



# THE TRANSFORMATIONAL AGENDA

EMBRACED WITH THE  
FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

## THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

### AFRICAN AMERICANS AT THE CROSSROAD

The African American community is in big trouble. To make matters worse, the African American community is fracturing along class lines. The poor and the middle class see each other as two different races, even two different species. We are not willing to work together. We do not see our problems and our struggles in common. We have a "me first and only my kids matter" mentality that is destroying the unity that used to insist that if one of us got ahead, we would then aid others in getting ahead.

So this begs the question, "What's really going on?"

African Americans were slaves in this country for approximately two hundred and fifty years. **We are suffering from an intergenerational and psychological trauma, which is rooted in the tens of thousands of days that we spent in dehumanizing bondage in the United States. This causes us to live out NEGATIVE MENTAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY on a daily basis without our conscious decision to do so.** The disempowerment that our ancestors faced as slaves on the plantation continues in 2008, because we have failed to systematically and courageously address these negative mental legacies of slavery. **As a result we are disempowered to heal and to make better, wiser, and more empowered choices for our loved ones and for ourselves.**



The African American community is truly suffering because we have been disempowered for so long that now we don't know how to empower ourselves. In many cases we can't even conceptualize what an empowered life is like. And while the reality of racism and discrimination is still very real, we are now in an age where we can—and we must—make up our minds that as a community we will do all that we can do and all that we know to do to empower ourselves for success. Waiting for a fair, equitable, and humane society is both insanity and an absolute guarantee of additional pain. Doing—with the fierce urgency of now—all that we can to mitigate our own situation, BY EMPOWERING OURSELVES, is what we must be and do.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said that one of the things that most compelled him to put his life on the line daily was an understanding that there is a such thing as the **FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW!**

We must empower ourselves—RIGHT NOW! There is no someday. There is no tomorrow. There is no "somewhere over the rainbow." Reparations are not likely coming anytime in the near future. No! No! My friends! It is up to us to save ourselves. **We must awaken out of our hundred year sleep of trauma and depression. We must empower ourselves NOW.** We must love ourselves, and our children, and their children enough to make up our minds that we are willing—and able—to begin to make small changes TODAY that will yield big dividends in the future.

What exactly is needed?

We need to precisely understand why our ancestors chose life, the unique trauma that has shaped our being, and what is required in order to heal. We need to distinctly define who we want to become and exactly what is required to make that vision a reality. That vision then needs to become our single focus, agenda, direction, and objective. All those who are willing must then turn their concern for their community into concerted action directed to make the specific vision a reality. We can do

this ourselves. We have the power to do so, even given the imperfect environment in which we live. This presentation, *The Transformational Agenda*, and its two companion presentations *Listen to the Ancestors* (which proceeds it) and *Empowerment is the Imperative* (which follows it), together presents an analysis, understanding, strategy, and agenda, for the transformation of the African American community!

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW WE DON'T KNOW HAS HURT US GREATLY. BUT, WHEN WE DISCOVER WHAT WE DON'T KNOW WE DON'T KNOW, THE REALIZATION CAN BE THE CATALYST TO TRANSFORMATION.

WE ARE ABLE TO TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY!



## NEGATIVE MENTAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

SANKOFA TEACHES THAT WE MUST GO BACK  
AND FETCH WHAT WE FORGOT

The Akan people of West Africa use pictures to relay messages of the utmost importance. One of the most widely recognized symbols of their culture is that of Sankofa. Sankofa is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolizing the future) in its mouth. **Whatever we have lost, forgotten, forgone, or been stripped of, can be reclaimed, revived, preserved and perpetuated.** In short, the image of Sankofa means "It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot." Or to put it another way, we must understand where we came from in order to get to where we need to be.

Let's face it. Slavery was an atrocious time in the history of African American people, and nobody likes to talk about it. Nobody likes to imagine it. Nobody wants to have to remember. That's why America doesn't teach it in school nor truly acknowledge it in any other meaningful way. American society has chosen to pretend that the horror of slavery just didn't exist, and has thus also chosen to believe that there is no lasting negative legacy to be corrected.

This is also why black folks fail to teach it in our homes and in our churches as well. We're all afraid—and ashamed—to look at the ugly, horrific truth of what our ancestors endured. We seem to believe that by not talking about it, it will somehow cease to have existed; that by not acknowledging it, we won't have to relive or revive those bitter days when we felt powerless, hopeless, and defenseless. By not even whispering the truth in the dark, somehow its effect on subsequent generations could be avoided. Clearly we, as African Americans, have made the choice to both avoid the pain of revisiting the horror of slavery, and to shelter our children from any meaningful understanding of their ancestors. This is human nature, and a natural and predictable response to trauma. But, it is also dead wrong!

**Trauma cannot be healed by denial. Only by the intellectually honest examination of the horrific event, and the resultant trauma and atrocious pain, can the impact be**

understood and its negative power over its victim released.

The Akan people of West Africa remind us with the Sankofa bird that by looking at the past with a critical eye, we can learn from it and move forward. So, what is the truth about our past in the United States?

The truth is that slavery was a dehumanizing and horrific institution. It stripped us, as descendants of Africa, of everything that was meaningful to us. We lost our language, our culture, our religion, our self-reliance, our dignity, our hope, our families, our traditions, and most importantly, our general sense of empowerment.

From the first moments of capture, our ancestors were stripped naked, chained together, and forced to march hundreds of miles to the seashores of West Africa. They were placed in the dungeons of slave castles and forced to stand, sit, and/or lie together in their own blood and excrement.

Once in the U.S., life was not better. Slavery was a dehumanizing institution meant to perpetuate white supremacy and white power at any cost. In order to perpetuate white power, slave owners attempted to strip every ounce of pride and empowerment they could from their African American "property."

