout the history of the United States, including our present.

They are a complacent class. This obviously does not apply to all white people. However, it is here, where we can see there exists a great white divide in this country. Many understand these differences and privileges and prefer them. Others prefer these things did not exist but do not necessarily know what to do about it. All the while, they allow these things to not just exist in society but in their own lives as well.

They are overwhelmed by this racist belief system that they have difficulty rooting out. They do not demand that justice and equality become the natural law of the land. They do not

agree with racism, but yet they allow certain discriminations and bigotries to exist within their own families, communities, house of worship, places of employment, playgrounds, schools, government, and institutions. This group will say no to racism and yet side with groups or policies or politicians that prefer to keep many of these things in place. The latest presidential election has thrown a spotlight on this issue. President 45—a. k. a., Agent Orange—has fueled the division and strengthened the ties of the most divergent among us. These people can be defined in two ways: those violent, extremist, racists who are a problem and those who are willing to stand beside them for their own personal benefit. (This is an opportunity to see the same dynamic play out as discussed earlier with the two types of law enforcement officer.)

When *this* group stands up and fights alongside of those who no longer tolerate the unfairness in society, we begin to see massive movement and course correction, similar to what we have seen in the history of the United States when real change was made. Abolition, voting rights, civil rights, and any success we have seen in this country was always aided by white people who would stand alongside equality and justice. There are those who actively stamp out bigotry in their daily lives. They are allies that are indispensable. They have helped to mend the gaps that exist. Remember, racism and all the baggage that goes with it can only be cleaned up by those living with it in their homes. Racism is a mental disease that affects the white community. It is only when they treat their own mental shortcomings that racism, and its many legacies, can be dealt with so we can move on as a country.

Let's dismantle another argument. Racism is a one-way street. When experienced in the opposite direction, it is simply bias and/or discrimination. Without the power behind the action to affect the lives of millions of people over the course of generations, it's just not the same thing as your good old-fashioned American racism with European roots. You know, like comparing American/European slavery to any other form of servitude that existed before it. Nothing else can compare or exist on the same level as it.

Unity. Communities of color must become stronger and unified if we are ever to have a chance. We are divided by many different things. At times, we are at odds with each other. We must learn to see through these things because they are illusions. They were created to make false lines of separation among us. They were created to find the insecurity and weakness within us and make us feel strongly about it. This fear and bias will separate us and cause us to want to be grouped alone. We will want each plight to be acknowledged separately from the other. However, black does not suffer alone. Brown does not suffer alone. Red does not suffer alone. Yellow does not suffer alone. In fact, they suffer many of the same pains of discrimination. When commonalities are identified, they can be used to draw closer, seemingly, different groups.

Strength is in numbers. We are so much stronger when we rely on one another. Individually, we may not be able to accomplish everything. Together we can accomplish anything. There was a time when we were more united as a people. Individuals in a community could rely on one another to get through their trials and tribulations together, to raise their children, to find

happiness and strengthen their relationships with each other and their loved ones.

We have to set aside the differences that we have been told to have and find our way back to each other. The bias is not real. It has no strength or value except to keep us divided, where we are truly our most vulnerable. Whether the bias is black toward brown, brown toward black, or yellow toward both, they must be overcome with honesty, understanding, and compassion.

We have been led to believe by the internet, TV, religion, and politics that sides of an argument are who and what we are. All of this is done to confuse us. None of it is true. We come together by dropping those titles and beliefs that have been imposed upon us. We should greet each other with love and affection. *I wish you well in whatever it is that you choose to do.* This is the sentiment we need to have with each other.

People ought to affect the change they want to see. Giving time and resource to a community is contagious. Doing so will garner public attention and the resource of others who want to do the same. Not helping from a distance but up close and personal is where it counts. This is the most effective way to create change. Remember, children do not do what they are told, they mimic what they see. When a child learns to give back to their community, a potential lifeline is formed that may have the ability to rescue or aid a community, as that child grows.

For those who have the ability to give larger amounts of resource, please consider where it is that you donate your money. A very small percentage of philanthropic dollars make their way to communities of color. Give directly to community organizations, agencies, and institutions that have a strong track record

of filtering as much aid as possible to the front lines. Avoid those groups that tend to spend most charity dollars on administrative affairs and salaries.

