

Is it True What They Say About Black People?

(A Guide to Success for Black Teenagers
and Their Parents)

Kofi Williams

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Table of Contents

1. The New Slavery 2
2. Is It True What They Say About Black People? 5
3. The Truth About Black People 7
4. The Real Reason to Go to School 14
5. The Power of What You Hear and Watch 16
6. Who is the Black Woman? 17
7. The Trick to Success 18
8. Why It is Important to be a Leader? 19
9. Add God to Your Life 20
10. Who is Kofi Williams? And Why Did He Write This Book 21
11. Black or African American? 24

Chapter 1

The New Slavery

Definition of a slave: *One bound in servitude as the property of a person or household*

Definition of servitude: *Lack of personal freedom to act as one chooses.*

Do you know any slaves? No. Are you sure?

I bet some of you do and you don't even know it. I almost became slave myself. It was the beginning of the crack era. Many of my friends were selling crack, weed (marijuana), and Love Boat (heroin). Some of them were making \$1,500 to \$3,000 a week. I was asked to join them many times and the temptation was so strong.

Through the grace of God, a strong Mom and a praying Grandmother, I didn't go down that path but I came so very close. Many of my friends did, one of my best friends did, and many of my classmates chose the road to slavery. What is the new slavery? Here's the breakdown:

Many intelligent strong young Black men and women believe the only the way to make money in the hood is to sell drugs. Most of them start selling at age of eleven or twelve. Crack is the big money maker and that's what most dealers end up selling at some point. They learn very quickly that as long as they are below the age of 18 they are considered a juvenile. Between the ages of 12 and 18 most of these young men and women go in and out of the juvenile prison system. They may get 6 months here and 9 months there but to them it is no big deal. Do most drug dealers stop selling when they hit the age of 18? The answer is no. The police know that too, the police watch people who have a record of selling drugs because they know that they will go back to it.

Everyone I have ever known who sold drugs after the age of 18 has gotten caught. Once caught the dealer at 18 or older, he or she can be tried as an adult. Guess what? Congress has a little thing called mandatory sentencing with no parole for possessing or selling crack. What do you think the sentencing is for having 10 crack rocks in your possession? How about 60 crack rocks (most dealers have at least that much on busy Friday or Saturday night)? Ten crack rocks equals more than 5 grams and 60 crack rocks equals more than 50 grams. Check the chart below to see how much time will be served

Federal mandatory minimum cocaine sentences (for first offenders)

Type of drug	5-year sentence*	10 year sentence*
Powder cocaine	500 grams**	5 kilos***
Crack cocaine	5 grams**	50 grams***

* There is no parole in the federal system

** A gram equals a single packet of sweetener (5 grams = 0.18 ounces/ 50 grams = 1.8 ounces)

*** A cup is 8 ounces

**** A kilo equals 2.2 lbs.

Congress made mere possession of crack cocaine punishable by a five-year sentence, making crack the only drug to carry a federally mandated sentence for simple possession.

***** Information comes directly from the United States Sentencing Commission <http://www.ussc.gov/>

Did you know that average prison sentence for a violent crime like murder carries an average sentence of 100 months but for selling drugs you can serve up to 120 months (ten years)?

What do you do in prison?

People in prison are told when to get up, when to go to sleep, when go outside, when to shower, and if you're real lucky you get to work in one of these new programs in prison where you work for \$0.25 to \$0.50 an hour. When you work a long hard 8 hours as a prisoner you get a whopping \$2.00 to \$4.00 for the day. Plus, you get to do this for the next 5 to 10 years of your life. Isn't selling drugs great?

Now where have I heard this before -- when Black people had someone else telling them when to get up, sleep, eat, drink, bathe, and work for almost nothing. Ding Ding Ding!! You got it! Slavery!! But this time we weren't dragged off by force to be a slave. We gladly applied to be a slave because we were trying to get some fast money. We wanted to have clothes, the money, and the cars but at what price?

Do you know privately owned prisons (not run by the state) are one of the fastest growing businesses in the country? Why do you think that is?

These companies are even traded on the stock market. The Corrections Corporation of America is one of the largest of these "corporations," their website is <http://www.correctionscorp.com/aboutcca.html>, and their stock symbol is CXW. The other private prison companies include the **Geo Group**, stock symbol is GEO (<http://www.thegeogroupinc.com/index.html>) and the **Cornell Companies**, stock

symbol is CRN (<http://www.cornellcompanies.com/>). Companies like these outsource the services of inmates to major corporations and make millions of dollars. What is the color of the majority of the inmates going into the prison system right now?

Did you know the Thirteenth Amendment of US Constitution Makes Slavery Legal in Special Cases?

Section 1. *Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

The above statement simply means that slavery is illegal unless you are convicted of a crime.

Back to being convicted at 18

Anyone who has gone to college especially a HBCU (Historically Black College and University) can tell you that between the age of 18 and 23 are the best times of your life. College can be so much fun! You get a chance to be an adult without adult responsibilities like having to work everyday at a job.

Let's fast forward, say you got a five year sentence and not the ten year one. You got locked-up at 18 so your getting out when your 23. That's not so bad right? Your still young and have your whole life ahead of you, right? Then it hits you, everywhere you go the felony charge follows you. It follows you to every job you apply for (almost no one wants to hire a felon), most good colleges won't touch you if you are felon, and you can no longer vote in some states.

Therefore, at age 23, it becomes extremely hard to get a decent job paying more than minimum wage, it's hard to go to a decent college, and you can't vote in some states. What are your options? What do you think happens to most felons after they get out? They want to do the right thing but it is hard going from making \$3,000 a week to making minimum wage. In prison, their food, housing, and basic needs were taken care of but in the real world minimum wage will not cover rent, food, and other basic necessities. So what do they do?

They still live in the same neighborhood. Their friends are trying to get them back in the game. They tease them about the minimum wage job. No more \$100 tennis shoes, no more \$1,000 shopping sprees, no car because it was confiscated when they were arrested the first time. Everyday is working at this job that they hate while making little to no money. And going out on Friday night with no money is no fun.

Most former drug dealers go back to selling because they can't take being dirt poor with the ability to make thousands of dollars sitting right in front of them everyday. Back to you, a year goes by and you just can't take it anymore. You are tired of being broke, back to dealing. Six months go by and you are caught -- again. Remember, police watch former felons waiting for them to trip up again.

