
INTRODUCTION

Thanks for picking up my book, *Stand Up! A Message to the Black Man*. Writing this book was very special to me because I am speaking to the heart and soul of all Black men. Because of its meaning and potential impact, it was something that I wrestled with within my spirit. My wrestling was not in the spirit of hesitancy, but rather to expose the truth and give applicable instructions for all Black men to understand in order to move into their calling. Sadly, in this society the truth does not stand as the truth, but rather if one can persuade another into believing what they want them to believe is the truth. Moreover, because of the complexities and media campaigns of society, I know that the Black man is looked upon through jaded lenses. Therefore, I conclude that the only way to change our story is to be the creators of our story. To do so, as Black men, we must peer deeply within ourselves, band together for a greater good, use our intellect to become producers of economic prosperity, and strive to climb to higher grounds in our families, communities, and societies. In our climb, some are stronger than others. That is why it is important that we continuously reach back to pull others up. And when we make it to the top, we cannot put on societal blinders and lose sight from “whence we came,” because if we don’t know our history, we are subject to repeat the same mistakes. With the world that we live in, there has to be a breaking point, and there MUST be a change. Hence, my subtitle, “A Message of Hope and a Call to Action!” We must plan, strategize, and plant seeds to gain control in the following areas:

- Taking control of our narrative in this society
- Respecting one another
- Creating financial independence through investment in assets and business
- Fighting against racism and injustice
- Working deliberately to change policies
- Positioning ourselves to become more involved in the political process
- Making our health a priority
- Taking the lead and responsibility for our relationships

I also wrote this book to share my story because it highlights my journey and how I experienced challenges, defeats, and victories while coming into my own. Those experiences gave me a greater awareness and appreciation of the blessings God has given to me. By telling my story, I hope to break down any challenges you may face and give you a different perspective in how to handle them.

Through the reading, I hope you will be able to use the content as a guide to navigate through society in a purpose-driven way.

This book also serves as a support tool and guide for you as a Black man, because we all have had our ups and downs in life. If a person tells you they haven't, they are not being truthful with you. As you reflect on your life, there will be times when you might not have all the answers. This is why this book is essential as you seek to discover:

- A new direction in life;
- Support and answers;
- How to get up while facing failure;
- How to lead in your family and community;
- How to live within your purpose; and
- How to build an economic and financial foundation.

Living life is more than just getting up, going to work, and returning home. It is about knowing and understanding our society and how it functions. For that reason, I have assembled several chapters that consider closely our history, what paths we should take to live a life of independence and freedom, and what strategic moves we should make to leverage our position as men. Chapter One of this book will cover Black America's journey in the United States. This chapter considers the rationale of why we were brought to the U.S. and how it has affected us politically, socially, and economically.

Chapter Two asks the question, "Who am I?" This chapter discusses my upbringing and present-day life. It opens the door of my life and tells how my experiences guided my thoughts and made me who I am today, and it explores one of the fundamental questions we must ask ourselves, that is, "Who am I?" While it might sound simplistic, the question requires you to do a great deal of reflection. It should cause you to look at your truth in terms of your moral character, self-worth, and what drives you.

Chapter Three explores planting your seed in life. It discusses the meaning of a purpose-driven life. Knowing your purpose in life opens your mind and awareness to your own blueprint and roadmap. Some people recognize their real purpose at an early age. In contrast, others go throughout life not knowing because they let the media, relationships, and lack of confidence blind them to their purpose. That anchors them down from being and operating in their true calling. This chapter will give you solutions to overcome your obstacles and will create a path for you to travel.

Chapter Four discusses distractions in life. While we cannot control what family we were born into, the circumstances we experience as children can play a role in our outlook on life as adults. It carries over into the way we think and act, and further compounds our standard of living and way of life, and it can rob you of your true purpose. This chapter will explain the different ways your true purpose could be robbed, such as through abuse, living a lazy lifestyle, lacking a spiritual foundation, and hanging with the wrong people.

Chapter Five is about manifesting your purpose. To manifest your purpose, I explain how to develop a PLOT. A PLOT, as an acronym, denotes Purpose, Limitation, Opportunities, and Traps. The PLOT

focuses in on your purpose, highlights your limitations, gives you the ability to see your opportunities for you, and discusses how to see and avoid traps in your life.

Chapter Six is about exploring the various walks of life of Black men via interviews. It highlights how they experienced different circumstances and how they mapped out their path to live and be successful. Those interviewed came from different eras and different economic conditions; some were raised in single-parent homes, some two-parent homes, some military homes, and one grew up in Africa.

Chapter Seven is about being the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. Being the master of your fate requires owning the path you seek to travel, and being the captain of your soul requires having the wherewithal to make decisions that are in alignment with your moral compass. It discusses operating within faith and focus and recognizing when you are unstable. It also discusses cleaning up what you messed up and redirecting your thinking. The chapter concludes by giving tips on learning how to make money independently and investing in yourself and family.

Chapter Eight discusses relationships and why they matter. Relationships are critical, and in this chapter, I will cover the different types and protocols for each. Anything that we do in life requires some form of a relationship to expand or grow. For example, opportunities presented to my children were from relationships I established and created years ago. The same is true for one-on-one relationships between a man and woman, or couples. To reap strong returns involves collaboration in the relationship. In addition, relationships must be honest and straight-forward. You cannot go into any relationship with an agenda that is not truthful; instead, you must go into it thinking how you could add value to the other party.

Many in the Black community are taught to acquire a college education or vocational training, and then go work for someone else. I only agree with that suggestion partly because getting your education does not guarantee that you will live the life you deserve, or that you will be successful. Chapter Nine discusses creating an economic foundation for you and your community. It underscores the need to invest in stock, real estate, other assets, and business. This is one of the more important chapters because it gives different avenues for creating different streams of income and strategies for establishing an economic foundation.

If you want to maximize your hopes and dreams, you must understand the political process and how it can benefit or hinder you in accomplishing your goals. Understanding the political system and how it operates will put the pieces together in understanding society and how it functions. Chapter Ten covers wealth-creating strategies. Chapter Eleven discusses why it is essential to participate in the political system and become a part of it by serving within it. In order to change what is happening in our community, we must become lawmakers and advocates at the local, state, and national levels to change the political landscape. And for that reason alone, Black men must become ingrained in this system. Chapter Twelve asks the question, where do we go from here, and Chapter Thirteen concludes by giving you tips; no matter what you are faced with, you keep going in life no matter what!

Given what is happening in society with the continuation of police brutality, racism, lies told as truth, and lousy policy implementation, many Black Americans are continuing the fight against a system that has planted and harvested systemic discrimination. Many are asking, “Where do we go from here?”

Whatever we do as a society, Black men need to stand up and take the lead, not because of egotism or masculinity, but because it is time for Black men to carve out an extra slice of prominence and independence in this society.

As men, we all have different abilities, needs and wants. Despite our differences, the media tends to lump all Black Men into a living, breathing negative stereotype. While we cannot control what people think of us, we can control how we respond to society by creating our own story. Now is the time for Black men to have a shared vision and goals that are the cornerstone to the development of ourselves, families, and communities. I pray that this book is a seed that will be planted and that those who read it will learn about their purpose by using some of the tools discussed in this book. I know we can achieve this goal, because each of us can **Stand Up! And this is my message!**