We all struggle the same, just in different places. We have to begin to separate our lives from the struggle that we face. *We are not our circumstance.* Our spirit and energy can still be high even though we are facing challenges in our lives. We need to maintain a positive approach and outlook even when we are staring down medical, financial, or other types of calamity. Our current or ongoing situation does not define us. We must be able to separate those conflicting ideas. We are bigger and stronger than any circumstance we may face.

We have to put value back into ourselves. One of the most important lessons to learn is to know that *what we think of ourselves affects who we become and how the world sees us.* To create pride and value within oneself is the moment that a power is born that can never be snuffed out. Your value does not come from what you own or what you wear. It comes from what you say and what you do. It can be seen in your humanity. The cascading effect of good deeds and positive thoughts will lead to the happiness and value that you will use to quantify your life.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS: THE GOD WE SEEK IS ALREADY WITHIN

Today we rise. We need to recognize the trauma that we face routinely. We must resist the physical, emotional, and environmental stressors that attempt to block our ability to restore

balance within ourselves and our community. We have to recognize the epigenetic factors that make us more susceptible to physical and mental health problems. We know the effects of chronic stress on the human body and mind. We know that a sustained PTSD is a very accurate description of the lives of black and brown people in the United States—from the beginning until now.

We are born with the stress of an unfair society that is placed squarely on our shoulders and backs. We learn to live with the force of those stressors upon us. We pass on the results to our children, as they develop in a womb consistently under attack from higher levels of stress hormones. Our children are born into a world that hates them, tolerates them, and accepts them, all with the same smile and handshake. It is not always easy to differentiate.

Understanding everything against you is paramount to overcoming those same things. We are a resilient people, able to adapt in the face of adversity time and time again. Our mental endurance is a blessing. Overcoming depression and hopelessness is a reality for historically impoverished and discriminated groups in America. We deal better in these areas because we have so much experience in these areas. We are better because of our inner fortitude that is always on high-alert and ready for the next assault.

Our relationship with church and religion has much to do with our ability to endure. We have relied on faith and hope that one day things will move into a state of equality and justice for all. We are a far cry from that reality. When church was our only means of communicating and one of the only safe spaces that existed, it made sense to cling to it and make it useful for us

in our lives. Today, we are a long way from church and religion being our only safe space and only path to understanding, progress, and spiritual well-being.

Our collective experience has shown us that religion is no longer needed to endure catastrophe. We can rely on our own inner strength as well as the strength from the positive thoughts and actions of others. Our ability to overcome has always emanated from within. It is the inner resolve that allows us to find answers to our most difficult questions and obstacles.

Religion claims to have answers about life, purpose, and understanding. It implores us to look up at the heavens and to look outward for our source of inspiration and strength. It is time for us to realize *the God we seek is already within*. Each of us contains all that we need to overcome anything that is aimed at us. Our inner strength is not a gift from another being. Our tenacity and toughness of spirit that causes us to fight back are things that stir from our own selves.

The God within already exists. The power and ability to accomplish anything in this world is at the precipice of our mind. We only have to move ourselves to action to bring any thought into reality. It is time to recognize that strength and stop giving credit to some made up character out of your favorite book.

It is time to set religion to the side. Spiritual evolution would be a more accurate assessment of the movement of humanity toward understanding themselves and the world they live in. Religion has failed humanity. A thorough look at religion is to uncover and lay bare the many atrocities in which it has been complicit. Each of the religions in their own history can be seen

to divide more than they have brought together. Each of them guilty of bloodshed and power mongering that has helped to bolster their individual claims of importance and superiority. Each of them is guilty of treating women and children as things to be used, and all too often abused. *Pain and suffering is the signature of the unjust.*

Another signature characteristic of religion is male dominance and female subservience. These are obvious indicators that religion is not in the best interest of all who follow. Religion is in the best interest of those who want others to follow them. In particular, the men who remain atop that pinnacle.

For those who are offended or confused, think of this. Religion tells you to pray to God for all things. No matter the issue or how difficult, one must send their thoughts and prayers to God. The God of religion is far and away. You send your energy to him and wait for him to send more back to you. Ultimately though, no matter the issue or degree of difficulty, you must resolve it. You must act and you must do. Motion will put things into effect and as soon as you move to solve your problems, they get solved. Motion creates momentum and momentum drives you to solution. You will draw near that which you require. It is always a matter of your action or inaction.