This time you get 20 years because the police found 100 grams of crack on you (go check the chart). You are 24 years old going back to jail for 20 years with no parole. When you are released you will be 44 years old. Between the ages of 18 and 44 you have spent 18 months of your adult life outside of prison, twenty-five years in prison. You have missed your entire youth. For what? So you could live like your rich for couple of years when you were a teenager and be a slave for the rest of your adult life. You get 2 or 3 years of living the life with money in your pocket in exchange for 25 years or more of being a new slave. Does that make sense? Is this the life that you want? Do you want to make \$2 to \$4 dollars a day while major corporations make millions off of your labor? The decisions you make right now as a teenager will determine whether you are a new slave for the system or someone who will succeed and go on to do great things in life.

Chapter 2

Is it True What They say About Black People?

I have traveled all over this country several times over and I am always amazed at what people believe is true about Black people. We have all heard the negative stereotypes about us, some seem crazy and others seem to be more accurate than we would like to admit.

What are your beliefs? In this chapter, write down your answers to the list of questions. This is not a test. It isn't about getting the answers right or wrong. The first lesson to learn about success is NEVER lie to yourself about anything. If you are ashamed or embarrassed about some of your thoughts or feelings, don't hide them. Take time to figure out why you feel the way you do. Try to remember the very first time you felt this feeling. What was happening? Who was there? Can you remember why you began to have this feeling? Taking time to understand why you feel the way you do can go a long way to changing those thoughts and feelings. Maybe you will realize that there is no reason to feel ashamed of your thoughts after all.

Please take out a sheet of paper and answer every question as truthfully as possible. After answering the questions save the sheet of paper until you finish reading the book. Once you have finished the book, please answer all the questions again without reviewing the first answer sheet. Compare the two answer sheets, I guarantee that some of your answers will have changed. If the answers have changed, ask yourself why. Think about why you answered the questions the way you did the first time around. You will be amazed by the answer.

Are Black people lazy?

Are we late for work more than other races?

Do Black people have a hard time working together?

Are we like crabs in a barrel? (When we see another Black person succeeding do we

get jealous and try to pull him or her down?)

Can Black people run a successful business?

Are other races better at business than Black people?

Are we more likely to steal than other races?

Are we more likely to be violent?

Are we more likely to kill someone?

Are Black people bad at math?

Are other races better in math than Black people? If so, why?

Are other races smarter than Black people? (If so, name the races in order from smartest to dumbest.)

Are Black people more likely to use drugs than other races?

Would you say Black people had bigger contributions in sports or science?

Name as many Black inventors as you can

Name as many Black inventions as you can

What do you know about Africa?

If someone called you African would you be offended?

Do you know of any African people creating inventions or scientific discoveries (like medical breakthroughs or new devices to help mankind)?

If you had your choice of places to visit outside of this country, what country would you choose to visit? Why?

Would you ever consider visiting Africa? Why or why not?

Remember to keep this sheet of paper until you finish the book.

Chapter 3

The Truth About Black People

In this chapter, I will give you some real facts about who Black people are and what we have done. All the facts in this chapter took several years to compile. The sources for this information range from “The Washington Post” and “Newsweek” to world-renowned historians such as Dr. Diop and Herodotus (the Greek historian widely considered the Father of History). I will begin with our ancestors, Africans.

African people were the first people to farm. They were also the first people to use animals to farm.

Africans in several different areas of Africa were the first people to invent tools such as hand axes, arrows, and fish hooks. These tools were used to build communities.

African people were the first people to build a community into a city. The farmers in the surrounding countryside provided food for the city workers by raising wheat, barley, cattle, and goats.

African people formed two territories which were called the lands of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Later, Upper and Lower Egypt became the world's first unified country. Menes was the king who unified Egypt and created the first known government in the world. Egypt was ruled by a Pharaoh (king).

Menes created a city called Memphis to serve as the capital city of Egypt. Memphis was the capital of Egypt just like Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States.

The Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted over 3000 years. Roman and Greek empires combined, only lasted about 1400 years. The United States is only 230 years old. Therefore, the African civilization is one of the oldest known civilizations in the world.

Africans in Egypt created the first kind of paper and ink for writing that was small and light to carry.

Africans were excellent in creating different forms of art. Statues were made of many different materials from wood to the hardest stone called black diorite.

Africans were great painters and experts at the craft of making pottery. Even today, African pottery is considered works of genius.

African scientists discovered that each weekday has 12 hours of the day and 12 hours of the night. They discovered that it takes exactly 24 hours for earth to have day and night.

African scientists also discovered that a certain amount days, make a month and a certain amount of months make a year. These scientists were the first to discover that there are 365 days in a year that can be divided into 12 months.

An African scientist and architect named Imhotep built the first pyramid as a place to study the stars, as well as a place to bury dead pharaohs (kings). This pyramid, the Step Pyramid is the oldest standing stone monument in the world - it is still standing some 4,600 years later.

The great pyramid of Khufu at Giza was designed and built by Africans was huge. Each side of the pyramid is 755 feet in length. If you were running the length of one side of the pyramid it would be like running across two and half football fields. The pyramid is 481 feet in height which is equal to running the length of one and half football fields.

In ancient Africa, African architects built the pyramids so precisely that the four corners face exactly to the North Pole, South Pole, East, and West.

The pyramids were built without using concrete or any type of glue to hold them together. Instead, they were built by placing blocks of stone on top of each other. The African craftsmen cut the blocks so perfectly, and the blocks fit so tightly on top of each other, that a knife could not fit between the blocks.

Pyramids were built using blocks that weighed from two tons to 70 tons. The smallest block used in building the pyramids equaled the weight of two small cars. The largest block used weighed 70 tons and equaled the weight of 70 small cars.

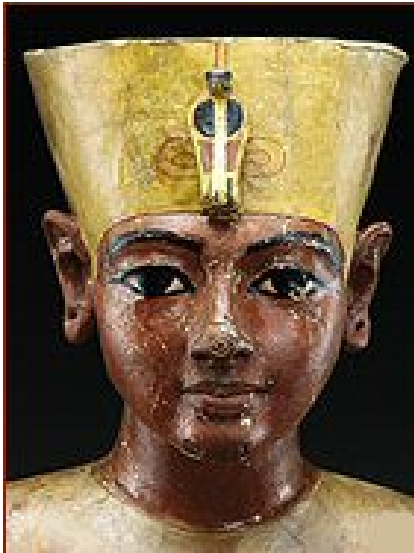
African architecture was so advanced that it was the basis for some modern architecture. In fact, the Washington Monument is an exact duplicate of an African monument called the Obelisk (Greek name) or a Tekkan (original name). The capital city of the United States has African architecture as one of its major monuments, and you probably didn't even know it.

