

BLACK ON BLACK

LIVES MATTER

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As far back as I can remember, African Americans have always been on the receiving end of systematic racism and institutional brutality. In summation of the alphabet-agencies and organizations responsible, this ill-treatment has consistently come at the hands of law enforcement. In 2014, the surge of *peace* officers murdering black people, Michael Brown in particular, along with the district attorney's office refusal to file charges, or, whitewashed Grand Juries failing to return indictments, led to the birth on an international movement known as Black Lives Matter.

While I commend the insurgence of the grassroots organization, in addition to the ad hoc coalition of freedom fighters emerging for the purpose of extracting political and social change, I believe we are losing sight of another atrocity that is equally important. Black on Black crime. Black on Black abuse. When are we going to say enough is enough and become just as passionate in professing that Black on Black Lives Matter?

Without argument, the customs of the *krooked kop klan*, the *persecutor*-prosecutor, and the *hang'em high* judges are disturbingly wrong, but we can't allow the injustice within the justice system to overshadow the way we treat each other. Let us not assume the identity and practices of the oppressor. At the 20th anniversary commemoration of the Million Man March, Minister Louis Farrakhan addressed Black unification with this statement:

Our war is on two fronts...the inner city and police wickedness...Take

Dr. Martin Luther King's philosophy of nonviolence and redirect it to

Black people. We have to teach to love one another and to love your neighbor.

As it relates to the inner city, we are not blind to the governmental design in keeping us under misery's thumb, i.e. inadequate housing, inferior school systems, minimum medical coverage, countless liquor stores, and a never-ending supply of drugs and guns – all of which serve a pacifistic purpose in systematic social complacency. However, this is not the paper in which I will be addressing that exclusively. The objective here is to expand the view and understanding of different things that we do that says, “Black on Black Lives **Don't** Matter”.

-Fathers and Sons-

There are many places where I would love to see fathers and sons occupy at the same time – the home, business field, spiritual/religious services, etc. The kind of places that should be off limits are street corners, dope houses, and the prison system. How many do we know that cohabitate in all three? I not only know some that are on the same prison yard, some are in the same cell! In all honesty, if this doesn't indicate that something is wrong with the leadership in our community, now would be a good time to re-evaluate our litmus test.

Apparently, the child followed his father's lead, so just imagine if he had guided his son along the righteous path? If the father was living a positively pro-social lifestyle, it is evidence-based that the son would have likely followed. That's the problem. Us as fathers aren't towing the line for the sons of our nation. When we model harmful behaviors, those that look up to us for guidance will begin to follow our example. The generation that comes after them will repeat this pattern. Therein lies the cycle of abuse.

For a moment, if possible, can we fathom the psychological effect of living in a 5'x8' cell with your son? To some degree, the father has to feel like a failure as a parent. This feeling would be a good thing, because it means that we recognize the problem. However, unless we can accept the fact that we fell short in our responsibilities, followed by an effort to resolve the problem, we can go on exhibiting various denial patterns. Terrence T. Gorski's book, "Professional Guide to Denial Management", the two antidotes for denial are: Acceptance and Problem Solving.

I once knew a father and son tandem that were in the same cell, but the youngster eventually moved out. They had grown so far apart in the free world, they were practically strangers. The two couldn't talk to one another for too long without arguing. In his formative years, the son's sense of abandonment caused him to join a gang. Whenever the two would get into one of their heated arguments, he would threaten his dad by saying he'd have his gang kill him!

Can we even begin to process how deeply scarred that child must have been to say something like that to his father? I use the term "child", because it's not the man in him that's reacting, it's the traumatized child speaking from the pain of rejection and abandonment. The victim has now become the victimizer. To protect himself from continuing to be hurt, the son is now the first to reject and abandon his dad. Hurt people hurt people. How destructive is this mentality to our culture? In the end, he moved out of the cell, because he felt that his thoughts, feelings, and beliefs didn't matter to his father.

The children of tomorrow are now forced to follow the misguided leaders of today. Ideally, that was an opportune time for the parent to make an effort to reconstruct a healthier relationship, but if the father is still blaming the mother, minimizing and rationalizing his faults,

he doesn't yet know how to lead and is still in stalemate with the responsibilities of fatherhood. This is why absentee-daddies often creates absentee-daddies.

As fathers, we have to realize that our refusal to lead is a bold statement that screams, "Black on Black Lives **Don't Matter**".

-Black Man vs Black Man-

Another issue that signifies the prior statement is our lack of discipline when it comes to pursuing the next man's woman/wife. A brotha can't even have a significant other without another Black man *trying his luck*.

How can we claim to care about the advancement of our culture, yet we attempt to destroy the family unit of another brotha for the sole purpose of sexual gratification? At the same time, we're playing Russian roulette with our own relationship. We can be selfish, egotistic, and immoral in this regard. Aren't we supposed to do onto others as we want done to us? Verbally, we're saying one thing, but our behavior screams, "**We don't need to exemplify brotherhood amongst our peers and display effective leadership for the next generation. We don't need to respect our women, their family unit, or the sanctity of marriage**"! Everything is self-self-self. I want what I want, right or wrong, and to hell with you if you don't like it. Selfish. Black lives what??? Stop it. You should never have to put another man down just to man up.

