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#186487

"Be ye Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind"

Romans 12:2

Greetings my beloved brothers & sisters,

I want to talk to you today about street violence and the culture which causes it, economic instability, which really makes it a subculture of its environment. And the perils which comes from it and the consequences of our decisions. The question is, is a life of hustling in the streets a life we really wanted to pick or was it the only means we felt we had?

From this I will discuss rehabilitation, transformation, and what they really mean.

Most people involved in street crime or what I will refer to as the underground economy, come from less than ideal situations. Poor neighborhoods - most come from single family homes with only the mother trying to raise the children. The fathers are absent from the child's life, or maybe even encouraged the child to become involved with the street life. It may have even been an uncle or older brother doing the encouraging. We grow up hearing about the American dream, having a wife/husband, house, two children and a great job. We hear this dream is obtainable through a good education which ends with a degree in some field. However, for the most part this is not what we see in our own homes, or for that matter when we step out of our front doors. What we see is a lot of hustling in order to survive. We see the flashy cars, the jewelry, the women, and the appearance of a good life style. We see our parents struggle to pay bills, and as males we want to help our mothers who we love more then anything. You add in the effects of having friends who may already be in the streets encouraging us to join them. Most of us have grew up seeing violence all around us and grew up fighting ourselves, so the fighting mentality has become like second nature for us. We turn on the t.v. and its in the movies we watch, the music we listen too. We can't escape the lures of the street life, then we look up and it has sucked us in.

But how did this happen? I contend that it happen because whether you ever looked at it like this or not, you was set up! You was placed in this position by two forces, the family you was born into, and the circumstances you was placed into

so you could overcome with the right guidance. It's the nature versus nurture theory. You can't climb a mountain without ever trying first, you can't get up without ever falling down. I will come back to this later, but let's get back to the first reason I cited, the culture which created the street life/underground economy. It didn't begin in our neighborhoods as we know them today. You must go back to slavery and the culture that was created just to survive that life. Black hustling has been scorned as long as black people has been despised and black intelligence has been questioned. The roots of black hustling runs deep into slavery, where black labor largely existed on white demand. But underground an informal network of affiliation also thrived for ambitious people who were neither well educated nor financially well off. These people struggle to survive through a range of off the books pursuits in the underground economy/street life as we call it today: running numbers, bootlegging liquor, selling stolen goods, gambling, dealing drugs, prostitution, and other illicit activities. Hustling was in part the effort to take hold of the American dream which was touted to the white masses.

Black people lives have been shaped by restrictions on social mobility, economic prosperity, employment opportunities, and even housing prospects. Some black people managed to thrive despite these restrictions because of superior networks of support and encouragement. The hustle, the plight, the conditions, is what black people are caught in when their resources are depleted, their access to legitimate goods severely restricted, their ability to enjoy social and educational equality greatly curtailed. Hustling is the main resort for those who are systematically deprived of benefits and advantages in society. The street life beckons those who are excluded from privilege and power. The street life, the action, the performance, is embraced because it often provides the only relief from economic misery. Those of us who is determined not to suffer silently turns distress into opportunity. The economic and social forces that stagnate progress forces some youth into the street life. The tragedy is that too often this isn't the exception but the rule for American black and brown youth.

This is what we must find away to overcome. I set down and interviewed a number of men while working on this topic, and no one said they wanted their children to grow up and end up like them or involved in the street life. This is where the absence of the black/brown man within the house hold really raises its nasty head. Our children, women, brothers and sisters are being lost to a system built and designed to destroy them. It's the circumstances that most but not all find themselves

in which leads to this life. The bulk of poor people remained trapped in circumstances where poverty, social dislocation, shrinking government welfare, gang warfare, and other forms of chaotic violence persist. The typical go to is we need to end black on black crime, I agree we need to end crime, but its not really about black on black crime. Black on black crime is best seen as a problem of proximity, not pigmentation. Neighborhoods more then color shapes crime, (NATURE V. NURTURE). This knowledge does very little to relieve the horrors of black carnage. Studies show that between 1989 and 1994 more black men were murdered in American than lost their lives during the Viatnam war. An unavoidable metaphor of the destructive doppelganger that lurks in black life. (Doppelganger - A ghostly double of a living person, one that haunts its own counterpart). For all the effort to do well and be right, there are opposing forces that seek to subvert, distract, and destroy. Some people want to do right but circumstances won't allow them without the right support around them. Inside and outside of black/brown neighborhoods across America, a potent narrative has formed that says there are only three ways out of the ghetto: Hustling, rapping, or sports. My question is this? What happen to the option of getting a education and building your life with and through effort. This is why I say to everyone we are products of our expectation and not products of our environment.

