

COUNTDOWN

DESTINY BECKONS

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PREFACE

This booklet was almost entitled 'Straight Talk'; because it is exactly what I want to do; no lies, no hidden agenda, no twisting of facts, no schemes. Just the truth as I have understood it.

I contend that at a time when there is so much evil in the land, so many lies dangling about and twisting of facts, that perhaps someone needs to step up to the plate and attempt to dismantle Some of these untruths.

It is my concern that if we allow the lies, the twisting of facts, and the endless hypocrisies to continue, well, it's almost certain that sooner rather than later it's going to be almost impossible to recover from this madness.

Hopefully, in this little booklet I can say or provoke a thought which will stem this tide of deception in some little way.

Bryant

MoveOn.KNOWLEDGE

The gathering of knowledge is definitely a very noble and honorable endeavor, someone has even said knowledge is power. It is also apparently held in the highest esteem by the Almighty, especially when He is alluded to have said "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6

Although this verse is generally associated with the Jewish nation of old, it is doubtful anyone can deny its relevance in the here and now.

Accordingly, if to suffer from lack of knowledge is to perish, then to acquire *some* knowledge must undoubtedly be very beneficial, hence the saying *knowledge is power*. Consequently if knowledge really empowers it becomes a component of life which clearly enables us to make wise decisions.

However, if one is lackadaisical, or stricken with the disease of laziness, knowledge is bound to render itself off-limits.

It is certain that in order for one to be informed about even the least of affairs, they would have to apply themselves and engage in the learning process, i.e., the gathering of knowledge.

Moreover, with things being as complex and unpredictable as they are in our world today, it just does not measure up for people to take things for granted, it's just not intelligent.

This writing is not suggesting everyone go out and become physicists, engineers, or political scientists. It is, however, suggesting that one at least knows:

1. What is in the water they drink.
2. Where the veggies are grown which we consume.
3. Where is South America? Or
4. What is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and its proximity to the United States of America.

Having this kind of information paves the way for intelligent conversation, if nothing else.

Specifics are very important when it comes to the gathering of knowledge. Selective reading and study should always be a priority, family matters right at the top of the list; everything from managing personal finances, to how much and what kind of insurance is needed, and yes, how we go about selecting a college or university for our children.

I would not be so bold as to say I've not personally made a few mistakes (for lack of knowledge). But I do however consider myself a life-long student *of life*, fully willing and able to adapt, which brings me to another infinitely profound word, that being WISDOM.

As important as knowledge is, it is almost useless unless we apply it with *wisdom and understanding*. The Holy Bible says "*wisdom* is the principal thing."

Using wisdom allows one to get the desired results from knowledge.

JONAH — The Possessive One

Some Biblical Perspective

The story of Jonah being swallowed by the whale is probably one of the most recorded in history. However, what is frequently overshadowed is the '*why*', why was Jonah thrown overboard and subsequently swallowed by the *Great Fish*? Jonah 1:7. The answer to these questions according to scripture is because Jonah disobeyed God.

What is even more striking though, is the reason for Jonah's disobedience, which is he simply found the thing God told him to do to be very offensive. That being, go preach and warn the Ninevite (a sworn enemy of Israel) of their eminent doom.

The Hebrew probably thought the Ninevite (an Assyrian people) to be little more than heathen. So, as a consequence, Jonah felt pretty justified in his refusal to go and deliver God's Message. God, according to the bible, had a somewhat different view of the situation and Jonah wound up spending three days in the belly of a whale.

After praying and zealously repenting (*while in the whale's belly*) the story goes, God touched the *Big Fish* and Jonah was regurgitated. According to scripture he had no difficulty in finding his way to Ninevah after this gruesome incident.

This story has many twists and unpredictable consequences for Jonah. For after delivering God's message of doom to the Ninevite, the people did an astonishing thing, *they adhered to Jonah's message* and cried out to God in repentance; proclaiming a fast for every man,

woman, and child. Even the herds and flocks of the field were forbidden to eat or drink, God saw these acts and spared the city. *Jonah 3:5-10*. This displeased Jonah, and he was angry. But showed very clearly *God loves all people, even the bad ones*, and that an omnipotent God can do as He wills.