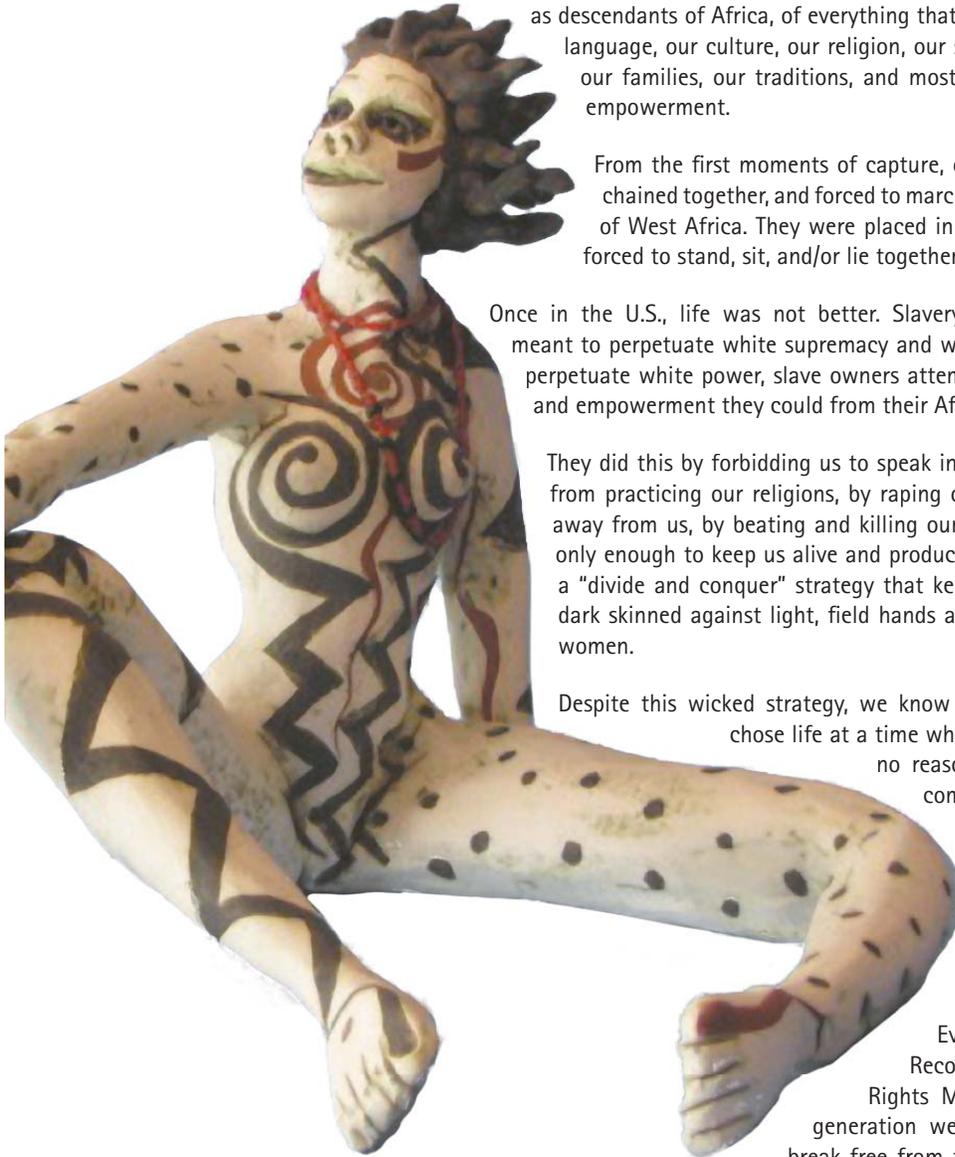
They did this by forbidding us to speak in our native tongues, by keeping us from practicing our religions, by raping our women, by selling our children away from us, by beating and killing our men in front of us, by feeding us only enough to keep us alive and productive in the fields, and by practicing a "divide and conquer" strategy that kept slaves at odds with each other: dark skinned against light, field hands against house workers, men against women.

Despite this wicked strategy, we know that our ancestors survived. They chose life at a time when hope unborn had died. They had no reason to hope that better days were coming, but they obviously did. They held on—rather than committing suicide or marching to their deaths in violent strife with their slave masters—because they believed that brighter days were ahead for their seed.

Eventually, freedom did come, Reconstruction did come, the Civil Rights Movement did come, and in every generation we hoped that we would somehow break free from the pain and the legacy of slavery that was visited upon our people. But, we have not

broken free from the pain. We have not moved past our anguish. We continue to be stuck. We are stuck in the racism and prejudice of the past and of the present. We are stuck in self-destructive behaviors that are the result of failing to look at our past and learn from it. And most of all, we are stuck in self-destructive behaviors that are the direct result of the negative mental legacies of slavery.

Because we have failed to really face the horror of slavery so that we can heal from it, we remain disempowered by our past. We whisper about slavery, instead of bringing it out into the light, looking at it, examining it, critiquing our experience, and learning from our pain and travail. By trying to avoid the suffering and misery of looking at the past, and by attempting to shelter our children from the evil memories



of slavery, we have unknowingly accepted as today's culture a continuation of the once required, yet still very negative, behaviors of slave culture. We also fail to recognize that today we can and must re-empower ourselves.

Yes, my friends! There are **NEGATIVE MENTAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY** that we continue even into 2008. For example, during slavery a man or woman who could avoid a hard days work was a hero. Today, despite the fact that work and income would be a boon to our families and our communities, many of us refuse to work and are hailed as heroes as we participate in "alternative economies" such as the sale of drugs and sex, or insist on pursuing the miniscule possibility of becoming the next Nelly or Michael Jordan.

During slavery and the Jim Crow/Black Code era, in order to keep our children away from the whip of the master, we beat our children into submission to the rules and regulations of the slave system, lest they "misbehave" in front of someone who would think nothing of beating them to death, or of organizing a lynch mob to delight in their torture. It was imperative that a mother be able to stop her children in their tracks by simply giving them the "evil eye." After all, it was a matter of life or death! Today, the descendants of those who knew the lash, often still believe that a good parent is the one who beats their children enough that the "evil eye" still works at all times and in all places.

During slavery, our ancestors were given the worst of everything to eat. But we had to eat it in order to survive. We learned to salt and sugar everything, to make a pigs tail or feet taste palatable, to live without fruits and vegetables. Today, our diets are little better, but for no good reason at all! Today, we have access to fresh produce, to the good cuts of meat, to opportunities to have fresh dairy products and grains, and instead many of us continue to eat just as our ancestors did, resulting in amazing rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity in our communities.

