

*"How has the violence in your
community affected you personally
and what would YOU do to fix it?"*

I've mulled over the dilemmas that our community has faced for many years, and while my thoughts and ideas of the matter have remained the same, the violent acts have been progressively getting worse. For the purpose of this writing, "community" will refer to people of color and not any specific geographical location. While I do not blame others for our community actions, it is rather necessary to address race and the factors that have contributed to this mindset. For too many years, we have been a divided community that dates way back before the days of the House Negro -v- the Field Negro. It has resulted in conditioning that we are somehow different, and this tiny seed has been our most detrimental self-infliction. To divide is to conquer, yet to White America and the Europeans before them, the one-drop rule will always define us.

Until I reached 6th grade, I wasn't exposed to the disenfranchisement of Urban America. Yes, my family instilled in me an age-appropriate cultural history; however, it didn't align with the neighborhoods and surroundings in which I was raised. That all changed mid-way through 6th grade when I transferred to a much publicized and new school with all the bells and whistles, the Beasley Academic Center. It was placed in one of Chicago's most impoverished and neglected neighborhoods, directly across the street from the Chicago Housing Authority's Robert Taylor "projects." In a weak attempt to offer prosperity, a small percentage were enrolled from the surrounding area, while the vast majority were bussed in from all over the South Side. I instantly became friends (later best friends) with a classmate who lived in Robert Taylor. It wasn't long before I was spending weekends there during the day, which was unbeknownst to my mother, who would have had a fit. This was a life experience I'm truly grateful for because I was able to see and appreciate this genuine reality.

The reality I saw and experienced while spending time in Robert Taylor and the "Low End" of Chicago's South Side is the same as written in the Iceberg Slim and Donald Goins novels. Over the past four decades, the violence has gotten so bad that the city was given the nickname "Chi-Raq." While many in the city were offended, this was an accurate comparison to outsiders. Why? Over the past several decades, we've gradually become desensitized while violent actions have normalized. To understand the mindset of people committing these acts of violence, we must first dissect the antecedent conditions that led to this normalization. After we fell subject to the subliminal divisions, we became property, and dehumanization became the standard. This has resulted in a hereditary depression and self-hate that, throughout generations, has crippled our metamorphosis.

What I would personally do to fix this problem that has plagued our community feels rhetorical. Around the country, solid Brothers & Sisters are speaking, educating, engaging, and donating financially to try and solve this problem to no avail. While I could join the fray somehow, the fact of the matter is I'm a convict whose voice is stifled. But what I can do is communicate through my writing to stress what WE as a people of color need to do. First and foremost, we need to address the divide because there is no difference between light skin & dark skin, rich & poor, folks & people, crips & bloods, and the House Negro & the Field Negro. Once we unite, the bigger picture will come into focus: we,

as people of color, are the majority. At that point, we must VOTE to change the narrative, allowing us to have representation without discrimination. At this very moment, the powers across this country are doing everything possible to ensure this doesn't happen. Without representation to ensure that:

- Education becomes a premium
- Housing is proportionate
- Developmental programs are available
- Extracurricular activities are abundant
- Law enforcement is homegrown
- Criminal justice is impartial

WE will continue to spiral out of control. To think otherwise is naive and why we are still trying to find a solution. A great man once said, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." Sadly, decades later, we are still falling.

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