




2033

20 YEARS LATER



Let us examine our status 20 years in the future: people always ask me how it is that African-Americans were able to turn their stuff around at the dawn of the twenty-first century and become a model throughout the world for how an oppressed, depressed, and despondent people could become a successful, upwardly mobile, empowered people in just two decades.

Let me explain it to you. At some point the ancestors summoned one of our own. They explained to us that we were suffering from negative mental legacies of slavery. These behaviors were absolutely necessary for the survival of our ancestors during slavery, but they were seriously harming our present, and, in fact, were cutting off our chances of

survival in the future. We didn't even recognize that they existed. We saw the problems, but couldn't connect them to a cause and, thus, couldn't find effective solutions. The account of the visit to the ancestors spread like wildfire throughout the community, and its written form became known as LISTEN TO THE ANCESTORS: FOR THEY DESERVE TO BE HEARD.

The message from the ancestors became an essential part of the development of The Transformational Agenda Retreat,

“...people always ask me how it is that African-Americans were able to turn their stuff around...”

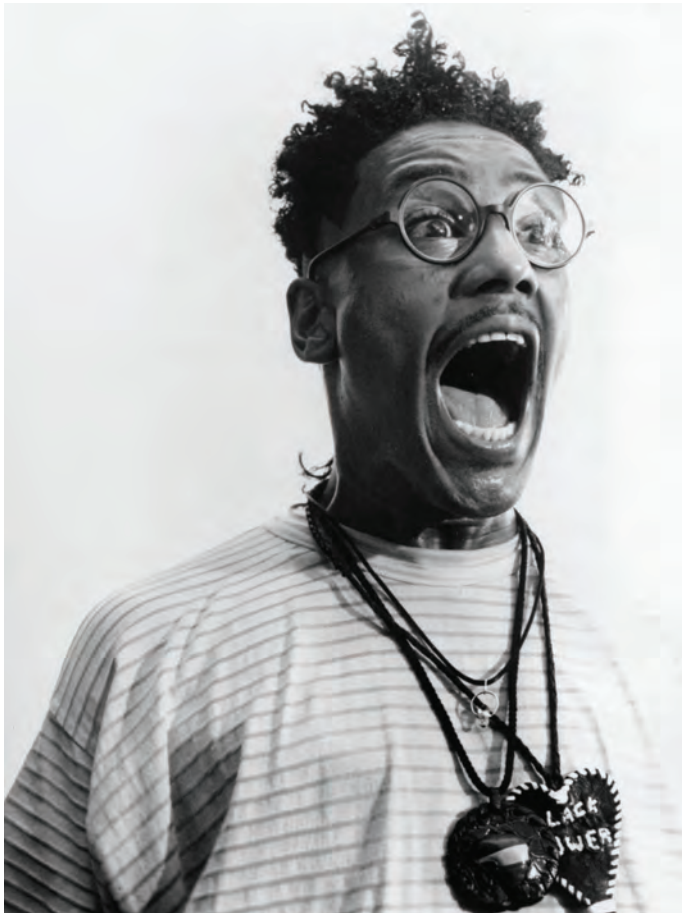
which carefully examined our history in America. It was an opportunity to look back at the horror, trauma, degradation, and powerlessness that our people suffered during slavery, and to realize that we were not a race bred from the weak, but from

the strong.

I mean, goodness, how strong did our ancestors have to be in character, virtue, values, and life skills to choose to live when hope unborn had died, to choose to serve greedy and evil men with the hope that one day we—their children's children's children's children—would be experiencing the empowerment renaissance that we are today?

See, in the past we wanted to hide from the horror of slavery. We didn't even talk about it in

the dark. We certainly didn't educate our children about it. We thought we were protecting them. But the ancestors made us understand that we had to boldly, courageously, calmly, and rationally look at our past so that we could understand our present



and shape our future.