African doctors created and implemented the entire process of examination and diagnosis. They developed treatment of over 250 illnesses. Records show they treated many different injuries and also performed surgery using many different techniques.

African scientists were the first to create mathematics (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions). They went on to create higher level mathematics like geometry and trigonometry. These early discoveries made it possible to later create things like computers, microwaves, and televisions that we use today.

African people were the first to create a school of higher learning, which is now called a college or university.

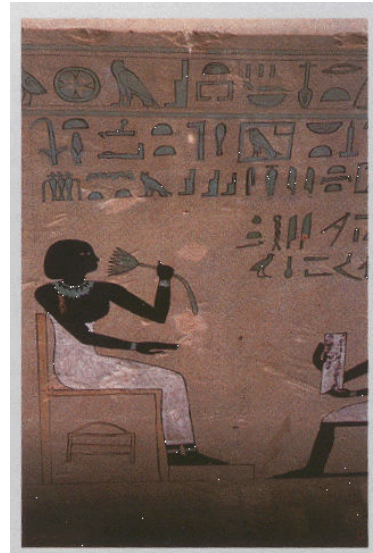
**Are Ancient Egyptians Really Black?
A picture is worth a thousands words.**



**Statue of the famous King Tut
aka King Tutankhamun**

Torso of Tutankhamun

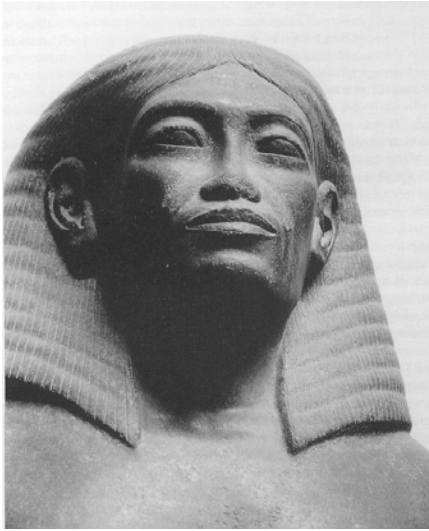
Painted wood
Length 73.5 cm (28.9 in); width 41.5 cm (16.3 in)
18th Dynasty; reign of Tutankhamun
Thebes, Valley of the Kings



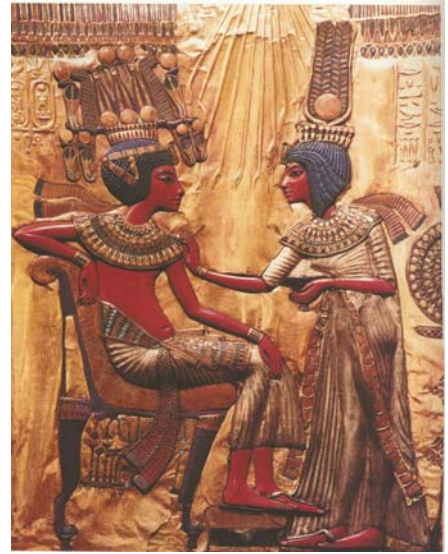
**Princess Aushead
daughter of Pharaoh
Mentuhotep II.**



**The picture is from the Egyptian
Tombs of Nobles, Rekmire**



**Stone Statue of
Pharaoh Amenhotep,
son of Hapu**



**King Tut
and his wife**

There is an easy way to determine whether these Ancient Egyptians would have been considered Black in America. During slavery times with the complexion and features in these pictures would ancient Egyptians have been a white slave master or a slave? During the 1950s would any of these ancient Egyptians have been allowed to sit at an all white lunch counter in the south? The answers are obvious. These Egyptians would have been slaves and they would have been arrested in the south for sitting at an all white lunch counter. It is clear, based on their skin complexion and their features these Egyptians would not have been considered white. The definition of being Black in America was mainly based on skin color and facial features. According to that definition the Egyptians were Black.

Here are more accomplishments from our ancestors in America

George F. Grant developed the **golf tee**, a small wooden peg used to hold a golf ball in place. Grant invented the golf tee because he and other golfers had trouble keeping the ball still on the initial drive (Patent No. 638,920).

John Stanard made the first truly workable **refrigerator** in 1891. Other refrigerators did not cool properly and food often spoiled. Standard's brilliant use of compressed air and the correct amount of ether as a coolant is what made his refrigerator such a success (Patent No. 455,891).

A new adaptation of the **ironing board** was created by **Sarah Boone** in 1892 (Patent No. 473,653).

A new version **clothes dryer** was invented by **G.T. Sampson** in 1892. It was the first machine to use a motor to dry clothing. Sampson's clothes dryer led to the creation of the electric and gas clothes dryers that are in use today (Patent No. 476,416).

S.R. Scottron invented the **curtain rod** in 1892. The rod was a long straight metal tube with an opening at each end. The curtain rod made it possible for people to stop nailing curtains and drapes over windows (Patent No. 481,720).

Thomas W. Stewart created an improved **mop** in 1893. The mop was made up of a long, wooden handle with a cloth attached at the end, used to wash and dry floors. Before the mop, people cleaned floors on their hands and knees with a scrub brush (Patent No. 499,402).

Lloyd P. Ray designed a new type of **dust pan** in 1898 to pick up dirt off the floor. The dust pan made it easier to dispose of trash. Before the dust pan, dirt was swept out of the door or picked up with thin cardboard (Patent No. 587,607).

One of the world's first **street sweepers** was constructed by **Charles B. Brooks** in 1896. This invention was made up of large brushes attached to the bottom of a vehicle to remove trash from the streets. Street sweepers are still used today in every major city in the United States to clean streets (Patent No. 556,711).

William B. Purvis invented a different version of the **fountain pen** in 1890. The fountain pen was hand-held with a supply of ink inside of it. Purvis' invention led to the invention of the ballpoint pen which is used by millions of people across the world (Patent No. 419,065).