From this culture of economic plight was born a culture of hustling, robbing, murdering, and drug dealing. For most of us we became the monsters we was told of and that haunted us in the night as children which caused us to cry out for our parents. We was taught as we got older there was no such thing as a ghost, however you couldn't tell us this as children because we seen him/her under the bed or in the closet. So I ask you what happen to them monster's? Is it possible they layed dormant inside of us and came out later in life which created a mind set that lent to our crimes?

So the subculture more often then not leads us to one of two places - the graveyard or prison. For us that was captured by the prison system we walked into it in the triple stages of darkness - fully clothed as a gangster, thug, or a man that felt they could do whatever they wanted because the ends justify the means. So we voluntarily surrender our freedom and walk back into slavery, the one thing our foreparents fought so hard to get us out of. Slavery in the United States is illegal except in the form of prison according to the 13th amendment on the United

## States Constitution.

Now prison is designed to do three things, punish, deter, and rehabilitate. The punishment comes in the form of your sentence, the deter aspect comes in the form of being locked up for a term of months and or years, the rehabilitation aspect comes in the form of programming which is offered by the department of corrections. The thing about the programming offered is they don't rehabilitate in and of themselves. Rehabilitation is something that each of us must do on our own. It will come a time when we sit down and reflect on our lives and be faced with some hard questions, such as, is this what my life is all about? do I want better for myself? is this all I will ever be able to offer my family? Once we are truthful with ourselves and decide we want better for ourselves, then the rehabilitation process starts. We start looking inward and searching out programs and ways to better ourselves. We realize that the way we think is flawed, that way of thinking leads to the way we act and the things we do. So our level of respect for ourselves change and the way we view and treat others change. We notice a change in the way we feel, we can see the moral part of ourselves take over. We can go sit before the parole board and look them in their eyes and articulate the way we've become rehabilitated and convince them we are no longer a threat to society anymore.

Then for those who has went beyond rehabilitation, those who have become truly transformed we are talking about another level of being. See theres a difference between rehabilitation and transformation, one is external and one is internal. Rehabilitation is external and transformation is internal. Lets look at the definition of the two words: Rehabilitation - To restore the former rank, privilege, or rights of someone, to restore to a former state. Transformed - To change the nature, function, or condition of something. Once a person has been rehabilitated then he/she can undergo a transformation and it is at this stage of our development that means the most.

See a rehabilitated person goes before the parole board and tells them he is a changed man and he is no longer a threat to the public. If he convinces them of this change then he is paroled. The question is what did he do when he informed the parole board he has been rehabilitated? He ask them to restore him back to his former state, that of a free man. If this person stops at the level of only being rehabilitated will gain his freedom and then go on with his life never to be heard

from again. However, a person who has been transformed by the renewing of his mind is someone who has come to the realization that if change is good enough for him, its good enough for everyone he comes into contact with. He starts working within his community to make a change for the better. He begins by working within the community he is presently in, then once released he goes back to the same communities he help destroy and starts helping to rebuild them. Transformation is another level, we become apart of organizations and say we are for the upliftment or people, this means we no longer desire to live in and partake in the subculture we came from, a life of violence. We want better for our families and those who we made a victim of, we've destroyed our monsters and now seek to help others destroy the monsters within their selves. Its not easy overcoming a mentality that we have come to know and even love, but we live out the results of that mentality everyday and see the effects of it. I say enough is enough and its time to dig deep within and find the God in you and walk hand in hand with him.

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson-

Let me leave you with this: W.E.B Dubois taught so that Rosa Parks could take a seat. Rosa Parks took a seat so we all could take a stand. We all took a stand so that Martin Luther King Jr. could march. Martin Marched so that Jesse Jackson could run. Jesse ran so Obama could WIN!!!

-Eric Micheal Dyson-

Sincerely Submitted By,  
Kenneth