Ultimately, you are responsible for all that transpires in your life, both good and bad. You are the cause when things go right. You are also the cause when (most) things go wrong. We have all of our strength, power, and ability inside of our own minds and bodies. All we have to do is look within to find the root and the source of those things. To become stronger individually and collectively, we must begin to recognize the power of God that exists within each one of us. You will determine

your destiny and happiness and you alone will be responsible for it. This is not to say you will not find help along the way. Help will come when you call for it. It will come when you are ready to receive it.

In the realm of possibilities,
All things are possible.
And I have the ability to
Create all things.

Understanding this puts us closer to our own godlike ability to transform and create our own realities and existence. Once you put something in your mind, you breathe it into existence and it will be drawn to you.

WHERE HAVE OUR BLACK LEADERS GONE

They have been assassinated and incarcerated, mostly. They have been put in the confines and constraints of the school to prison pipeline. They are intimidated and worn down from suffering at the hands of discrimination, bigotry, hatred, and an economic servitude. They are discouraged from stepping up to the plate. They are discouraged in school and in their communities, by constantly trying to do more with less because resources continue to shrink in school districts and communities of color. Their genius is snuffed out before it ever begins to materialize.

There was a time when black leadership was up front and center. It created unity and empowered all who followed and supported it. Black leadership was tied to the understanding of racial uplift and *equal rights for everyone*. The betterment of self and giving back to help one's community was a common practice and helped to heal the community. That time was brought to an end through extreme violence. Men and women were assassinated and jailed with very little they could do to fight it. In the late sixties through the early eighties, we witnessed

the jail population flip on its head from mostly white to mostly black and brown people. Throughout the remainder of the eighties and nineties, we observed the rapid ascent of that prison curve.

There is an inherent and intentionally placed and upheld approach to incarcerating black and brown people in this country. I do not say this because someone has stood up and declared it, although in the history of the United States one could find multiple examples, but rather because it can be seen in the outcomes of the judicial branch and law enforcement of the criminal justice system. It can be seen in housing segregation that still continues to affect BIPOC and the subsequent overpolicing of those communities. It can still be seen in the disparity of income and accumulated wealth of black and brown families compared to their white counterparts and their ability to successfully use that economic resource to defend themselves against these many forms of discrimination.

Mass incarceration is the biggest culprit for systematically removing black leaders from their paths of development. The constant push of schools to place more children of color in “special ed” classes prevents the black leader from flourishing. This often leads to a *fool’s education* for our children. More children of color are suspended, given detention, expelled, disciplined, and lead to drop out at rates that far exceed their white counterparts. The use of law enforcement to discipline children prevents our next leaders from growing because we know that early contact with law enforcement indicates a likelihood of future contact.

Today, we can see how America has doubled down on mass incarceration and other aspects of inequality in education,

poverty, housing, and disparities in health, wealth, and unemployment. Some argue that it is done as payback for wanting racial justice and equal rights for all. Black and brown people should have been happy with the little that they received. If only communities of color could accept their positions of inferiority, then this country could go back to a time when “America Was Great Again.” This is reminiscent of the language used and retributions against Haiti for winning their freedom and claiming their sovereignty as a former country of enslaved people—the first freed enslaved nation.

To some people, freedom is something to be given. To others, it is something they already have. At times, gentle and forceful reminders are necessary for those who would see fit to keep black and brown people in positions of inferiority. And like Haiti, even Dr. King was coming to the conclusion that if the American people and government would not give freedom and equality to all, then black people should rise up and take it. We continue to celebrate King because no one else has been able, effective, or willing to galvanize people around like-minded issues. There continues to be a glaring absence of sustained leadership since his passing.

It’s a scary proposition to step up into that space of leadership, because of the literal and figurative assassinations that one undergoes when they attempt to get into public space and speak about these matters. However, there are plenty of young people, elderly people, and all in between that have the ability to take positions of power within their own communities. They need to become more active in already existing organizations and then strengthen the ties of those groups to each other, in ways that help their communities.

First, we do this locally, and then we can start to make connections at the national level. We will start to have national networks where communities can help each other and support each other in a very positive way. There are plenty of us in our communities that are willing to do this. Many just don't know how, don't know where, and don't know who. Strengthening the bond of community through existing organizations will help to yield influence over matters of importance that affect one's community.