As we looked at the past via the eight-hour retreat, we came to an understanding that we were still living like we were in bondage. There were unconscious **NEGATIVE MENTAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY** that we were still carrying almost 150 years later. Examples were our work ethic, a diet that was killing us, the beating of our children, and the destruction of our families. Other examples of these behaviors were our tendency not to trust or help one another, to belittle each other's success, to endear ourselves to powerful people and institutions to seek our own privilege and personal advantage. Hell! Many of us were even willing to knowingly do things that would damage our people in order to get ahead. We had a "Judas mentality" that was destroying us. We saw ourselves in terms of "the I" instead of "the we." We knew we were in trouble and our community was coming apart; no...it had come apart, and we didn't even know why we were doing the crazy things that we were doing. We were lost because we didn't even know what we didn't know.

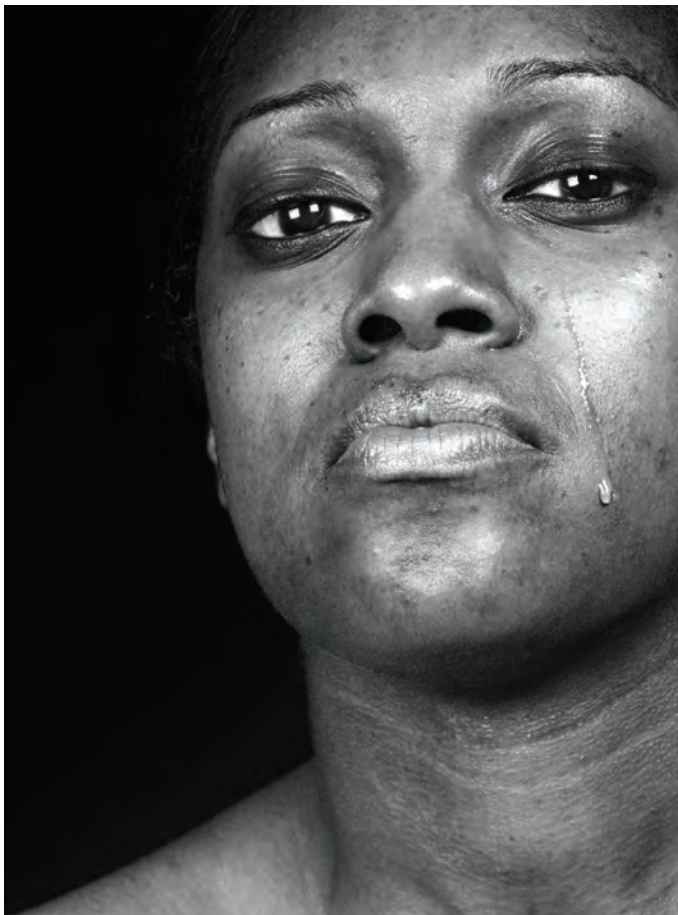
BUT NOW WE HAVE LEARNED THAT ALL OF LIFE IS ABOUT ONE THING—EMPOWERMENT. We, as a people, began to define empowerment as the opportunity to develop high character, virtue, values, and life skills. As the Retreat allowed us to examine our history with intellectual honesty we realized that

our ancestors had all of the above in abundance. They empowered themselves through meaningful longitudinal relationships with other adults. They believed in the power of the rites of passage ceremonies and cultural organizations that ensured that the cumulative wisdom of the ancestors was passed down generation after generation, so it could never be lost or abandoned. The old men taught the young men and boys. The old women taught the young women and girls. At every stage of every person's life, there was an empowered adult willing to be in relationship with them, to help to empower them to become their best self, and to fulfill his or her greatest destiny on planet Earth.

WE GOT IT! WE CONNECTED THE DOTS. WE UNDERSTOOD THE PAST. EMPOWERMENT BECAME OUR SINGLE OBJECTIVE, AGENDA, FOCUS, AND DIRECTION.