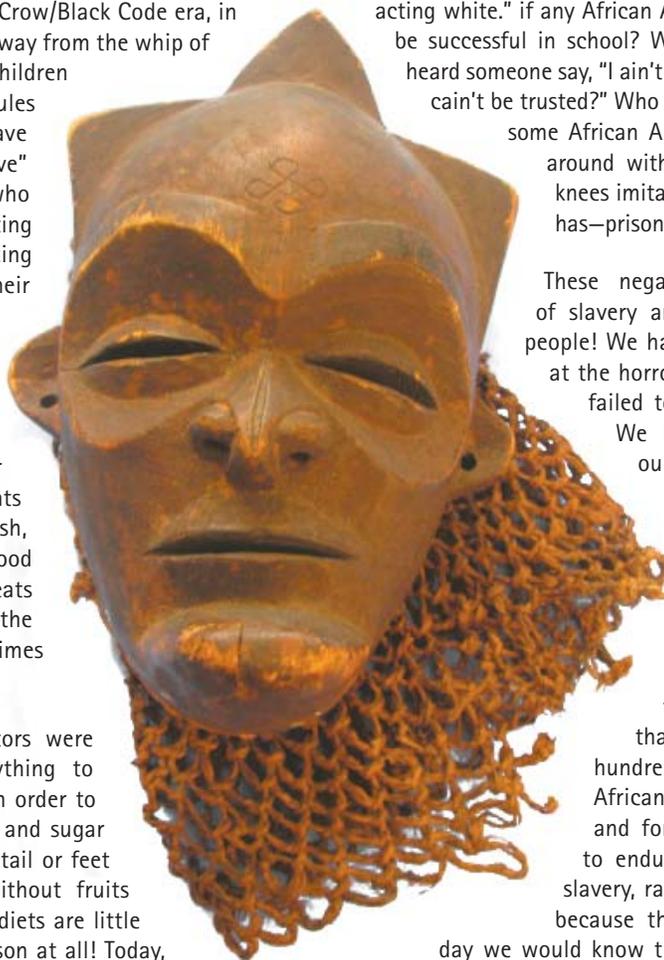
During slavery, white slave masters did everything possible to destroy any notion of family amongst their slaves. It was common to separate mothers from their children, husbands from their wives. Today, we are facing the total disintegration of the African American family. When seven out of every ten African American children are being born in a home with no father present, and one out of every four African American boys is being introduced to the criminal justice system, it is clear that we are experiencing a terrible mental legacy of slavery, which makes it easy for us to act like marriage and family are for whites only.

If we truly practice Sankofa and look back over our shoulders, we would realize that there are many, many, many more negative mental legacies of slavery. I mean, who amongst us hasn't heard someone say "You're acting white." if any African American child dares to be successful in school? Who amongst us hasn't heard someone say, "I ain't goin' to no doctor, they cain't be trusted?" Who amongst us hasn't seen some African American youth walking around with his pants around his knees imitating the only heroes he has—prison inmates?

These negative mental legacies of slavery are destroying us as a people! We have failed to look back at the horrors of slavery. We have failed to learn from our past.

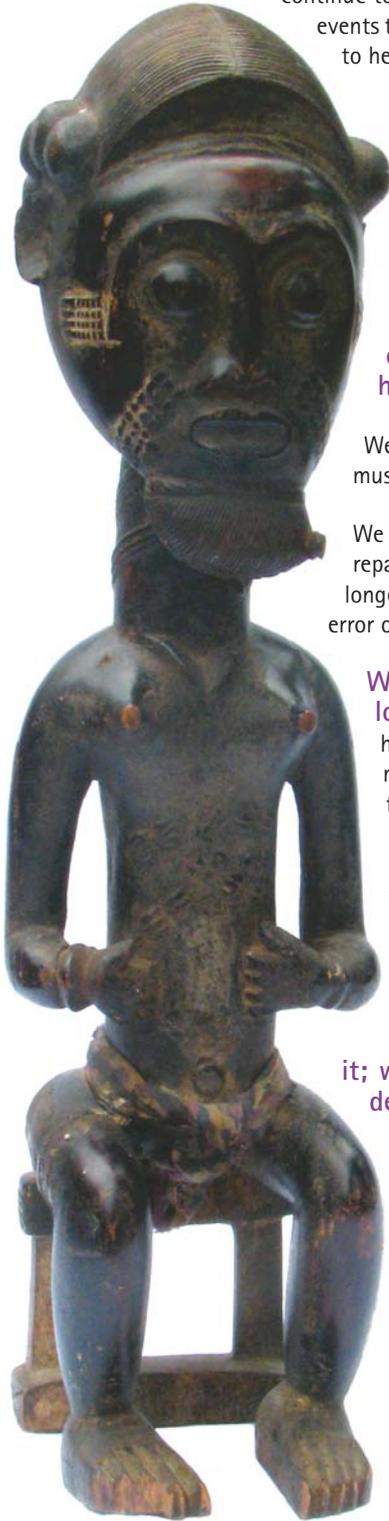
We have failed to teach our children about the pain of our past. But, we have not failed to unconsciously perpetuate the negative mental legacies of the past, thus destroying the sacred covenant that was made with us hundreds of years ago by our African American foremothers and forefathers. They chose to endure the degradation of slavery, rather than deny us life; because they dreamed that one day we would know the imperfect freedoms that exist today; thus be able to empower ourselves to rise up, and to build and create, a wonderful community and culture of which they could be proud.

It is now time to let the shackles loose and to seize the empowerment that comes from seeing the truth, speaking the truth, and then living



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the truth into the future. **THERE IS A LINKED SEQUENTIAL PROCESS NEEDED TO HEAL.** It typically goes event—trauma—pain—exploration—heal. Truly, African Americans experienced horrific events that produced massive trauma for hundreds of years. We have, and most certainly continue to experience the pain. However, we have not successfully explored the causal events that produced the trauma and pain. Therefore, we have not had the opportunity to heal, and heal we must.



**Do you see how each of these harmful contemporary behaviors has their roots in residual negative mental legacies of slavery? Behaviors, which once were necessary for our physical and mental survival are now our worst enemies. And we have been complicit in our own pain because we have been unwilling to dissect our experience of slavery, relive and agonize over its horrors, thereby creating the insight whereby we might understand and then heal from our traumas. As a result, we continue to face unmitigating challenges to living health, happy, holy, and whole lives in the twenty-first century.**

We can, and we must heal ourselves. There is a fierce urgency of now that we must immediately respond to, my friends!

We can no longer wait for white folks to apologize. We can no longer wait for reparations to come our way, or for millions to fall from the heavens. We can no longer hope that the white supremacist society that we have inherited will see the error of their ways and come riding in on a "white horse" and save us!

**We must focus on loving ourselves and loving our people and loving the courage and the determination of the ancestors.** We have spent too much time and energy hating on white folks. We have spent too much of our creativity and our genius hating all of those people who just aren't that concerned about helping us.

We must seize the day! We must realize that the negative mental legacies of slavery can be shaken off. We must do what we can for ourselves. We must work together, aid one another, and create a healing community of love; so that we can begin to flourish, in this land of great possibility, which we and our ancestors have built with blood, sweat, and tears.

**Here's what we know. We can survive in this land. We have done it; we are doing it. But it is not enough to just survive. We must decide to thrive.** We must pull together through the power of Sankofa and thrive beyond our wildest dreams.

