

Why All African Americans Need to Help Each Other

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"One of the prices we pay for integration is the disintegration of the black community."
-Ed Smith

1 Introduction

Is there a black community anymore? What does community mean? When I, a light-skinned African American District of Columbia native, meet a dark-skinned African American from Fresno, are we part of the same *community*? Or do we just share some other characteristics that are common to the Black experience in this country? Given that these experiences exist, should there be an involvement by African Americans in helping other African Americans?

These are not easy questions. In this article, I intend to answer the final question with a resounding YES, regardless of the definition of community, residence in this country, or lightness of darkness of an African American's "blackness."

2 Facing the Opposition

In giving lectures about why it is vitally important for an African American to help other less unfortunate African-Americans whenever it is possible, greatest resistance time and again comes from what I like to call the "I Did It Myself" African Americans or IDIMs for short. This is a person who has worked very hard to achieve great success and perceived no help from any sort of "black community" whatsoever. IDIMs feel that because they worked hard, then others can too. Moreover, because they perceived no help from any community, they see no reason to spend their hard earned wealth or time in helping a race of people they see as not being helpful to their success.

IDIMs can come off as selfish, but that label is too naive. In the ideal world, their argument of "I did it, you can too," holds much weight. In addition, because of their success and

wealth, they often feel as if they are living in the ideal world, thus influencing their feelings. But this is not an ideal world. Here is why:

2.1 A Brief History Lesson from a Mathematics Professor

I am not a history expert but here is indisputable knowledge about the history of African Americans in the United States of America.

- The Transatlantic Slave Trade, which was the trade of African Slaves by European, occurred from the 15th century to the 19th century.
- The birth of the United States is recognized widely to be in the late 1770's with the Declaration of Independence.
- The Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1862.
- The Civil Rights Act was enacted in 1964.

3 Implications of the Historical Facts

Here are a few implications of the facts above:

- If one takes the birth of our nation to be 1776, then a significant number of African Americans were slaves up until 1862 (If one gives the absolute benefit of the doubt). Thus for 86 years, a large number of African American's were slaves. That represents 86/231, roughly 37.2 percent, of this country's history.
- If one assumes that full rights were given to African Americans in 1964, then 188/231, a little over 81 percent, of this country's history has involved African American's being less than full citizens.

We go a step further and make the following statements as a result of these previous implications:

1. For over 80 percent of the time this nation has existed, African Americans have been INHERENTLY and SYSTEMATICALLY viewed as

- property to sell or trade.
- animals to be treated at best like pets.
- intellectually inferior.
- tools.

- dangerous.
- laborers.
- entertainment.
- lazy.
- felonious.

This is a modest list.

2. The implications of statement 1. are easy. How can any African American truly claim to be living the "American Dream" when the extremely negative thoughts about their very existence has been the norm 4 times (80 percent) as long as it hasn't (20 percent)?

3. Statement 2. implies that there is a tremendous amount of work to be done for any African American to have any hope of living free of the stereotypes that have followed African Americans for centuries.

4. Statement 3. then implies that while many IDIMs believe they are successful in this country, they are still just as likely to be pulled over for no reason, subtly demeaned by co-workers, and in general susceptible to all of the stereotypes in point 1. Is that being successful? What is success without the freedom of knowing that you are inherently respected in the country you reside? Is there an amount of money that one can earn that makes an individual not care about that?

5. Statement 4. makes it clear that even the most selfish of IDIMs must realize that the only way to really become successful is to destroy these stereotypes by creating a systematic movement to improve the overall Attitude, Life, and Image (ALI) of the African American. Only when ALL African-Americans are seen in a positive light will the typical African American be looked upon as a "great accountant" as opposed to the "best/first black accountant" in a company's history.

6. Statement 5. suggests if this movement does not occur, African Americans of the future will most certainly still be victims of this negative list of depictions.

4 Conclusions

There is a not ONE truly free African American in this country. Affluence and education have provided a great illusion of freedom; it's not so clear if Michael Jordan himself donned

a hoodie to conceal his superstar identity, hopped in a souped up benz, and rode through Beverly Hills, that he would make it all the way without being stopped. Is that freedom? In order to achieve that freedom, don't we need EVERYONE'S help?