



“Missed Opportunities”

In the last several years I have had the opportunity to travel and see how other people of African descent are living, and two simple words keeps returning to my mind when I compare the opportunities African American have in this country compared to opportunities available to our brothers and sisters who reside in the Caribbean and Africa, Missed Opportunities. Where I have been you might be wondering? I have been blessed to have visit Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, St Kit, and this past summer I was able to visit Ghana thanks to the Black Social Workers. What an eye opening experience, I strongly encourage all African- Americans to take the trip back to where it all begun, mother Africa. From the moment I first begin to travel to these countries I begin to think that Africa- Americans were being taught wrong, we were not being instructed that despite all of the wrong doing White America had subjected us to, we still lived in a country that if you invested in your self-development, you could get yourself out poverty. We lived in a country where there was vertical mobility, and it was ours due to our birth-right. But, instead we were being sold on receiving public assistance, hand out, free turkeys, and not on becoming highly skilled or marketable, where we could control our own financial destiny, but, in stead were being directed to become depended on a city, state or federal government program.

What has become very clear from my travels in the last five years is before you can capitalize on an opportunity, you first must be able to recognize one when you see it, to many Africa Americans today have been helped so much through programs, they are now permanently blinded from recognizing opportunities. Our visit to Ghana coincide with the Ghanaians celebrating fifty years of being independent from British rule, we stayed in the Capital city of Ghana named Accra, but for me I was instantly transported back in time to my childhood in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee. Although there modern buildings, most of the dwellings in this capital city consisted of two or three rooms sacks, with tin roofs, no indoor plumbing, no indoor bathrooms, dirt roads, farm animals roaming freely, over-crowd living conditions, kerosene lamps, out houses, drinking wells, poor sanction conditions, many adult who were idle etc.

Our visit to Ghana also coincide with their school break, but instead of these children resting they were out selling their arts and crafts trying to earn next semester tuition payment, you see there is free education. But what was really interesting to see which really carried me back to my childhood experience, these Ghanaians, like my parents generation who left the South in search of better opportunity, they were accustom to making things happen, because there was no safety net to depend on. If you did not create an opportunity for yourself, there would be none. What happen to caused so many African Americans to become psychologically comfortable receiving help from city, state or Federal government?

Missed place good intensions, when you do for a person or a people the things, they must and should do for themselves; you make them a slave to you. I believe there has never been a better time to be an African American in America than right now, for a couple of reasons. First of all, thanks to our parents, grandparents and the millions of unknown Blacks who helped to bring down the institution of Jim Crow Segregation, you and I are not confronted with that evil. Secondly, in a society where people get rewarded and compensated based on their skill base, African American should be at the top of the leader board, considering we were denied access for so long. But why are so many of us not highly skilled? I think Harriet Tubman said it best when she was asked how many slaves had she freed. Harriet responded by saying” I could have freed thousands more, but they had become slaves”. The late historian Carter G. Woodson who wrote the classical novel Mis-education of the Negro put it this way; “ When you control a mans mind you don’t have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will automatically find his proper place and stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit.” A person or a people who have become a slave of another will never recognize opportunities.