

Op Ed by NYOIL Statements from the State of the Black World

Written by NYOIL ID4566

Saturday, 06 December 2008 23:38 -

You either weren't aware or did not care ... I, (**NYOIL**), was blessed with the opportunity to attend and sit on a panel for the State of the Black World Conference this year (Nov 19-23) by the Head of the IBW (Institute of the Black World) and Father of the event, Dr. Ron Daniels. It was an incredible event that brought out some of the most respected names and the nameless in black cultural, political, educational, and social liberation leadership. I found the experience conflicting and distressing in some aspects while being liberated and connected in others. I felt as though I gained a new perspective while learning how to reconcile some of my past issues with my elders and the generational gap that plagues us.

Having thrust myself into the forefront of conscious/political Hip Hop I find in some instances that there is an expectation that I should or would know many of the names and faces connected to the Black Liberation, black power, black theology, black cultural arts, and Civil Rights movements. But the truth is, I know more names, powers and associated origins of Super Heroes in the Marvel Universe than I do the names of the people who have shaped much of the black experience in the 20th century. My ignorance is one part victimization due to a skewed educational system that ignores--and in most cases censors--the contributions of black freedom fighters who have suffered and sacrificed in the name of reshaping the face of this country and the fate of our people. It is also however two part apathetic ignorance, an ignorance built on a lack of desire to learn about or care for the people, the places, spaces and names that have impacted my life. And though I was warmly and well-received having made a name for myself I felt much like an outsider, disconnected from something I knew--or at least felt--I should be a part of, as if I've been deprived of some birthright. So instead of reaching out in a way that would bridge the gap I found some of my communication came from anger. Now anger is a product of needs not being met. Someone isn't getting something they need (respect, space, an apology, attention, etc.) and as they learn to resent that which refuses to supplicate them, they are learning to survive without it. They are learning to no longer need something they've learned to resent.

Growing up without a father, I knew that feeling; trying to appreciate what extenuating circumstances must have kept him from me. But despite what facts I could conjure in my young mind to excuse his abandonment, they could not alleviate the feeling of pain and resentment his absence created. So, like so many other youths, I learned to not need him. I remember when I finally met my father at 16 and to my surprise, he was well accounted for. He was doing well, had dough and was getting married to a woman whose children he'd raised. But what about me? I imagine so much of the black youth feel this way about their elders...abandoned, disregarded, unimportant and when we are engaged it is as an afterthought or as an

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annoyance. There is an absolute disregard for HOW we have come to be who we are and a total disrespect to what we are and the real question WHY we are is totally ignored.

So my frustration began as I interpreted my disconnection as not being apart of "the clique." My righteous frustration was fueled by the ideal that "Black Leadership" cannot be a clique because cliques choose their membership. Black leadership cannot be achieved through nepotism. It cannot be handed down to a son or daughter. It is NOT genetic. It doesn't transfer over to your sycophants. Black leadership must be determined by, and the inclusion into that "clique" has to be, contingent on the willingness of the individuals to do the work, make the sacrifices and put the needs of the collective before themselves. The alphas of Black Leadership must be ever vigilant to source and recruit new talent. Now I understand cliques, they are not a negative thing; they are a natural thing. They generally consist of A-alikes, people that share similar theologies, ideologies, characteristics, politics and any number of things that delineate and define people... simply put, they share the same interests.

This is most definitely true of "Black Leadership." To see them discuss how they'd come to meet one another, years ago, how their paths crossed and crossed again like some great quilt, you realize that these aren't just "Leaders" who happen to know each other via the mantel of leadership. No, this isn't like the fraternity of Rap where if you come out with a record or get enough fame you're instantly embraced by the community and the love is given in proportion to the love you get on the streets, radio, etc. No, these people are FAM. These are people who have lived with one another, fought for, with and against one another, learned from, inspired, and were inspired by one another, have been friends, lovers and widows to one another. And we're talking 40 - 50 years worth of this. So this isn't "Sally Rottencrotch" and her cheerleaders crew that won't let you sit with them for lunch; these are people in the autumn of their years who've seen fire and rain together, whose association, whose "clique" has grown to be identified as BLACK LEADERSHIP.

So these understandings are coming to light within me. They collide and contradict one another as I try to find a middle ground. This middle ground that could act as a bridge between the generations. A bridge so desperately needed.

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I saw the elements of this bridge in the loving selflessness of Sonya Sanchez. During the panel I spoke on, she opted out of resuming what had been scheduled at a second part to her panel because she wanted to hear what the youth had to say. She wanted to understand our paradigm and connect to that. She wanted to listen and be taught by our voices. Hakim Matabuti wanted assurances that we were choosing the proper course of action with our opportunity. He was a fatherly advisor with the interest and intent to continue this dialogue as well as devote his considerable resources to its doctrine becoming manifest. I witnessed this in Attorney Jaribu Hill who fought through unexpected conflicts that arose in the Youth section of the conference because she realized through her own hindsight that this anger and fury must be harnessed to the benefit of our people and our cause.

And I was reminded of something that helped to clear the desperate fog that was my angst and frustration. That when the Student is READY the teacher Will come. You see this is no clique; this is a library, a treasure of knowledge and wealth of wisdom. This is something that you don't access just because you exist, something that you must work to strive to be worthy of. Because the safeguarding of our people of this struggle cannot be just passed on or granted because you THINK you are doing the work. It must be earned because this road is a slippery slope with barbs at its base and little reward at its apex. This is not the way of the entitled; it is the way of the devoted. So since the State of the Black World I have chosen to become more devoted to this cause I've taken on. To be worthy of the burden I'm trying to shoulder. To be patient with myself and with my elders as we develop the relationships that allow for the love of wisdom to be passed on.

I am also recognizing myself as a father. Because to a 69 year-old I'm just a baby, to my kids I'm "Old Daddy," and I've been reminded in the kindest of ways to be mindful of the needs of my children, the needs of the youth as a larger body and the frustrations they must feel. To redouble my efforts to understand and appreciate them and their methods to be a help not a hindrance. To be a steering wheel and a guiding force without trying to pilot or captain their vessel. I see it so much more clearly even in Hip Hop. I want to find a way to bridge this gap and to encourage a new generation of Hip Hoppers to the cultural side of the art form as well as help them avoid the spiritual, business, mental, physical and financial pitfalls this industry hides.

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Ultimately I want to be a Father to my community, a community Father whose love for my people is transcendent of my own family but expands to everyone within my sphere of influence. And to do that I am learning from my elders in their wisdom and their folly. I pray we are all the better for it.

My name is **NYOIL** and I approve this message!

The State of the Black World Conference took place Nov 19th - 23rd in New Orleans Louisiana. For more information about the SOTBW or the IBW <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=36663192769> or <http://www.stateoftheblackworld.org>

office - 888-774-2921

Video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pvSWX_m4Fk

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