J.B. Rhodes invented an improved Water Closet in 1899. It was the first indoor bathroom for homes. The water closet was an area the size of a closet that contained a toilet. Before the Water Closet was invented, people had to go outside to a place called "the outhouse" to use the bathroom. Without J.B. Rhodes' invention and others like it, people everywhere would still have to go outside to the bathroom (Patent No. 639,290).

William B. Purvis built the first **paper bag machine** to cut and fold paper into bags in 1894. This invention changed the paper bag industry by speeding up production and reducing the cost of making bags (Patent No. 293,353).

Alexander Miles built an improved **elevator** in 1887 using a platform with wire ropes attached to a structure in buildings for the purpose of carrying people or goods. Before Miles built his elevator, other elevators would frequently break when heavy loads were used (Patent No. 371,207).

Ms. L.D. Newman developed one of the first modern hair **brushes** for grooming in 1898. All types of brushes have been around for hundreds of years, but Ms. Newman invented the first modern plastic brush (Patent No. 614,335).

The **pencil sharpener** was created by **John L. Love** in 1897. A crank and rotor would cut thin slices of the pencil away as the crank was turned to create a sharp point. Until the creation of the pencil sharpener, pencils had to be shaved with knives to produce a sharp point (Patent No. 594,114).

A team of African Americans named **Albert Jones and Amos Long** designed **caps for bottles** in 1898. They designed a round tin covering for the purpose of sealing bottled liquids. In the past, bottles were sealed by wooden corks. Caps changed the bottle-making industry because they greatly reduced the amount of spoiled liquid (Patent No. 610,715).

B.F. Jackson developed the **gas burner** in 1899 which is used in gas stoves and gas furnaces in homes and businesses around the world. The gas burner is a device that when lit produces a flame for cooking or heating. Jackson's invention has made it possible to cook food and heat a house at the touch of a button. Before the gas burner, people had to gather wood from outside to create a fire to cook food and heat the house (Patent No. 622,482).

A version of the **lawn mower** was created by **John Albert Burr** in 1899. His lawn mower consisted of rotary blades used to cut grass. Before the invention of the lawn mower, the grass was cut by hand with a sickle, a curved single-edged blade on a short handle (Patent No. 624,749).

The traffic light was invented by **Garrett A. Morgan** in 1923. This invention not only shaped the way Americans drive, but the entire world. Can you imagine traffic without the traffic light (Patent No. 1,475,024)?

John H. Hunter built the **portable weighing scales** in 1896. The scales were made up of levers and balance springs to weigh letters and packages. Now there are portable weighing scales in post offices, hospitals, and businesses across the entire world (Patent No. 570,533).

J.W. Smith created the **lawn sprinkler** in 1897, a swivel-shaped device that sprays water over a large area. Before the lawn sprinkler, most lawns were watered by hand-held hoses (Patent No. 581,781).

The improved **water closet for railroad cars** was designed by **Lewis H. Latimer and C.W. Brown** in 1874. A compartment, usually the size of a closet, served as the toilet. This was the beginning of toilets being placed on trains, planes, and buses (Patent No. 147,363).

Lewis H. Latimer and J.V. Nichols also designed the first **electric light bulb** with a carbon filament in 1881. Most history books credit Thomas Edison with this discovery but his light bulb used a cotton filament. The cotton filament did not work very well because, the light it produced lasted for a very short period of time. Latimer created the carbon filament light bulb that brought America and the world out of the dark age of candles into the age of the electric light bulb. He went on to write the first book on lighting systems and installed the street lighting system in New York City (Patent No. 247,097).

Locomotive (train) Smoke Stack was built by **Landrow Bell** in 1871. The cone-shaped metal structure was used to keep embers and cinders from blowing into the passenger compartment. Before Bell's smoke stack, blowing embers and cinders from older smoke stacks often caused fires and injured passengers (Patent No. 115,153).

Garrett A. Morgan created the **gas mask** in 1914. This invention has made it possible for firemen and other rescue officers to enter smoke- and gas-filled areas without inhaling smoke or gas. The gas mask has saved millions and millions of lives (Patent No. 1,113,675).

How can the stereotypes in chapter one be true when they directly conflict with the facts of our history? Black people can't work together? Black people are lazy? Our ancestors built the pyramids and a society that lasted for over three thousand years. We had to be able to work together to get that accomplished. Do you think a group of people who are lazy could have created a civilization, maintained civilization, and then advanced civilization for over 3,000 years? The United States has been around for only 232 years. Black people just aren't good at math? Black people created math. How can we not be good at it? Black people are always late? Our ancestors created the divisions of time (seconds, minutes, hours, etc.). How does that work? Black people found it important enough to create the divisions of time but don't respect it by being late all the time. Does that make sense? Black people can't run a business. Black people are violent. Our ancestors were the first to create a society where people didn't act like animals. They created a system based on rules and a value for life. How is it possible that being violent is in our genes when we share the same genes of our African ancestors who respected life?

The object of this book is not to tell you what to think -- it is designed to make you think! The book is designed to make you question why it is so easy for us to believe the negative stereotypes about ourselves. Why do we allow ourselves to be so easily divided? Why have some of us accepted the stereotypes so much that we don't even want to be Black? Why do some of us not want to be called African American? Some Black people don't want to be associated at all with Africa, even though Africa is the birth place of

civilization and all human life. How did this happen? This book will explore all those topics and more in the coming chapters. All that is being asked of you is to keep an open mind until you have completely read the book.

Chapter 4

The Real Reason to Go to School

“It’s not all about A’s and B’s.”

Whether you know it or not, knowledge and information determine how people view you, this even affects how you view yourself, your friends, and your life. If you disagree, read the example below.

In our example we are going to use Kareem. Kareem is very smart, he gets straight A’s in school, he comes from a rural area in another country with no TV, where he has never seen a laptop computer.

He attends a summer camp in America with some people who want to play a joke on him. They give him a broken Play Station and tell that this is the newest laptop computer. Kareem gets very excited about his new gift. Kareem goes around to the whole camp telling people about his new laptop computer. Some people laugh while others just look at him like he is stupid. Is he stupid?

No, Kareem is not stupid he just didn’t have knowledge about laptops to know what they looked like or anything else about them. So what did the people he told about his new gift probably think about him? They more than likely thought he was stupid, right? Kareem’s lack of knowledge and information made him appear as though he was stupid.