We can do it. **WE CAN MAKE THE ANCESTORS PROUD.**

## MEANINGFUL LONGITUDINAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH AN EMPOWERED ADULT

### THE REQUIREMENT OF EMPOWERMENT

Recently, the Pew Research Center released a study entitled *Optimism about Black Progress Declines: Blacks See Growing Values Gap Between Poor and Middle Class*. In this study, which reports a survey, a most distressing phenomenon was discovered. **A shocking 37% of African Americans surveyed by telephone stated that "Blacks today can no longer be thought of as a single race because the black community is so diverse."** In doing so, they rejected the other choice that "Blacks can still be thought of as a single race because they have so much in common." Further, an additional 10% of respondents said that they were unsure whether poor and middle class blacks should be considered a single race. So, fully 47% (almost one of every two respondents) believe that it is possible that the differences between middle class and poor blacks have led to such a division of values that we can no longer be considered one race.

Are we a race deserting ourselves at the crossroads?

Now, equally as shocking, the Pew survey also reports that "...while most blacks see anti-black discrimination as widespread, fewer believe it is the main reason that many blacks cannot get ahead." **A 53% majority of blacks believe that the inability of blacks to move ahead is due to personal fault.**

Are we a race deserting ourselves at the crossroads?

Way back in 1903, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois recognized that we neither would, nor could, all rise together. He believed that it was the obligation of those within the African American community who were capable of understanding the complexities of post-slavery society and of attaining a college education to do so. He called this group of individuals "The Talented Tenth." This Talented Tenth would then assume the responsibility of aiding the remaining 90% of the race to achieve positive, satisfying, fulfilling, and productive lives. He believed that this was the best and fastest way for African Americans to move forward.

Today, whether or not you agree with Dr. DuBois, there is indeed a segment of African Americans who believe that not racism, but African Americans themselves, hold the key to improving the life conditions (e.g. empowerment) of their under-educated and impoverished "brothers and sisters." The Pew research indicates that most African Americans believe that discrimination is alive and well, but that racism is no longer our main stumbling block. **Clearly many believe that the disadvantaged are responsible for their own predicament.** I wonder if this "talented tenth," which today is more like a "talented third," are willing to aid in the empowerment of the "other Black race?"

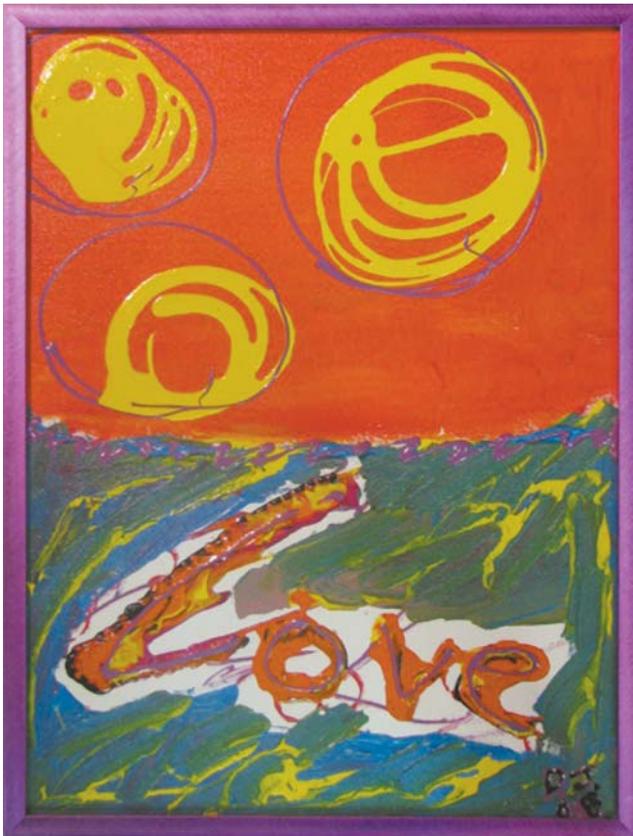


And how do we attain empowerment? It is only attained as a direct result of **A MEANINGFUL LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP WITH AN EMPOWERED ADULT!** There is no other way. It must be gifted by someone who is already empowered.

We are all the descendants of slaves. In every African American middle class person's history is at least one ancestor who gifted them with high character, virtue, values, and life skills.

Someone might have extraordinary drive to succeed and it is hard to determine from whence it came, but to beat the odds in America, one has to have had a meaningful long term relationship with an empowered adult. Yes, siblings sometimes turn out quite differently, and a single negative experience can change one's path in life, but we excel when someone is committed to our long-term empowerment. **In other words when we are lucky enough to have a meaningful long-term relationship with an empowered adult—whether a parent or someone else—we excel.**

It is important to note that anyone, at any age, can achieve additional empowerment, whether age 5, 15, 35, 65 or 105. It simply requires a meaningful longitudinal relationship with an empowered adult, and desire. Empowerment has no age limit and disempowerment shows no age discrimination.



If middle-class African Americans are honest, they will acknowledge that they were just lucky enough to be born into a situation that allowed them to thrive, or lucky enough that someone empowered gifted them with empowerment.

**Conversely, it is almost impossible to thrive without a long-term relationship with an empowered adult who is committed to our positive and holistic development.** If we are unlucky enough to be born into a disempowered home/community, then all the probabilities are stacked towards pain and suffering, of failure in life, not success.

So, if you are fortunate enough to have someone in your life that makes sure you get an exemplary education at an outstanding school, which propels you into college, where you earn a degree, then you are most likely to end up as a middle-class empowered African American person. Does this good fortune mean that it is okay for you to look down your nose at the poor, under-educated blacks that did not have the same advantages as you?

Will middle class blacks choose to passively stand by watching poor, under-educated African Americans implode in a firestorm of discrimination, and violence both within the home and without? Will those who have achieved success be concerned enough to turn their concern into action; or will they leave poor blacks feeling resentful of their inaction, deserted at the crossroads of their lives? Or will they simply scratch their heads and say, "I really don't understand why they can't get themselves together?"

No one actually wants his/her life to be full of pain!

**ARE WE A RACE DESERTING OURSELVES AT THE CROSSROADS?**

# CHARACTER, VIRTUE, VALUES, & LIFE SKILLS

## THE DEFINITION OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment isn't about income, assets, and jobs. **EMPOWERMENT IS POSITIVE CHARACTER, VIRTUE, VALUES, AND LIFE SKILLS.**

Think about it. Who are the people you most admire? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't accumulate wealth and neither did Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, or Malcolm X.

The ancient Egyptians had a conceptual entity called *Maat*, which represented all things good, wonderful, and in balance in the universe. Some referred to *Maat* as literally God's emissary. There were 42 character traits associated with *Maat* that made the *Ten Commandments* seem like child's play. They were also referred to as *The Negative Confessions*. One example is, "I have never caused anyone emotional turmoil." Attempting to perfect oneself in relation to the 42 character traits was literally the purpose of life in Ancient Kemet (Egypt). Imagine such a society compared to our own, where it seems that we believe that the purpose of life is to accumulate money and possessions.