These are things that can be done with the right coordination and the right effort. The right group of minds, brought together to help answer these questions, have the ability to create platforms and roll out these programs. These are conversations we must have. We must unite to uncover the paths and options that are best suited for our advancement in a country that prefers to tell us, "Go back home" and "Send them back." Individuals who lean toward *the betterment of ourselves* will get together and explore these things. They will create the better model by which we will work together and enact the change we desire.

We have to be connected. We have to be funded. We have to be helped and supported. Change is not the result of hard work alone. It cannot just be "boots on the ground." It requires resources as well. We don't have to go very far for that. Much can be done within our own communities. Those who are able to contribute from within will be aided by those who want to help from afar.

There was a time in this country where there was something called Black Wall Street. It was vibrant, thriving, ambitious, and empowering. Ultimately, it created such a threat

to the existence of white American wealth and power that it was violently destroyed. The United States government used its own military and bombed its own black citizens during this period to ensure its demise. The slaughter was so inhumane to intentionally make sure that any hope of resurrecting it, with any prolonged success, would never come to fruition again. The US government and the local white population destroyed Black Wall Street.

Black people and brown people were combining their wealth and doing exactly what I'm discussing now. Combining wealth and using resources collectively in our own communities, for our own communities. The flip side to this is divesting from certain aspects of the public at large, government, business, and those structures that exist that have a negative effect on us. Instead, we will invest in our own structures that we will begin to create and grow stronger while continuing to support policy, procedure, business, and agencies that support us.

Now, it certainly cannot be a “black” Wall Street because this is not just a black problem. It is a colored problem. It is a resource problem. It is a poverty problem. Those institutions that we create have to better us. This concept of a “black” Wall Street will help to enhance our lives. It will pool our resources, where we can start to identify them and use them in a much better fashion for our own well-being.

It looks like business districts, economic infrastructure, perpetual funds, and think tanks—encompassing entrepreneurship, innovation, global trade, technology, clean energy, retail shops, market, and healthcare to name a few. Private sector investment is critical to enable this. Youth development will be a central focus. It will serve as an economic renaissance for all

people of color, those who live in our communities, and those who want to live at peace with our communities.

Individually and collectively, we need to start boycotting and buycotting agencies, organizations, institutions of government, corporations in general, and people more effectively. We create power when we successfully influence organizations and others. There exists in our communities a tremendous misunderstanding of a very important concept: *buying power, consumer power, purchase power*. They are all different names for the same thing: the power created by wielding the influence of one's consumption or affiliation. It is best used to create positive interactions with those who serve your community. This can easily move into consumer activism; taking a stand against companies who promote negative outcomes of social, environmental, and racial issues, etc.

Boycott is the intentional support of a company, individual, agency, or country through purchasing their products and services. This is best used as economic, political, and environmental activism.

Today's consumer wants to shop in line with their beliefs. More responsibly, I advise to shop more in line with the understanding of a company's position on matters that are important to you. Support socially conscious brands. Support those companies that support you. Most importantly, do not support those companies that do not support you. Remember, a boycott will not usually affect the cash register, but it may create a risk for a company's long-term reputation. For example, the lowest hanging fruit, Gucci likes to make "ni**er lip masks" attached to

sweaters. OK. Never purchase from them again. See how simple that is? This action is not intended to “close down” the company. Rather, it is to *live by the principle of not supporting those who do not support you*. Additionally, it may propel the offender to take action that is beneficial for you as the consumer and your community.

Consumer campaigns have the ability to create pressure against corporations, individuals, and governments. These campaigns consist of boycotts, buycotts, social engagement, and social media pressure. The key is the ability to sustain these campaigns; play the long game. These types of activities give power to the campaigning party. In the continued age of injustice and inequality, civic engagement and civil disobedience are one’s duty. Collective action will establish opposition to these enduring legacies of separation in our society. Remember, the only way to hurt Big Business is through their wallet.

Single-handedly, by far these are some of the most effective ways to create change by any one group against another group. It is here that we start to recognize a certain power that is created by us. Now, we become a group to be dealt with and acknowledged, because of the power generating from within and the ability to wield its influence. That can be laid out and used economically, politically, and socially. At any time, the greater population can engage in a mass exodus from numerous markets across the nation to deliver a staggering blow to an untold number of companies and corporations who routinely have negatively affected the lives of that population. Collective movement is key.