Let’s go to another example.

Who do you think would make more money -- the top Black business men and women or the top Black pro athletes or the top musical artist? Shaq is the highest paid NBA player. Does Shaq make more money than the top Black business person? Prince in 2004 was the top money earner for music. Does Prince make more money than the top Black business person? If you thought Shaq made more money, then you were wrong! If you thought Prince made more money you were wrong too! There are at least four Black business people who are billionaires, not millionaires, like Black professional athletes and musical artists in America. Shaq makes about \$40 million a year, and Prince made \$57 million in 2004. Those numbers would not put them in the top five of richest Black people in America.

Back in the early 90’s, before the first \$100 million contract in the NBA, a Black businessman named Reginald F. Lewis was worth \$400 million. He was the CEO of TLC Beatrice International Holdings, Inc., a conglomerate of 64 companies in 31 countries. TLC Beatrice had earning revenues of over \$2.5 billion. The company made him the wealthiest African American in the country. It was the first African-American owned

enterprise to exceed the billion-dollar mark. He died in 1993.

Another major corporate leader, Kase L. Lawal, chairman and CEO of CAMAC Holdings, Inc., which was cited as the No. 1 Black business in 2003 with approximately \$1 billion in sales. In 2004, World Wide Technology, Inc. led by their CEO David Stewart was named the top Black business in America with sales exceeding \$1.4 billion dollars. The list continues with Gregory Jackson the CEO of Prestige Automotive an African American owned car dealership bringing in \$1 billion dollars in 2004. There are also very prominent wealthy African American businesswomen such as Sheila Johnson Americas's first Black American woman billionaire, and Oprah Winfrey, world-renowned TV talk-show host. They are both worth more than \$1 billion. To give a visual of how much \$1 billion really is, imagine a one-million dollar check. It would take a total of 1,000 one-million dollar checks to make \$1 billion. Janet Bryant Howroyd created the Act-1 Group, a company that specializing in staffing and professional services. Act-1 Group brought in \$623 million dollars in 2004. Black business can be much more profitable and it can last for a longer period of time than sports or music.

Let's recap for a second! In the beginning of the chapter it was stated that knowledge and information determine how people view you, how you view yourself, and how you view your life.

Did you know all the facts about Black people mentioned in chapter two? Did you believe some of the stereotypes about African Americans? Do you think people in America believe those stereotypes?

If you believe those stereotypes you were like Kareem, you were not stupid, but you lack the proper knowledge and information about your history to make an intelligent decision. The same goes for the example about who makes more money the top pro athletes or the top business people. A lot of people think the best way for young Black person to get rich is to play sports, sing or rap. Most of you probably would have never thought that a Black business person could make more money than Shaq. Again, lack of knowledge and information affected how you viewed the world and your life.

Lack of knowledge or important information can cost you and your family millions of dollars. It can cost you your freedom or your life. This is the real reason why it is important to not just stay in school but to strive to be the best in school. It is not always about learning Algebra or English. It's not all about A's and B's. Yes, you may never use Algebra in your life but the ability to problem solve that you learn through Algebra can help you throughout your life. You may not like English as a subject but the knowledge you gain from reading books can help you to earn millions of dollars and/or follow your dream. When you get A's and B's in a subject it should reflect how much knowledge you gained from that subject. You should never get good grades for the sole purpose of increasing your grade point average. The focus should be to gain as much knowledge from school to learn how to use it to reach your dreams and goals. To educate yourself as much as possible so you will never be Kareem telling people a broken play station is a laptop computer because you lack the proper knowledge.

Chapter 5 The Power of What You Hear and Watch

Can someone make you like something when you don't want to? Not you right? No one can make you like something that you don't want. That is what you think, but the truth is it is being done to you everyday. How? Has there ever been a song on the radio that you hated at first but the station played the song 20 times a day, everyday? Then after a few weeks the song didn't seem so bad, after a month you began to sing the song yourself.

At first you hated the song but now you like it. How did that happen? The power of repetition!! Your brain can be programmed by repetition. Whatever the brain hears and sees consistently is what it becomes use to and after a while it begins to want the very thing it hated at first, like the song example used earlier.

Why is this important? I mentioned in an earlier chapter how lack of knowledge and information can determine how you view yourself, friends, and your life. If you don't know that your brain can be programmed to want things you don't want simply through repetition, can someone use that lack of knowledge against you?

Is it possible that stereotypes and negative ideas can be repeated so much through songs and images that you get use to it? Maybe even like it and want it?

Why is going to prison promoted so much in Hip-Hop? Prison has been always considered a bad thing in the Black community. How did that change?

Why do the majority of young Black men want to be thugs, pimps, and players? Even though a good number young Black men come from good homes and the suburbs, they still want to be seen as a pimp, player, or thug. In the Black community those words have always been considered negative. What happened?

I'm not going to tell you what to think? I will tell you this, when the TV show *A Different World* was on primetime TV in the eighties enrollment for Blacks in college increased by 300%. Since urban radio stations have been playing songs promoting prison life as well as HBO making shows like *The Wire* and *OZ*, there are more Black men in prison than in college.

Let's repeat that one more time, in the eighties when positive shows like *A Different World*, *The Cosby Show* were being aired, and music wasn't promoting prison life, college enrollment was up. In the 90's with no popular Black shows promoting college life and a lot of Hip-Hop songs are promoting the thug life as a badge of honor was when more Black men ended up in prison than in college. Remember the power repetition!! Whatever the brain hears and sees consistently is what it becomes use to and after a while it begins to want the very thing it hated at first. The next time you listen to the radio listen to the amount of negative words used over in over in songs. Listen to how many times rappers talk about pulling a gun, shooting somebody, prison, and smoking weed. After you do that, think about the song you use to hate but liked after the station played it 20

times a day. Could the same thing be happening to you with your views on drugs, prison, Black women, and how you see yourself? Can hearing negativity over and over again day in and day out be programming your brain? Remember the song you hated but liked after constant repetition. If that happened with the song you hated, is it really that hard to believe that same can be done with negative stereotypes and ideas?

Chapter 6

Who is the Black woman?

(This chapter is for the men too!)