How you define your purpose of life defines everything; if you never define your purpose in life then you'll never have authentic purpose and direction in your life.

Your time is your life and how you spend it defines your life. Empowerment is positive character, virtue, values, and life skills. Empowerment should be our objective as a people. **Empowerment is what slavery took from us, and acquiring empowerment is what will heal our people.** So seek empowerment!

It takes an empowered adult to transfer high character, virtue, values, and life skills to their children, the children of others, or to other adults. Some are lucky, and others are not yet lucky; some have healed from the intergenerational trauma of slavery and its negative mental legacies, while others have not—at least not yet.

So, the question at hand is whether we will allow ourselves to become two different and distinct races? Are the fortunate really prepared to desert our brothers and sisters at the crossroads, or is it possible for us to build a healing community of love that will lift, serve, and save all of our people from utter destruction? **We suffered together through the dog days of slavery when hope unborn had died, and death was the only freedom. Can we not rise together, with the help of one another, as we heal from slavery?**

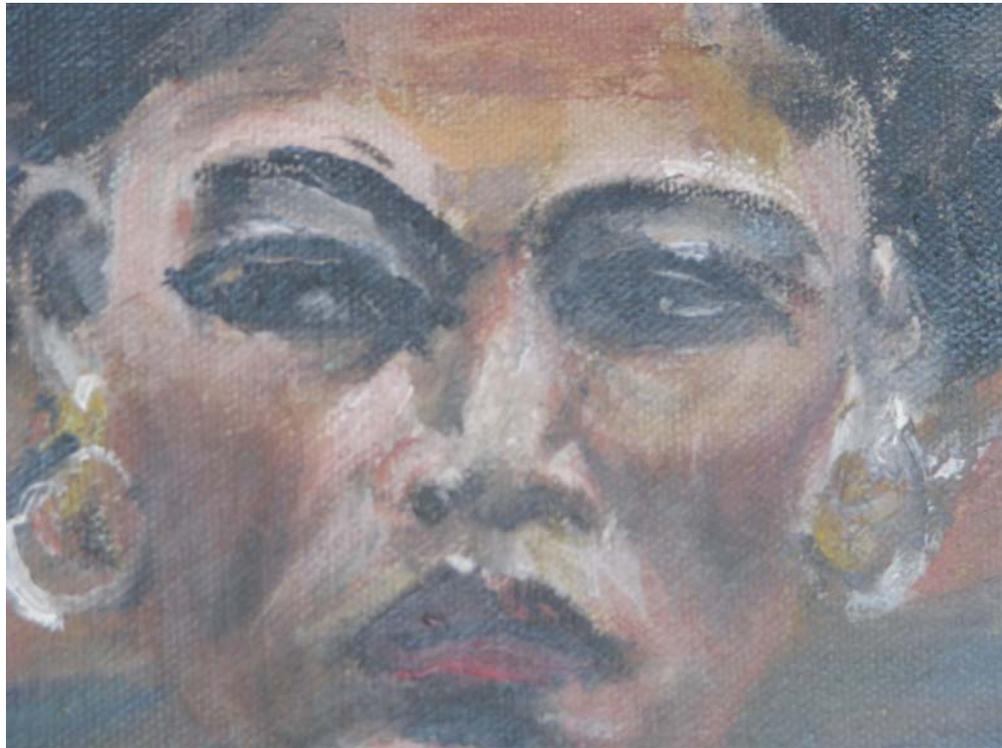
We know the statistics of the number of black children being raised in foster care. There is a most difficult life story behind each of them. We know of the many children whose brains were affected by lead paint dust in their homes. Each represents a difficult life story. We know how many parents sought escape from the difficulties of life by turning to drugs, thus becoming a slave to them, subjecting their children to life's difficulties. We know that many, as children, were sexually, emotionally, verbally, and/or physically abused. So very many precious human beings must struggle with real difficulties in life for which they are not personally responsible. Some are simply not born as privileged as others. They simply are not as lucky as others. They simply didn't have empowered adults providing meaningful long-term relationships in their lives, to empower them. Today's children become tomorrow's adults, and without intercession, difficult life stories will pass from generation to generation. So, never doubt the value of aiding a single child or a single adult.

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This is an extremely sad and serious situation. This is not the time to turn on each other. This is not the time to desert one another. This is not the time to turn up our noses and walk away from the children of the ancestors who toiled in the fields of slavery beside our ancestors. Nor is it the time to turn our backs on our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents who need the help of the empowered. NO!

If all of us are to be successful, it is necessary that middle class and empowered black folks make a commitment to forming meaningful longitudinal relationships with those in need. If we are empowered, then isn't it incumbent upon us to help those who have been systematically disempowered?

And let it be said here, "shame on us" for waiting for someone else to do this for us. We can—and we must—save ourselves, empower ourselves, and lift ourselves. We can—and we must—create a healing community of love that unites the middle class and the underclass of the black community.



We are at a crossroads in the African American community. We must understand that all of us deserve to be loved. All of us deserve to be empowered. All of us deserve to be redeemed!

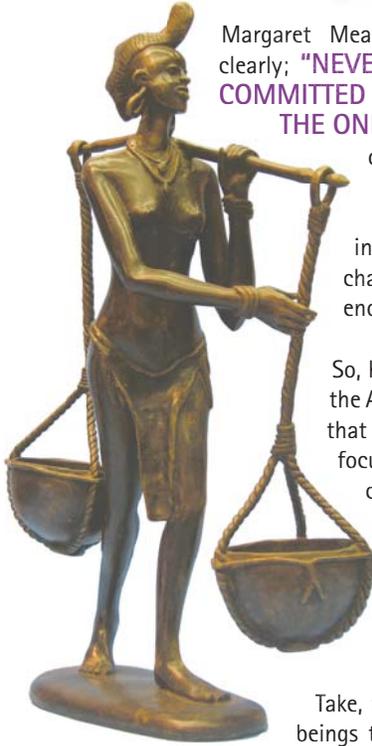
It is not too late—yet we must act **right now!** The task is not too hard for us to undertake if we will but work together. Remember, a band of twigs bound together is stronger than steel.

Let us make up our minds to work together to create a culture of love that empowers and equips every individual for greatness and for success.