It is a basic Christian belief that the Lord via the patriot Abraham established the *covenant* proclaiming the *one God* thus giving him (Abraham) a charge to pass this on through his sons Issac and Jacob and the subsequent twelve tribes of Israel.

However, a sovereign God can never be thought of as owned by a particular people, whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or any other.

WARS

We are all victims of this madness that has gripped the world, this madness called war but camouflaged as something noble and just.

The outcomes of these engagements are usually questionable. Who won or who lost is usually in the eye of the beholder. However, one thing which never changes (especially in recent years) is the victims, which are almost always a disproportionate number of children and elderly.

But what is so alarming (especially to me) is how detached and insensitive so many people seem to have become in regard to the suffering and calamities of their fellow human beings. I can't help but think this is a dangerous course to take for a nation which prides itself as godfearing.

The greater populace seems to be either asleep or in some kind of ROBOTIC trance, a kind of "OH just hold on a few weeks, months, years, it'll take care of itself" type attitude. A Reminder: Ours is a nation of, by and for the people, in case some of us forgot, that means you have a voice.

I think the Bible is right when it forecast certain events leading up to the end of the world, but I don't want to hasten it along. If you're on a ship that is headed into a horrific storm, it seems it would be one's duty, or at least in one's interest, to try and steer that ship in a different direction.

SONG BIRDS

Oh how it blesses my soul
When I hear Yolanda sing

Sing girl, sing
Much like it blessed my soul
YESTERDAY

When I heard Tramaine go
On and on

Oh how it blessed my soul no other can carry a tune
Like my sisters.....

both

Yesterday and today.

When she sings, it's like
Heaven itself opens up,
And the angels pay attention
It's like the bird which sings
It's like the wind that blows
Across a thousand snow-capped
Mountains all different sizes
And shapes echoing in perfect
Harmony

I do believe it comes from

Deep within.....this

Sound of hers.....from

Years of pushing back and

Putting-up with

TWO HUNDRED plus you know

her song is like none other, it
awakens beauties not yet discovered,
treasures not yet tapped

Sing girl Sing

It's gold shining...diamonds glittering
Emeralds peaking...roses being red.

Oh Songbirds of the Nile

Will you ever recognize your beauty!!!

For I heard it in my mother
Oh that sound, and my aunt T
Like a golden harp and finely
Tuned violin...that yes I can
Still hear fifty years and some
And finally I heard it in my
Wife, the sincere girl
The innocence, the dreams
Oh how it blesses my soul
Sing you *songbirds*
You keep on singing

LEGACY

—*Remembering Others*—

If I had a wish regarding what might someday be called my legacy, I would want it to be "remembering others," and especially the people and rich culture I grew up with.

Need I say that I take it very personal when others (races and cultures) so zealously brag about their chicken and dumplings, their pumpkin pies, and their strict Aunt Penny. I'm even the more ruffled when it seems some go out of their way to portray every race of people on the planet—except African Americans—as having a culture worthy of a strict old Aunt or scrumptious pumpkin pie. So yes, I want my legacy (or at least part of it) to be that I remembered others.

For instance, when someone mentions their strict old Aunt Penny or Aunt Caroline, I remember my Aunt Clara, who played a very pivotal part in my life—sometimes I believe without even knowing it—for I never really got a chance to express my gratitude. Nevertheless, during a period in my early twenties, when I was struggling and at my lowest, she, observing my demeanor, beckoned me to her side and in no uncertain terms (while reminding me of my grandmother (her sister) and our family as whole) spoke these words: 'Boy, don't ever hold your head down, always hold your head up,' and continued with some other poignant remarks which amounted to "It can't be that bad." These words I never forgot.

All races of people have an Aunt Clara or an Aunt Caroline and that includes yours. Don't marginalize the substantive value of your Family, your Race, and *do not* allow others to do it.