Did you know the oldest living bones ever found were those of a Black woman? Through the research of anthropology a Black woman has been found to be the mother of the human race. This is not my opinion but the research of the highest experts in the field of anthropology. The legacy and greatness of Black women have been felt since the beginning of time.

Even something as horrific as slavery could not strip the greatness from Black women. Beatings, repeated rapes (sometimes on a nightly basis), having their babies ripped from their arms to be sold, watching their men lynched and beaten to death were endured for generations of Black women. The mental and physical abuse would have broken most women but the greatness could not be stripped. Harriet Tubman rose to the occasion along with thousands of others during the dark slavery times.

After enduring slavery, then Jim Crow laws, the civil rights movement got a shot in the arm from a Black woman named Rosa Parks. She along with many others stood side by side with Black men in the face of death during the demonstrations for civil rights. Both men and women were beaten, bit by attack dogs, hung, and shot for basic human rights. The ability to eat or live anywhere, the right to vote, the option to go to any public school, are some of the privileges we take for granted everyday. Many of us never take the time to think about the incredible sacrifices made for us by our ancestors especially our Black women. Many gave their lives for our freedom. How do we repay them for their sacrifice? Many of us don't! Our actions toward each other (black on black crime), the music we make (songs praising prison, murder, and degrading our Black women), the way we take the education they died for as a joke (by dropping out or not studying), and the stereotypes we perpetuate say that their sacrifice meant nothing.

Magazines, TV shows, music videos, songs, and movies have reduced Black women to b***hes and gold diggers going to the pimp with the most money.

How did this happen?

The overwhelming majority of Black women have always been respectful and supportive to Black men. They pushed through barriers in education and the workplace to achieve goals that improved the Black community. Now they are just eye candy to be used as sex objects, risking their health with AIDS, Herpes, and many other diseases. Some Black

women have allowed themselves to knowingly share a man with other women because the idea of living without him is more painful than the pain of his disloyalty. What happened? Remember, your brain can be programmed by repetition. Whatever the brain hears and sees consistently is what it becomes use to and after a while it begins to want the very thing it hated at first.

Essence Magazine published an article in March of 2005 on how music videos damage Black teens. The article cites a study done with 522 African American girls. The girls were tracked for a year. Girls who watched 21 hours or more of music videos a week were 60% more likely to have contracted a STD (sexually transmitted disease), twice as likely to have multiple sex partners, and 60% more likely to use alcohol and drugs. Why?

Maybe, just maybe if a young girl hears about sex all the time on the radio, watches sex all the time in music videos, listens to songs promoting getting drunk and high, that maybe the same thing that happened with the song she hated (in the Chapter 6 example) could be happening here? The power repetition has placed the message of sex and drugs in her mind so consistently that it has become part of her daily thoughts. Is that possible? Is it possible that maybe on her own (without the songs and videos) she would **NOT** have sex on her mind 24/7 without the negative input from the media?

Based on what you have read here and your own personal experiences who is the Black woman? Does the media image of the Black women match the true nature of Black women?

Chapter 7

The Trick to Success (Learn What Successful People Do And Do It)

Anything you want to do in life someone else has probably already done it or some form of it. Research and find the best people in the field you are interested in and study them. Find out how they got started, what obstacles they overcame, and what makes them the best at what they do. Read books on your subject and look for classes or workshops that can help you improve your skills in your chosen field.

Every occupation and career has basic fundamentals. Fundamentals are the basic building blocks, pieces to the puzzle that you must know in order to be successful. You must become a master of the fundamentals; this will give you an unshakable foundation on which to build.

Think of fundamentals the same way you would see the foundation of a house. If every part of the foundation for a house is not laid correctly, the house will fall. The same holds true for any successful career, if it is not built on a solid foundation it will fall.

Do not take the easy way out? Don't try to slide by or get over to get through. You will only hurt yourself in the long run. Choose to be a leader!!

Chapter 8

Why Is It Important To Be a Leader?

Leaders are the pioneers of change. Great leaders can change the direction of an entire society or take a group of people to place they have never been before. Leaders are not born they are made. No one is a great leader when they start. It takes time to develop skills and the traits of a leader. The reason most people never develop those traits is simple, it takes a lot of dedication and hard work to become great leader.

The most important trait of a leader is the ability to be honest with themselves and with others. Liars make the worst leaders. In order for people to truly follow a leader there needs to be trust. The people on the team must feel that their leader is truthful in dealing with all the problems facing the team. With liars there is no way to be sure that they are telling the truth, therefore trust will never form between the team members.

Traits of a leader:

Driven – To be a leader you must have a non-stop desire to achieve your goal. A non-stop desire becomes easier to achieve once you have found something to be passionate about.

Focused – A leader has to have the ability to shut out all the distractions and zero in on the task at hand. A great leader knows how to get a group of people to block out distractions in order to finish the task at hand.

Humble – A good leader seeks acknowledgement not praise. Everyone wants to be recognized for a job well done, that's fine. However, when you want people to constantly stroke your ego about your success that's a problem. People who need their egos stroked tend to take up the entire spotlight, leaving no room for other people who helped the team achieve success. A great leader will always share the spotlight with everyone who played a role in the success.

Mental Strength – Whenever you begin working toward your goal in life, you WILL run into people who will talk about you, make jokes about you, and tell you that your goal is something that will never happen. Your mental toughness will be the difference in your success or failure. If you listen to negative people about your choices in life you will have the same lifestyle they have. Have a belief in your purpose, surround yourself with positive input from people, books, and environments to build a strong mentality.

Ability to Listen – The biggest misconception about leadership is that you get to tell everyone what to do and you don't have to listen to anyone because you're in charge. Telling people what to do without taking their input is a dictator not a leader. A good leader understands he/she does not know everything. Receiving input from your team helps you make better decisions, even a child can point out things that most adults miss. Never look down on the people you are leading. Respect their input and understand with confidence, that you make the final decision.

Accountability – If you have the final decision, guess what else comes with that? Responsibility! It doesn't matter who drops the ball on your team; if you're the leader it is your responsibility. The leader's job is to get the best effort out of the team and create the best outcome possible by combining all the team's abilities. Great leaders know that you win as a team and lose as a team. Pointing fingers at the team always looks like the leader is making excuses about his/her inability to lead the team. When a team member drops the ball in front of the world, you take the responsibility -- and behind closed doors you take the proper measures to correct the problem with the team member responsible. If you're responsible for the mistake, be man or woman enough to stand in front of your team and admit that it was your mistake. Being accountable for your actions will help gain the respect of your peers as well as your mentors.