Sometimes I ask myself, "What's the difference between the Klansmen that wore white sheets verses the young Black males that now wear black hoods"? And I'm not talking about the innocent kids like Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant. I'm referring to those that wear them to

shield their identity when it's time to commit criminal activity and cause terror. "White sheets" and "black hoods" both practice similar discrimination and recognition patterns:

- * Black men can't visit certain neighborhoods without being ran out, beaten, or killed by those wearing black hoods;
- * Black hoods will shoot your house up with your family present;
- * Black hoods prefer to "ride at night" when doing their dirt;
- * Killing a Black man is an instant status symbol;
- * Respectively, Black hoods can earn a tattoo tear drop or a "black heart" for killing a Black man (different White supremacist sects commemorate their kill of a Black man with esoteric tattoos, i.e. shaded lightning bolts, tombstones, or skulls);
- * Black hoods are taught to be heartless and to "show no love" to other Black men or women (nigger lover);
- * Black hoods are taught to "trust no bitch" (place no value in the Black woman).

At the end of the day, those that wear black hoods aren't identical to those that wore/wear white sheets, but one thing we can't do is deny the similarities mentioned herein.

As men, we must recognize that the interrelated destruction of ourselves and our communities translates to society at large that "Black on Black Lives **Don't** Matter".

-Mothers & Daughters-

Whether it's in the movies, music, or in person, how many of us have witnessed Black women telling their daughters things like, "All men are dogs..."; "Don't trust them..."; "All they want is one thing"? Although these gender bashing comments are often inclusive of men in general, they're directed at the majority-race of men that they've either dated or been in an intimate relationship with. Being that our perception derives from experience, it would be rational to conclude that these women have been emotionally, psychologically, and/or physically abused.

Many mothers make the mistake of educating their daughters through the emotion of their own pain. They've seen the flipside of love (hate) and their hearts and minds still bear the scars of unresolved trauma. In other words, their advice can become tainted with subjective reasoning. A lot of times it's not solely the guy's fault. These women have simply made poor choices in men, or, bad decisions within the relationship. The knife cuts both ways, so as stated in the Fathers & Sons section, women also exercise denial patterns by blaming, minimizing, and rationalizing. More befitting would be that of projection: "Attributing one's own feelings, shortcomings, or unacceptable impulses to others" (Essentials of Psychology, 8th Ed. 431).

How does this relate to Black on Black lives matter? Because if she's unwilling to recognize, accept, and problem solve her own issues, she's saying that her healing and well-being doesn't matter. Victimization is victimization, whether we're victimizing ourselves or others.

Not only are our daughters developing unacceptable social characteristics, they're suppressing their real self in the process. Eventually, their real self will become repressed and their ideal self will be the one mimicking the learned behavior. The transformation is better

known as identification reaction formation: "The person attempts to take on the virtues of an admired person" (3 Psychology, An Introduction, 9th Ed. 482).

External influence is powerful. Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, has completed extensive research on the topic and had this to say about it:

New scientific research shows that environmental influences can actually affect whether and how genes are expressed. Thus, the old idea that genes are "set in stone" or that they alone determine development have been disproven. In fact, scientist have discovered that early experiences can determine how genes are turned on or off and even whether some are expressed at all. Therefore, the experiences children have early in life-and in the environments in which they have them-shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grown up to be healthy, productive members of society. This growing scientific evidence supports the need for society to reexamine the way it thinks about the circumstances and experiences to which young children are exposed (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Early Experiences Can Alter Gene Expression and Affect Long-Term Development: Working Paper No. 10).

The presence of a negative father-figure in the home leaves a psychological impression upon the mind of a young girl. To see her mother being respected and love sets the bar for what she will and won't accept as she approaches womanhood. This model of manhood affords her the opportunity to see her own self-worth. For that same father-figure to also treat her with love and respect, it'll reinforces the self-esteem needed to enter healthy relationships in the future.

At the same time, if the mother that is being treated with love and respect has one or more boyfriends on the side, what is the daughter now being taught? Deception? Lack of commitment? Selfishness? How about a false sense of entitlement?

Again, we have to be careful about the behaviors children are exposed to. If not, they'll probably grow up representing a mentality that reads, "Black on Black Lives **Don't** Matter".

-Black Women vs Black Women-

The Black woman is one of the most beautiful women on the planet, but there is still an ongoing rivalry between sistas. One of the most troubling issues would have to be the lighter complexion verses the darker. We've been mentally colonized into believing that the fairer the skin, the more beautiful the woman. Many people that think this way have no understanding of contexts as it relates to perception, therefore they often mistake their opinions to be factual. Big name companies that produce beauty products are in cahoots with this brainwashing agenda. A lot of Black women from the entertainment industry are seen in huge advertising ads with lighter hues than their natural skin tone. Why?