True power lies in the ability to influence outcomes. That is what a movement like boycotting certain products and companies

can do for any concentrated base. White America has known and mastered that for years. Except it's not quite mastery. This is because their benefit is inherent on the exploitation of the many to preserve the gains for a few. That is a fundamental flaw. True mastery does not require the exploitation of anyone, and it certainly does not serve to diminish the potential leaders of our society.

With all of that said, the greatest loss of leadership that we are suffering from is caused by our mistreatment of women and children in our cultures and communities. Eventually, it results in a loss of humanity that becomes the new normal in society. There is a tremendous disrespect and dismissal of value, the hypersexualization, misogyny, and violence (physical, emotional, and sexual) that deteriorates our communities.

So often, women and children are left to fend for themselves after they have been used and abandoned. The act of leaving a mother alone to raise her child will often create a wound that tends to remain unhealed. It routinely becomes a schism that gets passed down through the generations like a hereditary factor. A landscape of fatherless households litters our communities, a total disregard for the most sacred of responsibilities: creating and caring for a child into adulthood. This behavior is a betrayal of that which is most powerful and fundamental within our communities: *the strength of women*.

One only has to look at natural world to discover the greater significance of the female in relation to the male. Of course, father's are significant in the creation and upbringing of children, however, woman is the creator and must be cared for and protected above all things. She will ensure our existence into eternity. And, as most children should remain with their

mother, none can ever be illegitimate, as they are labeled in the language of men. She has the ability to raise our children to be more kind, considerate, and compassionate. They will learn that there is no hierarchy in life. Instead, all people are equal and free of domination and discrimination. Our children will embody intellectual creativity, empathy, and practical experience and will always be aware of the needs of others. When women are cared for, children are cared for.

Our society has forgotten that. As a result, children are raised with little awareness of these things. The culmination of their upbringing becomes a “net negative” on the world. Simply put, they take more than they give, and they hurt more than they help. Eventually, they will create more just like them. That will become their ultimate contribution and enduring legacy to the world. When women and children do not have a safe space to grow, we doom ourselves and subsequent generations.

In our communities, we talk about the strength of our mothers and grandmothers and how they have held and continue to keep families together. We are all able to recognize the women in our lives who raise us up and create the strength of the family. It is from the strength of the family that we derive our very own strength. There exists an amazing synergy from mother to child that strengthens over time, when allowed to flourish. This always yields a “net positive” to the planet. This creates a *global humanity* that nurtures and cares. Women will heal this world because they have given birth to it.

There is strength of woman that we need to honor again. When you look at a society and see how they treat their women and children, you can easily begin to identify the characteristics and qualities of that society. We don't treat women well,

and consequently, there is a certain disregard for children that is easily observed. The needs and rights of women and children are greatly ignored. They get used and abused in horrific ways and absurd quantity throughout history. We need to recognize that women have significance in our world much greater than what we have been told and taught. For those who adore history, it is not difficult to go back in time to moments where women were more revered and significant in society. It is also not difficult to see how that has been rewritten throughout time by the victors of war.

By far women are the most powerful beings on the planet. They are capable just like men and, in the realm of humanity, deserve to be treated as equal. Yes, there are natural differences between them, and they should be respected and acknowledged as equally valuable. However, the fundamental difference that makes them more powerful is the fact that a woman can bring life into this planet, where a man can only add an ingredient to help bring life into this planet. An important and vital ingredient it is, but nevertheless a single ingredient.

However, after adding some salt to the bowl of life, men walk out of the kitchen and claim to be the top chef. Meanwhile, their *little cook* remains behind and does all the work. Let's be clear, women are the masters of this process, and as such, they deserve complete recognition for their magic and majesty. The process of life is absolutely amazing and is carried out by *her*. Man cannot bring life into the planet, and that is what makes a woman more powerful. When we start to recognize her power, ability, and strength, we start to recognize our power, ability, and strength as well.

We should hold true and dear and protect that which is protecting us. That's where our strength comes from. We notice a stronger community growing when we respect women and take care of our children. That has to happen collectively. We are responsible for that. We are responsible for our own well-being. And for those paying attention, it would seem that the pendulum of time has swung back to the Era of Woman. And I am in full support.