It is and always has been true—**WE ARE ONE RACE.**

## TIME TITHING

### WHAT WE MUST BE AND DO



Margaret Mead, a highly celebrated American anthropologist, stated it clearly; **"NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD. INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS."** Internalizing the absolute truth

of Dr. Mead's statement is the reality that has eluded us. When we recognize, acknowledge, and cast off the negative mental legacies of slavery, and then turn our concern for one another into concerted action, we will be an irresistible force of positive change! We must respond to what Grammy always says, "It ain't enough to talk the talk, ya gotta walk the walk."

So, how exactly do we walk the walk in regard to the redemption of the African American race in America? Well, first of all we must believe that the power of a single individual united with other individuals focused steadfastly on something positive is more than enough to change any given situation. As human beings we are ingenious.

We are creative. We are innovative and we are problem solvers.

Just a few can change the world. When a few hundred, or a few thousand, such people come together and focus on the same positive change, the world is literally transformed in marvelous ways before our very eyes.

Take, for instance the abolitionist movement. Those individual human beings turned their concern into action by working diligently day and night—applying various tactics—to dismantle the evil of slavery in the United States. Those truly active in this movement, like any movement, were but a very, very small percentage of America's citizens. Yet, they were successful against incredible odds. Also, let's think about the Civil Rights Movement. Many marched when a national leader came to town, but there were not many truly doing the heavy lifting on a daily basis. Jim Crow was entrenched. African Americans were less than second-class citizens (by law) throughout our country. Yet, some spoke truth to power, agitated and litigated, putting their lives (and the lives of their loved ones) on the line, and steadfastly focused on changing our country and changing our laws— together. Little by little, the wall of lawful segregation began to crack until it came tumbling down in a series of Civil Rights laws that changed our country.

Of course, we could go on and on and on: women's suffrage, the birth of the labor movement, the elimination of child labor, the establishment of minimum wage laws, the establishment of the rights of children, the improvement of mental institutions, the end of lynching, etc. There have been countless movements for positive change throughout our country and world since the dawn of time; but the one thing that they *all* had in common is the power of a small group of thoughtful committed individuals, united in righteous struggle, and determined to turn their concern into action, until positive change was accomplished.

**Slavery was first and foremost a mental institution. Utilizing constant degradation and abuse, slavery instilled a self-limiting belief upon the African American community.** Stripping one of belief in their own ability is one of the most potent negative mental legacies of slavery. Slavery dehumanizes the individual and leads them to believe that they have no power. It attempts to remove one's ability to recognize any potential within. This is a trait that has, sadly, been carried down generation to generation. However, we know ourselves well enough to know that this is an evil lie. We do have power—individually and collectively. When we realize this, we will be able to implement the steps necessary to achieve our own empowerment.

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Never underestimate the power of a small group—or that of a single individual—focused and directed on accomplishing something positive. It seems like the power of the universe comes into play to support their efforts, and it is as simple as their having taken decisive, focused and directed action.

It is believed that very few people realize even 15% of their potential? Why is that? It is because they didn't really try and/or haven't realized what is possible. Why? Because they put limitations upon themselves, like "I was never taught" or "I don't learn that way" or "I don't have the power to do that" or "I can't do that" or "Someone should do something" or "I'm not smart enough." The truth is that a single individual can accomplish almost anything positive if they are really committed, believe that they can, are willing to truly extend themselves, and in fact do so. When this happens failure is impossible, because the worst case scenario becomes one fantastically successful learning experience, which will make it more likely that they will succeed in the future. When a few such individuals act in concert, you have a "Margaret Mead" group.

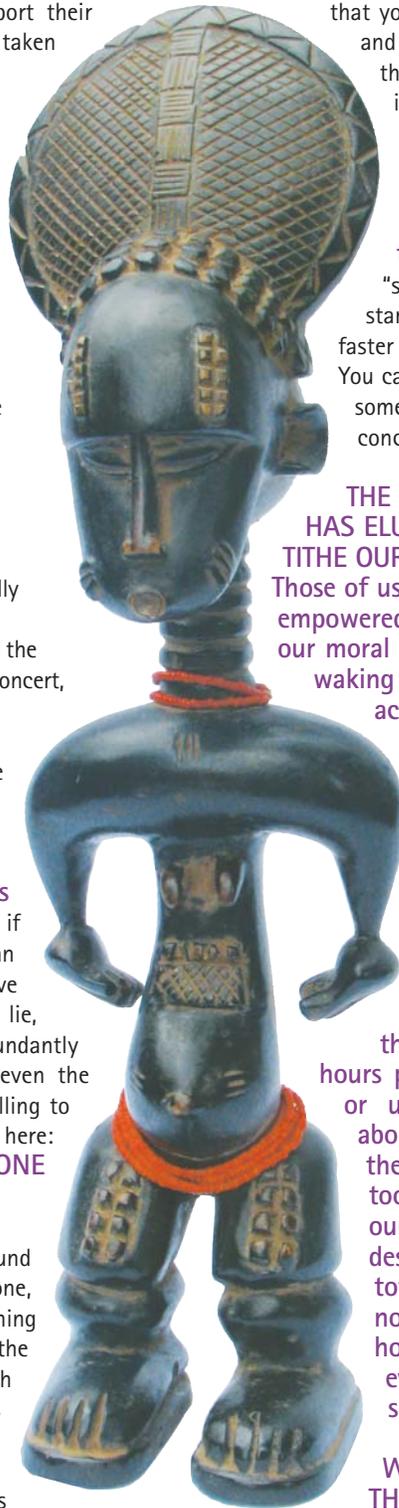
This is the answer to the plight of the African American community. **We as individuals must join with other concerned individuals, and through our actions change our communities now!** For too long we have acted as if (and many have actually believed) African Americans have no power, and that we have no ability to shape our destiny. This is a lie, my friends! We are exceedingly and abundantly more able than we can imagine to do even the seemingly impossible things—if we are willing to work together! And let's state the obvious here: **NOTHING HAPPENS UNTIL SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING...**

Look, aren't you tired of sitting around your kitchen table, talking on your phone, or sitting in church meetings complaining about the challenges that we face in the Black community? Aren't you fed up with watching our precious sons and daughters have their lives flushed down the toilet in the swirl of our apathy? Aren't you tired of praying for a miracle, while God wants us to pray for the strength to turn our concern into concerted action and be his agents on Planet Earth?

Aren't you weary of listening to folks who are willing to blame, blame, blame, but do nothing to create a more positive outcome? I know I am, and I suspect that you are too. And since you're so sick and tired of being sick and tired, this is the perfect time to turn your concern into concerted action. **Destiny is calling you, and this is the exact moment in time when you must answer its call—or decide that you aren't up to the task!** You can become the "someone" who stops talking and starts walking, or who resolves to walk faster and further than you already have. You can become the "someone" who does something...the someone who turns their concern into concerted action.

