

CULTURE IS EVERYTHING

EMPOWERMENT IS OUR RIGHT

We have the power to make our lives, our families, and our communities extraordinary, and now is the time to tap into that hidden potential and make it a tangible reality. To do this, we simply need the will, focus, and drive to make better lives for our loved ones and ourselves. Empowerment must be our enduring agenda, and the power to make it so lies within us. No one can heal us for us. We need to heal ourselves.

One might ask, “What is empowerment?” Simply put, empowerment is high character, virtue, values, and life skills combined with the knowledge and wisdom that it takes to make one’s life extraordinary. Empowerment combines practical knowledge with awareness, acceptance, vision, intention, strategy, preparation, and action. Empowerment enables us to walk fully into our own destinies.

While empowered people may seem to live a life that is blessed and highly favored, or to have unique qualities, or to have inside knowledge, this is simply not the case. Most empowered people have no more intelligence or talent than those disempowered; what they do have though is an accurate sense of the “big picture.” While empowered people are not guaranteed success, they make conscious informed decisions that vastly increase the likelihood of success.

Empowerment is our right; it must also be our choice.





NEGATIVE MENTAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

The empowerment of our families and our communities is imperative. We've made many strides forward in our history, yet today many of our brothers and sisters still live disempowered lives. We do not even understand why we do the wacky self-destructive things that we do because we have never dissected the realities of American slavery. Behaviors, once necessary to survive the cruel culture of American enslavement, live on today as negative mental legacies of slavery. We have been in denial about slavery for so long that we cannot even connect the dots from the culture of slavery to the troubles we find ourselves facing today.

By never speaking of the horrors of slavery, we thought that we were protecting our children; instead, we doomed ourselves and our children to continue to live the culture of American slavery. By never having examined, rejected, or reconstructed the wacky and self-destructive behaviors, we denied our souls and our community of the opportunity to heal from slavery and destined ourselves to the madness of today.

We see our brothers and sisters failing to live up to their potential because they have accepted the idea that we are not entitled to passion, joy, and purpose. We see families falling apart because their members are "going with the flow" of selfish materialism and easy "success." We see our communities crumbling under the excesses of crime, drugs and violence, and the shortage of economic development, social services, and empowered leadership. Many have entered into the vicious cycle that tells us "we deserve nothing more" and thus unconsciously promote the status quo. Others simply shake their heads in disbelief and wonder why.

We don't realize that most of today's self-destructive behaviors are simply negative mental legacies of slavery and the brutal decades that followed. Behaviors such as our self-destructive soul food diet, not pursuing excellence in educational pursuit and employment, not loving and nurturing and protecting and aiding one another, and not benefiting from stable intact families were once necessary to survive American slavery. Continuing to practice these behaviors today makes no sense, establishes us as our own worst enemy, and is literally destroying us. The sad part is that we don't even know that we don't even know that the negative mental legacies exist.

LISTEN TO THE ANCESTORS

Our slave ancestor, Bernadine, in our beloved short story, “Listen to the Ancestors,” said it well:

We couldn't even help each other except to endure, and we couldn't lash out at white people, so our anger was focused on ourselves and on each other. We lashed out in a way that said Black life was cheap, for we saw it being abused all the time. Living in fear, disappointment, shame, and forced submission made us do crazy stuff to ourselves and to each other. We did what we felt we had to do to bring you to today. But, let me ask you chile: why in God's name are you still acting like this now? Why are you still living as if you have no hope, no dreams, and no aspirations? Why are you living like you ain't got no ancestors, no God?!



THE RECONSTRUCTION OF BLACK CULTURE

Love is the weapon, dignity is the prize, and empowerment is the hammer with which each of us may smash the negative mental legacies of slavery and embrace our heritage. Empowerment is the imperative.

Empowerment is more than just a matter of personal improvement; it is a conscious choice and a way of life. To live an empowered life is to live a life of high character, virtue, values, and life skills combined with the knowledge and drive to be and do better. Empowerment offers us rich rewards: financial security, educational opportunity, spiritual fulfillment, stronger relationships, and an improved sense of self, but these rewards cannot come without dedication, sacrifice, and patience. We must dedicate ourselves to making excellence the norm in our lives and work daily to generate the successes we wish to see. Empowerment doesn't just happen; it requires thought, action, belief, strategy, and focus. We must make empowerment an imperative for our families, our community, and ourselves.

This action guide is designed to ardently focus your attention and activities on personal empowerment. Whether you're seeking more income or wealth, better physical or mental health, enhanced education or employment, or a stronger spiritual life, you'll find information and inspiration in this action guide to direct you towards your goals



AND THAT IS HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

Recognizing that we need no longer live the culture of the enslaved in America, we can take out a clean sheet of paper and choose to consciously reconstruct Black culture by ministering to one another via Time Tithing (ongoing voluntary service). We can manifest the blueprint for healing our community revealed in our cherished short story, “20 Years Later,” which concludes with:

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.