We parlayed our desire for empowerment into a program called Time Tithing. Time Tithing demands that each of us give 10% of our waking hours—not devoted to employment—to the work of empowering our communities and ourselves. For those of us with full-time jobs, we gave about seven hours a week in voluntary service to our community. Seven and a half hours became known as the Gold Standard of Time Tithing. 5 hours a week became known as the Silver Standard, and 2.5 hours became known as the Bronze Standard. And those of us without jobs or who were retired, gave approximately 11 hours in service to our community.

And let me tell you, **NOBODY WAS LET OFF THE HOOK IN REGARD TO THIS THING.** See, at first some of us said, "I can't help to empower others. Look at my life. It's a mess." Others said, "I'm just too busy." But the wise amongst us consistently communicated in countless ways that you have something to give! Everyone has power that they can use to serve others. And



we all have the same 24 hours in a day—so it’s a matter of choice, a matter of priorities. Well, that mentality infiltrated everybody’s mind, heart, and spirit. We decided that none of us were going to fail to be empowered.

Eventually, almost all of us realized that we could only be delivered by giving of ourselves, one to another—by gifting one another with meaningful longitudinal relationships. People started personally advocating in social clubs, sororities, fraternities, block units, youth groups, churches, and schools. **THE CONCEPT OF TITHING YOUR TIME, AND MAKING THE PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO DO SO, SPREAD LIKE A VIRUS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.** Organizations committed to promote Time Tithing, to teach the negative mental legacies of slavery, and to match volunteers with volunteer opportunities. It was a beautiful thing to observe and participate in. For those committed to living a religious life, Time Tithing literally became the demonstration of faith in God and each other. Whether religious, spiritual, both or neither, almost everyone was a Time Tither because we understood that giving of ourselves in voluntary service to the community was our proof of responsible personhood.

Such a radical shift in mindset set a people free!

Now we can all quote the wise words of our ancestral

grandfather as reported in Listen to the Ancestors They Deserve to be Heard, who said,

“YOUR TIME IS NOW! LIVE LIVES OF JOY, AND LOVE, AND POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT, HIGH CHARACTER THE HIGHEST VIRTUE AND EXCEPTIONAL VALUES. IT’S IN YOUR GENES, IT’S THE ESSENCE OF WHO YOU ARE. EMPOWER YOURSELVES WITH LOVE, CREATE A HEALING COMMUNITY OF LOVE, AND YOU WILL THRIVE BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS...”

And thrive we have...

Look at us!

We now certainly understand the importance of meaningful longitudinal relationships with empowered adults. Every single one of our children experiences the gift of many adults—parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends, co-workers, neighbors and teachers—who commit to their empowerment and long-term success. Today the same teachers serve the same children for a least four years, and can now see that before they just didn’t have the same children long enough to be successful with them. Today everyone says all the time, “Teaching is a human endeavor and at its very core is a meaningful long-term relationship with an empowered adult that you would be most pleased if your child developed to be like.”

We now have every young person participating in empowerment curriculums in schools, churches, scouts, and community centers that teach our children character, virtue, values, and life skills on a daily basis. Our empowerment guides are now taught and discussed everywhere. Most adults belong to empowerment support groups that meet at least monthly. We’re supporting one another in our quest for individual and group empowerment.

I could go on bragging, but here is the

bottom line: empowerment became the single overriding objective of our African-American community.

WE BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICAN GOT HOLD OF AN OBJECTIVE, AN AGENDA, A FOCUS, AND A DIRECTION, AND WE ALL JOINED TOGETHER TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Today we are the toast of America, admired and respected by all. We are influential, accumulating wealth at an unprecedented rate as we have made a commitment to savings and investments. Our schools are emulated around the world; our children are succeeding beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Our commitment to meaningful longitudinal relationships with empowered adults is being copied by everyone who has observed them. After all these relationships work. We don't know how we ever got along without them!

We now look back in wonder. For a while we had lost our focus, we didn't have an agenda; heck we didn't even have goals or objectives that were serving us well. But today, we are **EMPOWERED...**

I know the ancestors are smiling, and future generations will call us blessed.

AND THAT'S HOW IT ALL HAPPENED.