**THE ANSWER IS SO SIMPLE IT HAS ELUDED US. WE MUST BEGIN TO TITHE OUR TIME IN OUR COMMUNITIES.** Those of us who have been blessed to live empowered lives must decide that it is our moral obligation to give 10% of our waking hours to community service activities that will empower others and change our communities for the good. Look, if you work, you only need to give about seven hours per week (24 hours in a day x 7 days = 168 hours in a week – 56 hours of sleep (8 hours x 7 days) – 40 hours of work (8 hours per day x 5 days) = 72 hours that we control x 10% = 7.2 hours per week). If you were retired or unemployed, you would give about 11 hours per week. Now, in the big scheme of things, is this too much to ask in order to save our people from the brink of self-destruction and our cities from total annihilation? Of course not! If you're unwilling to give 7 hours a week, give five hours or even two and one half...but give something on a regular basis.

**WE MUST TIME TITHE WITH THE SINGLE OBJECTIVE OF EMPOWERMENT, WITH THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW!**



Those of us who are not empowered must resolve to act with resolve to become empowered. These must also time tithe—time tithe to improve their own condition and also time tithe to aid others! Someone needs their help, too!

This is the way the world is made...King also said rightly, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny." This is just true, my friends. What hurts you hurts me. What helps me helps you. **This is why Time Tithing is so powerful. It helps all of us to become better human beings—more caring and compassionate, considerate and loving individuals and leaders. As we offer our gifts and talents to others through tutoring, mentoring, advocacy, agitation, teaching, and the like, we too are uplifted, encouraged, and blessed.**

Listen, empowerment is all about the proper application of character, virtue, values, and life skills. As we tithe our time, we teach others the importance of character, virtue, values, and life skills, and in doing so we demonstrate it to them, and prove that empowerment is possible for them. As we give of our time in voluntary service, our own character, virtue, values and life skills are enhanced. It's a beautiful circle from which the entire community benefits. In fact, it just seems that God made it so that we are happiest when we are in service to others.

**Now don't you dare say this all sounds like a pipe dream! It's not.** It is simply all about empowered individuals turning their concern into action, and thus affecting positive change in our community. And likewise, it is all about those needing empowerment to simply resolve to, and to then work to get some. What if Harriet Tubman, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, or Mahatma Gandhi had said, "This task is too great?, We can never really change anything, We ought not waste our time." If they had, our world would be an incredibly more sad and sorry place. But these individuals, and countless unsung heroes like them, were willing to dream the impossible dream and then work to make it happen. We must do the same.

There are only 24 hours in every single day. We choose how to invest those hours. Those hours come to represent our life's work. **HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME TELLS THE WORLD ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT.** Your time really is your life. How you spend your time literally is your life. Do you really want your legacy to be that you were really good at Wii, or that you played a mean basketball game with your boys, or that you were an inadequate parent, or a terrific abuser of women, or didn't provide for nor nurture your children? Wouldn't you rather tithe your time responsibly in your community such that when you die people will say, "Here lies one committed individual who turned their concern into action, strived to be the very best he/she could be, and helped to change our world"?

It's your CHOICE. You must choose TODAY. As Gandhi said, **"YOU MUST BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE."** Dr. Martin Luther King once said, **"EVERYBODY CAN BE GREAT BECAUSE ANYBODY CAN SERVE.** You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

**WE WILL BE GREAT WHEN WE TIME TITHE IN SERVICE TO ONE ANOTHER.**

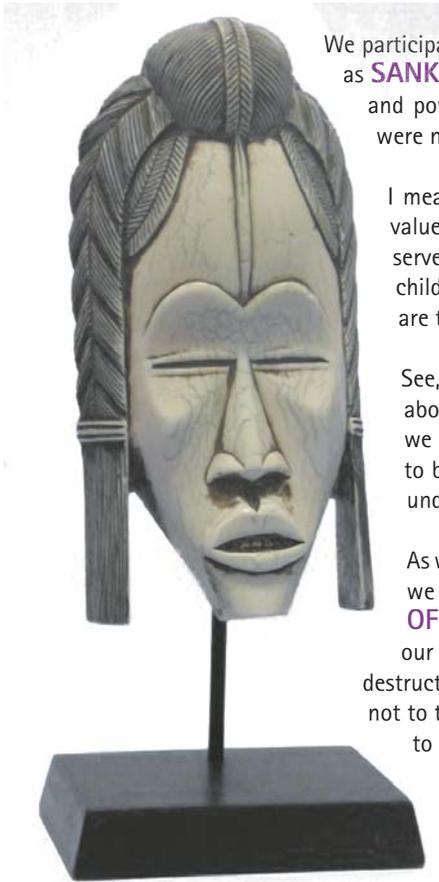


## 20 YEARS IN THE FUTURE

### EMPOWERMENT WAS THE AGENDA, THE FOCUS, THE DIRECTION, AND THE OBJECTIVE

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; and 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.**



We participated in a careful examination of our history in America, which we referred to as **SANKOFA**. 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 horrors 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 to 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, 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 only our own privilege and personal advantage. Hell! Many of us were even willing to knowingly do things that we knew 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 in terms 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 understand that it's all about empowerment—positive character, virtue, values, life skills, and professional skills. Out of empowerment flows everything that is good. The Sankofa Project taught us that we had to go back to the beginning and, step by step, live out the linked and sequential process of healing from the horrors of slavery—**ONE STEP AT A TIME.**

**WE 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 we examined our history with intellectual honesty via the Sankofa Project, we realized that our ancestors had all of the above in abundance. **SANKOFA TAUGHT US THAT OUR PRE-SLAVERY AFRICAN ANCESTORS BANDED TOGETHER.** They empowered themselves through meaningful longitudinal relationships with other empowered 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 that 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. WE WALKED THROUGH THE JOYS AND PAINS, HOPES AND HORRORS OF OUR PRIOR DAYS, AND WE EMERGED MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO RECLAIM OUR GREATNESS, AND TO RESHAPE OUR DESTINY BY EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH MEANINGFUL LONGITUDINAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPOWERED ADULTS WHO WOULD HELP EACH OF US TO DEVELOP CHARACTER, VIRTUE, VALUES, AND LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS THAT WE COULD THEN SHARE WITH OTHERS.**

**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 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. Some gave 5 hours a week and it became known as the Silver Standard of Time Tithing. Others gave 2.5 hours which became known as the Bronze Standard. And those of us without jobs or 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 is a matter of choice, a matter of priorities.** Well, that mentality infiltrated everybody's mind, heart, and spirit. We decided that not one of us was going to fail to be empowered.