The main reason we have difficulty recognizing and discussing this is because men continue to rewrite history. Goddesses became witches and temptations, and matriarchs became second class citizens in their own families and religions.

Understanding this creates power. It creates strength in community. It creates the environment by which *we now matter*. A community is strong because it moves together. Children play and grow with each other. People protect each other and invest in each other. The community influences those around it. This is the ability of unifying people of color of this country and throughout this earth.

Our communities are in shambles. The next leader is nowhere to be seen. We are having so much difficulty just living that most families no longer teach and preach the values of strength in community and self. Most are struggling just to get by. Their focus is where the next meal comes from and if there is going to be enough left over from their checks to cover all of their expenses. The strength of a well-defined community is in its ability to help each other.

“Our” Wall Street is required again—a system in which people of color can keep resource and money recirculating

within their community. This will create pockets of resource that can be spent on programs and initiatives that will place the well-being of a community above taking profit from that community. It will create opportunity which will lead to action that can be taken because it will now be driven by investment, accomplishment, and growth. Communities will be cleaned up and brought back to life and children will be encouraged to engage in the places they grow up in and want to see them flourish. Pride and desire to expand and do better, backed by wisdom and love, is what will drive the next generation of black and brown leaders to rise and stand up in the crowd.

Uniting our communities through efforts that give back to our children is paramount. The same arguments of the original civil rights movements exist today. That time in America saw some of its most profound leaders take the stage. We are the children and grandchildren of that movement. It is our time to pick that fight up collectively and continue forward.

LEADERSHIP TODAY

Leadership today cannot be the same as the existing model. The business-as-usual approach is unsustainable and needs to change. The definitions of success and leadership in our society are very masculine in nature. They are embodied as economic growth and financial profit through aggressive tactics that benefit the few over the many. That approach is not working and is not healthy. Today we suffer a crisis of inequality. Our next leaders need to exhibit an understanding that their moral compass needs to be driven by their ability to contribute to the social impact of society. They are not just responsible for profit.

They also must consider the impact on people and the planet: wellness and well-being. Their leadership must be transparent and accountable to the next generation. Our next leaders must embrace their masculine and feminine values and encompass the spectrums of age, ethnicity, and sexuality.

We are interested in the well-being of our community. That shouldn't scare anyone because we're interested in creating a better us. We are not interested in hurting others. We want to make our world a better place because we've seen that those in charge are not interested in making our world a better place. They're interested in preserving the same world for them or prefer to go back to when it was great for some and terrible for others.

True mastery is to do great things, but not at the expense of anyone else. We can exemplify the best of humanity by being true to ourselves. We are a caring, loving people; a sharing, hugging people; a strong, resilient people. We need to reclaim all that is great among us and discard that which is not. I wish you nothing but the best in whatever it is you do. Just as others show love to their community, we should show love to ours. *Black and brown love will heal us.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gahrey Ovalle is a serial entrepreneur who has spent more than 20 years building successful six-and-seven-figure companies for himself and others in multiple industries.

He now teaches people the art of living remarkable, purposeful, happy lives while erring on the side of personal well-being, financial security, and growth.

As a business coach and mentor, Gahrey is an execution specialist for those looking to turn their do's into done. Passionate about social impact, he knows that healing our communities starts with financial security. Gahrey helps you create yours, so you can help someone else create theirs.

The child of a community activist, Gahrey saw firsthand the effect of loving one's family and community enough to enact change in it. He has been able to employ the understanding of volunteerism and dedication to one's community in his own life, the lives of his children, and in the lives of the young people he has mentored, creating lifelines that will continue to Grow Forward and Give Back.

Gahrey is passionate about leveraging personal transformation and development to create generational and professional wealth. He accomplishes this by empowering entrepreneurs to eliminate the generational wealth gap that affects them and their families allowing them to create greater impact in their communities.

As an author, activist, and community leader, he is determined to impact the lives of those in need through education, mentorship, and philanthropy. Gahrey knows that when people find their purpose in life and share those gifts with others, they have the ability to create generational change that improves not just their lives but the lives of everyone around them.

IT'S NOT OVER YET . . .

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THANK YOU!