Confidence – How do you get confidence? The dictionary defines confidence as a feeling of assurance, especially of self-assurance. Confidence is built on fundamentals, knowing the basics of any subject or task is the beginning of confidence. Knowing the fundamentals comes from repetition, doing the same task over and over until you master it. For example, let's say you practice throwing 100 darts at a board everyday for 6 months. In the third month you started to hit the center of board 7 out of 10 times. In the sixth month you hit the center of the board 9 out of 10 times. If an average player who hit the board 5 out of 10 times challenged you, do you think you could beat him? Of course you could because through your 6 months of practice you know you can hit the center of board 9 out of 10 times -- every time. You would be confident that you could beat him based on the months of repetition. Constant practice of any skill will increase your confidence in that skill.

Chapter 9

Add God To Your Life

Adding God to your life doesn't mean you should go out and start preaching tomorrow. It means starting on the little things first and working your way up. In my opinion this is the most important chapter in the book based on the role God has played in my life.

I have been in many life threatening situations. The difference between life and death for me in those situations was God. Whenever there was a shooting in my neighborhood, at a party, or at school, God always protected me. After being attacked three times, once by a group of 10, then 40+, then five, and all from different neighborhoods, I never had a broken bone or even a black-eye after being hit by multiple people.

How do you start small? Start with thanking God for the blessings you do have, if you are not sleeping on the street, thank God. If you have food and clothes, thank God. If you have a family and you are healthy without disease, thank God.

The next step, whenever your life is in danger and God brings you out, thank him. Whether it be an almost car crash or stray bullets miss you, take time to thank God for that blessing.

Once you begin to give God thanks for his blessing and his protection he will begin to warn you about your actions. My mom called it the little voice. She always told me to listen to the little voice. The little voice is God's way of telling you that something bad is about to happen to you if you do not listen to this warning.

When I was fifteen, I was on my way to the Go-Go (a club that plays DC born music called Go-Go). Something inside me was telling me not to go, so I decided not to go. Later that night the club had a drive by shooting after the Go-Go ended. The thing that sent chills up my spine was the location of the shooting, it was in the exact same spot we would stand after the Go-Go was over. If I had gone against my little voice I might not be writing this book right now.

Last but not least, never get mad at God, it's not his fault. The decisions we make or don't make, create the outcome for our lives. If you are ever feeling sorry for yourself, having pity party about how bad your life is, just take the time to look at people with much bigger problems.

If you're alive, remember hundreds of people were murdered or died today. God bless you not to be one of them. If you have money problems remember there are men, women, and children dying of starvation right here in America. God bless you not to be one of them. Don't make the mistake of **NOT** paying attention to the many blessings God has given to you and your family. Never forget how many people on daily basis would fall down on their knees and beg to have the very blessings you take for granted everyday.

Chapter 10

Who is Kofi Williams? And Why Did He Write This Book?

I am an inner-city kid. My family moved to Edgewood Terrace in Northeast DC, when I was three years old. My Dad was a good father at first, but when he became addicted to drugs my life changed forever. After age seven I don't have many family memories of my Dad, around this time he was incarcerated. His prison term caused considerable problems financially for the family. My Mom had to start working two full time jobs. It was rough to be broke all the time. In junior high school I use to get teased because I only had two pair of jeans and 3 shirts to wear to school each week. (To be fair, when I turn 17, my Dad straightened his life out and has been sober ever since. He has help countless other addicts turn their lives around and has been a shining example of what you can do after an addiction).

By the end of 8th grade the drug game was in full swing. Guys were wearing \$200 sweatsuits with \$100 tennis shoes, driving Mercedes, BMW, trucks and getting the attention of all the girls. Hustlers (the name for drug dealers) paid for the girls to get their hair done every week (averaged \$100), buy expensive jewelry, and go on \$1000 shopping sprees for clothes.

It got so bad it seemed as if you had to hustle in order to get in the game. If you didn't have money, the in-clothes, brand new tennis shoes, you were getting joked. If you're getting joked about your clothes, girls were not feeling you. I stood outside everyday in the cold, waiting for the bus and watch classmates ride by in brand new SUVs, BMWs, even Porches. In the passenger seat, was always a pretty girl. What did I have? Frost-bite! It was so tempting? The temptation seemed to call to me everyday. "*Kofi, Kofi,*" it would say, "*Kofi you know you want that SUV. If you just give in you can have it. Kofi, Kofi, you know you want that \$200 sweatsuit. All you have to do is give in.*" It was a daily struggle to fight the temptation but I did it and you can too.

As I was dealing with the temptation, my friends and classmates began to be murdered in shoot outs, gang related grudges, and sometimes just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It seemed ironic that these were supposed to be the best times of my life but my life was filled with death, and fear of death, on a daily basis. The deaths didn't seem to have any kind of pattern. One day it would be a hustler from the neighborhood, the next day a girl I used date was stabbed to death, on another day a friend gets shot for stepping on someone's shoe. On yet another day a church member gets shot 41 times in a drive-by shooting. Unfortunately the list goes on and on, this happened non-stop from my 11th grade year in high school to my junior year in college. Every three or four months I would hear about another funeral of a friend or classmate.

If that's not enough I had to deal with whether or not I would live or die everyday of my senior year. My neighborhood played a football game against another rival neighborhood. Tempers got out of hand and shooting broke out, several of the people from rival neighborhood were shot. The rival neighborhood let it be known that anyone from my neighbor caught in their neighborhood will be killed on the spot. My high school was right in the middle of their neighborhood and most of them went to school with me on a daily basis. So everyday, that 6 block walk from the bus stop (Washington, DC doesn't use school buses to transport kids to school, we had to use the public transportation) to school was a very fearful one -- never knowing was today going to be the day they would catch me.

The sad part about this is that millions of Black children share my story of pain, death, and fear as a way of life. Never knowing what it is to not have a care in the world. Never knowing what it is to be just a child, without having to worry about their safety or safety of family and friends.