Within the social order of white-supremacist culture, white women come second to white men, so now it becomes an issue of "the lighter the skin of the black woman, the more socially acceptable she becomes". Still second to the white woman, she's now "easier on the eyes to be a nigger". Decades of being told and treated as such continues to teach this prejudice rhetoric to our children. The next generation then becomes the adults that pass on contemptuous insults of dark skin through ribbing or other acts of cruelty.

Another issue that comes up far too often to be ignored is the topic of "good hair". Whether it's in the entertainment industry or in our everyday lives, nappy hair continues to be labeled as "bad hair". By now it should've been realized that people of every nationality have different hair textures. Nevertheless, sistas are continuing to subject one another to adverse classifications because of it. Obviously, those that participate in this madness are unaware of what "naps" are.

Webster's New College Dictionary (2007) defines "nappy" hair as "kinky". Kinky hair is then defined as "tightly curled". The word "bad" was not included in neither definition, which leads me to believe that our hair has been labeled as such because it is non-white.

Between the 1920's through the 1960's, black men would use scalp burning chemicals to fashion their hair in a pompadour style known as a "conk". This is how white men wore their hair during that time period. The same practice of imitation has taken place with black women. Bleaching creams (lighter skin), perms (straight hair), and dieting down to mannequin figures (white super models), are being sought by sistas that have bought into the European beauty standard. Given that white men run this country and the white woman is his most prized possession (because it is she that gives birth to their nation), she becomes the standard that a woman's beauty is measured by. Light skin, thin figures, and long straight hair.

The fact that men validate what's desirable in the opposite sex, black men are just as guilty for shunning the dark skinned, curvy figured, kinky haired black woman. It is us that have either intentionally made disparaging remarks or made them feel insecure with their natural beauty.

Sista, it is your hair that grows upward and outward in a 360-degree circumference that represents knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Erykah Badu has a song where she sings, "Pick your afro daddy, because it's flat on one side." The message within the lyrics was telling men to improve in the areas they were lacking in. Only then can we acquire the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding needed to be an asset to ourselves, our woman, and our children.

Black woman, it is imperative that you too "pick your afro". Only then can you appreciate the melanin in your skin and the cultural texture of your hair. Both of which are the number one biological protectors against the cancerous ultraviolet sunrays! Queen, your beauty is God-given. Love yourself. Fore if you don't, you have psychologically convinced yourself that "Black on Black Lives **Don't** Matter".

-Black Men vs Black Men-

In Zig Ziglar's "See You at the Top" seminar, he theorized that our lives could become more manageable if we learn how to balance the following seven categories:

* **Family**

* **Education**

* **Employment**

* **Leisure**

* **Finance**

* **Health**

* Spirituality

What I will do now is concisely identify the imbalance between both genders within the framework of these categories.

Family: In the ghettos of the inner-city black people tend to face a lot of hardships. Particularly, those related to finance. To destroy the family unit, or any plans on having one, the government offers welfare to struggling mothers under the condition that no man/husband is to reside in the household. The county now becomes her new boyfriend *and* baby daddy. (Hence: the provider);

Education: How many successful college educated sistas marry brothas that dropped out of high school? Not many. We're so caught up in passing judgement against one another, rarely do we stop to consider the "Whys". Ex.: Why are there more brothas incarcerated than the total number of brothas and sistas in college? (It's not by happenstance);

Employment: When Affirmative Action came into existence, white business owners undermined its purpose by hiring more black women than black men. Why? Women fit both minority groups. (1) African-American and (2) Woman. If the black man is excluded from making livable wages in the workforce, he can no longer provide for his family. If his woman isn't receptive to the covert function of Affirmative Action, she may hold his unemployment/under-employment against him. (Hence: resentment);

Leisure: Enjoying leisure time at home differs from that of going out.

The under-educated-unemployed brotha is likely financially embarrassed, so his woman is paying for the movies, dinner, and entertainment. At some point he begins to feel inferior and secretly dreads her reaching for the proverbial pocket book. This feeling intensifies when the roles are reversed with other people present.

Health: Body shaming in any form is wrong. Making fun of with a disabled person is even worse. It's really a low blow. Manipulating people self-esteem issues against them is also deplorable. We should be encouraging our counterparts, not tearing them down.

Spirituality: When we are not grounded spiritually, or, even of the belief that there exist a Higher Power greater than ourselves, we are under-prepared to deal with the many curve balls that life throws at us.

The only way to restore the balance needed to culturally and economically thrive, we have to stabilize our communities. How do we do this? By strengthening our bond (brothas & sistas = the family unit). How do we do this? By first challenging ourselves in our problematic areas, then reconstructing our irrational belief system. Through knowledge of self, we can learn to appreciate one another. Yes, man is the father of our people, as it is he who plants the seed. Equally important, the black woman is the mother of our nation, because it is her womb from which life comes into existence. Let us never forget that we need each other.

As it takes two to create a child, it takes two to raise that child. This level of understanding will birth a nation of men and women committed to raising their children together,

under one roof. With this mentality and practice, this is how we show ourselves and others that

“Black on Black Live **Do** Matter.”