The most interesting thing happened. Those who needed empowerment the most gave 10% of their time in voluntary service, and by serving others their perception of their own self-worth greatly expanded. They also spent an additional 10%, 15%, and sometimes even 25% of their time actively seeking empowerment. They served others while, simultaneously, they aggressively pursued opportunities to achieve personal empowerment.



THE  
TRANSFORMATIONAL  
AGENDA

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, new and old, 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 to participate in.

For those committed to living a religious life, Time Tithing literally became the demonstration of our faith both in God and in each other. They all talked about Matthew 25: 31–46. We called it *The Final Judgment* and the food, clothing and shelter mentioned we took both literally, and as a metaphor, for a directive to empower the least of our own. Of course everyone also talked about “doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.” Many memorized Matthew 25: 31–46, although they debated which translation was most appropriate. I liked the New Living Bible Translation, but I didn’t memorize it.



31 “But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

37 “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

40 “And the King will say, **‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’**

41 “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. 42 For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. 43 I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

44 “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’

45 “And he will answer, **‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me!’**

46 “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”

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 and the demonstration of our faith in God and in each other.

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 our beloved *Listen to*

*the Ancestors: They Deserve to be Heard, who said,*

**"YOUR TIME IS NOW! LIVE LIVES OF JOY, AND LOVE, AND POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT, OF 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 at 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, an 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. We also demanded—and got—12-year curriculums in every school district that are crafted to 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 and on bragging, but here's the bottom line: empowerment became the single overriding objective of our African American community. Our pastors, imams, and rabbis preach empowerment from pulpits and lecterns every Sunday.

**WE BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA 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.**



## WHAT'S YOUR DECISION?

### INDECISION IS A DECISION & INACTION IS AN ACTION

We, the great-great-grandchildren of our dear slave ancestors, are floundering because the connection to their greatness was severed. We really don't understand who we are, nor our history, nor the enormous sacrifices that our enslaved ancestors made to gift us with life.

We know we have challenges, yet we don't really understand why, so we cannot craft effective strategies to overcome them; and we have been floundering for a long time. **WE SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW, WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW. AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW, THAT WE DON'T KNOW, REALLY HURTS US.**

But the ancestors just spoke to you via **Listen to the Ancestors: They Deserve to be Heard**. You now know what you didn't know. There is no shame or guilt associated with actions resulting from what you didn't know you didn't know. You simply did not know. But now you know. You just read **The Transformational Agenda** and know that it needs to be implemented **With the Fierce Urgency of Now**. **Empowerment is the Imperative: The Strategy Guide to Unleash Your Potential**, *the article which follows*, will provide you with the tools to begin your empowerment of self, and others.

#### SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

Remember, INDECISION IS A DECISION...AND...INACTION IS AN ACTION!

EITHER YOU DO, OR YOU CHOOSE NOT TO.

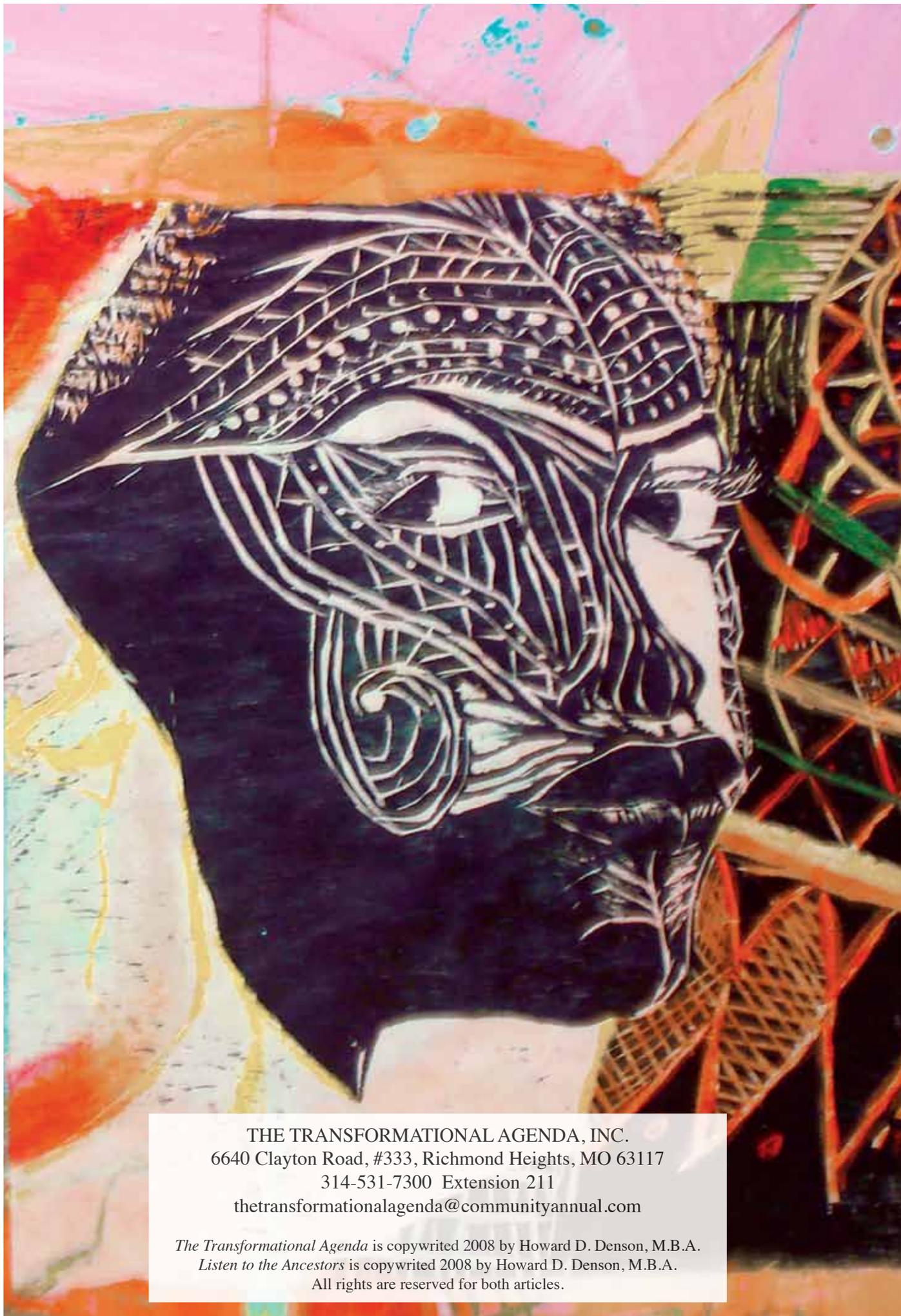
It's that simple, isn't it?

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