By the time I entered my freshman year in college many friends had already died senseless deaths but I was fighting my way through it. My solution was to just focus on my books and get those grades. After months of doing pretty well, the word of another classmate's death reached me. It was a classmate that I had hung out with a lot on my senior class trip to the Bahamas. He was at the club, got into an altercation and someone shot him. That one hurt but I still kept it together. In my second semester of my freshman year, my childhood friend I've known since I was in the second grade, his girlfriend was shot in the head. I knew her from my high school. Holding it together is getting much harder everyday. The one that broke me was my friend from church. He was killed two

weeks before I went back for my sophomore year of college. That was it for me, I sunk into a place where I lived in pain everyday. I couldn't study, I would go to class and couldn't hear or remember what the professor was saying. My grades took a nose dive. Some of my friends told me to get counseling from the university, that didn't help one bit. I don't think she had dealt with anyone like me before because she just didn't know what to do or say to me. Life didn't make sense. I didn't understand why:

My life had so much pain. Black kids were killing Black kids
Most of the popular artists on the radio were glorifying the ghetto lifestyle when I lived it and knew the kind of pain and damage it caused. Other people (different races in America) didn't have a care in the world, never experience the death of a friend, or their life being threatened.

I became reckless, I was in so much pain I didn't want to live anymore. No one knew about my pain other than my girlfriend at the time and some very close friends. My mother and family had no clue, but I was at rock bottom, starting fights, pushing people's buttons to make them do something crazy. As crazy as this sounds, I was hoping I would piss them off enough to shoot me and I would have no more pain. My life was literally spinning out of control.

It all came to a head one night with an altercation. My roommate had an issue with some former friends who said they owed him money. The former friends came to the door, got into argument with my roommate, and I jumped in. One guy told me if I didn't shut-up and step back, he was going to get his gun. My response "Go get your gun, I will be waiting right here." Needless to say my girlfriend who was witnessing all of this, trying to calm me down, and get me to go in the house but I wouldn't. I kept antagonizing him, making smart comments, trying to push his buttons.

When it was finally over without any violence, my girlfriend pulled me into her room, and proceeded to lay me out about my actions. She asked me what was I trying to prove. I told her I didn't care if I lived or died. She looked at me and said "You think your mother might care? How about your cousin that you are mentoring -- you think it might mess him up if you got yourself killed?" It was a long conversation, too long to tell here but at the end she said to me "Why don't you take all that pain and anger and do something positive with it. Make a difference. Don't let all these deaths be for nothing." And that is why I am sitting here writing this book. I hope that it will make difference in your life. I hope it will have the same effect that conversation had on me, a life changing effect. Take all your pain and channel it into something positive, something that will make a difference in someone else's life. In my experience when you channel your pain into something positive it helps your wounds heal.

I want to take this moment and say to my former girlfriend, thank you for letting God come through you that day to change my life. It will never be forgotten.

Chapter 11

Black or African American?

If you notice, all through this book I have used the word Black to refer to my race. African American is the proper term to use for Americans of African decent. Until now, most of you did not know your history therefore you were Black because the word Black has no history, no proud heritage, and no ancestors. Black is a color. African American shows that you understand that you are a decedent of greatness, a long line of great minds dating back to 6000 BC. If you ask any other race in this country -- white, Asian, Latino - - they can tell you exactly from what country their family originated. Try it, go to a white person and ask them where there family originated from and some will say Irish, some will say German, and so on.

There is an old saying that goes: "You will not know where you are going until you know where you come from." Our history does not begin with slavery -- it begins in Ancient Africa. The lack of connection to Africa has robbed African Americans of a rich and strong ancestry. History of a culture binds a people. It gives them strength to know what overwhelming obstacles your ancestors overcame to achieve greatness. History of culture also defines a race of people. Before you read about all the great accomplishments of Africans and African Americans the only thing that tied us to one another were negative stereotypes. Stereotypes were the one thing that every Black person can agree on about their race. Do you think all Jews are bound together by negative stereotypes? Why? Because Jews know their history and therefore know those stereotypes can't be based on historical facts. They trust in each other more than they trust in stereotypes because they can go back to the past to show how they worked together to survive some of the worst attacks on their people. Black people tend to trust more stereotypes because there is no common positive history that binds us together. Slavery binds us, but it is full of pain.

History tells a story of people who were released from slavery by President Lincoln, not a people who overcame it. Further proof of that idea is that Black people from 1863 Emancipation Proclamation until the 1964 Civil Rights Act were still treated like animals. Slaughter by angry white mobs, not able to vote, and not allowed to eat or visit all-white establishments was the reward for just being Black. Imagine that! A full 100 years of still being treated as less than human, after suffering through 200 years of slavery! And again, we were released from Jim Crow laws by President Johnson. This time history does attribute the efforts of Black people to the demise of race discrimination as a law. The Civil Rights Act accomplishment should have been the one thing that united Black people forever but it didn't. Why? I believe that the majority of Black America at that time still did not know their true history. We made songs and talked about being proud to be Black but our actions and current path of the youth say different. Without knowing the greatness of African American culture leading all the way back to Africa, stereotypes will always be the tie that binds Black people. Until we all become African Americans by learning our true role in history as the first scientists, inventors, great leaders, and builders of civilization, stereotypes will always divide us and keep our true nature of success from coming to the surface.

Now that you know what is true about Black people what will you do with it? Will you use it to better yourself thereby improving the African American community? Or, will you continue to mindlessly let your brain be programmed through negative songs and media images? Will you allow yourself to fall into the trap of thinking it's not that serious, its just music, not taking responsibility for your mind or your future?

Will you make this world a better place like your ancestors have done for you or will you turn back the clock? Allowing our young Black children to be enlisted in a new form of slavery! What can you do? What did Dr. King do? What did Malcolm X do? What did Garrett Morgan do? What did Imhotep do? Are you thinking you can't do anything that big? Then you must not know your history! Anyone who knows their history understands that these great people were just people, like you. What made them great? In two words, courage and dedication! They were regular people who had the courage to face the fear, the self-doubt, the negative family members and/or friends to achieve their goal. They were people who had the dedication to work daily on the fundamentals of their goals and the traits of a leader.

There is no magic trick, no shortcuts to long term success. The sooner you learn that and accept it, the faster you will reach your goal in life.

In conclusion, pull out a sheet of paper and answer the questions at the beginning of the book again without looking at your previous answers. Once you completed the second survey compare your two lists of answers. Think about your new answers and what changed since the first survey. Is it true what they say about Black people? You tell me, is it?

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