My rich culture involves some "bragging" rights, i.e., some noteworthy things one can say about one's family, friends, or community.

For instance, I've travelled at least halfway around the world including about forty states in the U.S. A., and I've never read of or have witnessed a woman stronger than my mother; a person who exemplified more resilience (the absolute ability to bounce back from the most severe adversity), nor a person more principled or one who possesses more personal character. When I'm down I think about this woman (my mom) her strength, character, and her will to go on. A person who, yes, made some mistakes and bad judgments in her life, but one who found the courage, the will, the sheer audacity to overcome obstacles and set a positive example for her children and grandchildren.

Having not exhausted my "bragging rights," I think I'll include another extraordinary person, this of course, being my Uncle, I'll just call him uncle J.R., a perfectly moral-minded person but at the same time I've never met a more determined person when it comes to defending his honor, especially when it involves those things he holds dear to him, i.e., his family and friends. Maybe I should note here that I grew up in a small southern town in rural Louisiana, but friends, my Uncle didn't care if you were white, black, or Polka-dot.

However, as much as I admire and have admired these qualities in Uncle J, they are not what I wish to emphasize in this writing. The thing which shapes his legacy is his voice, (his ability to sing anything), he was Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, and Lou Rawls all packed in one, and I never heard him sing anything but Gospel (which is where Sam Cooke and Lou Rawls got their start). In all my travels I've never witnessed a better voice.

Now in remembering others I'd like to concentrate on some pacesetters, some celebrities, some pillars of the community and family life. A cousin of mine was such a man; he was probably the "guru" of my immediate family, a man with enormous biblical wisdom. I consider myself privileged to have had some rather healthy interactions with this old gentleman, even though I was only around sixteen years old and he was in his mid-seventies. What I think I admired mostly about him was his ability to reference the Bible in just about everything he did or said. He was an extraordinary spiritual person. I feel enriched by having known him.

As we move through the "Chronicles of Bryant" (yours truly) and the legacies of others, I can't help but mention my Aunt—we'll call her Celia—a truly remarkable and kind person, I always felt so engulfed-in-love by my Auntie, she was like a second mother to me.

My Grandmother (my dad's mother) was an extraordinary woman, a receptacle of common sense, in many ways wise beyond her years.

PURPOSE

One of the purposes in writing on this subject is to emphasize the bond between kinship and culture, and, to show how interdependent we all are on each other. Especially on the ways we shape each other's legacies.

Remember, if one's legacy is all about how academically astute they are, how many aircraft they've flown (for whatever reason) or how many lyrics for songs they've done, or movies they've starred in, well I'm afraid that remembrance will be short-lived. On the other hand, when you've taught second grade and helped little Billy's blow their noses, or helped little Amanda's tie their shoelaces; I'm certain that your legacy will live forever.

CONSIDER

Too many of us think we have nothing to give, nothing to offer, that we don't matter especially in the larger scheme of things. Nothing could be further from the truth. Who's Aunt Jenny are you? Whose mother, big brother or sister are you? You matter to a lot of people and if you've fulfilled these duties honorably, your legacy is set in stone.

And so, let my **Legacy** be as follows:

1. *That I said "Good Morning" every morning to as many as I come in contact with.*
2. *That when there is a Mudslide in Central America (whether it's in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua or other), I want to know about it and I want to feel their helplessness so I can learn how to gauge my own life.*
3. *I want it to be known that I am devastated when I consider the unconscionable plight of the Haitian people.*
4. *I want it to be known that orphan babies in Romania and other Balkan states are on my A-list (right up there with my mother and my two buddies I left in Vietnam—whom to this day I don't know if they made it out alive).*

"Love thy neighbor—as thyself" The Good Book says, "Why don't we all let this be our **LEGACY**?"

Names represent actual people, but are fictitious.

RED FLAG

Troubled Young Men or Not

It has become almost commonplace to associate young African American males with crime and time in prison. So much until this has become a very elusive and troubling stigma. It paints a broad picture of the majority if not all of young black males as being unruly and/or very troubled young men, which is a terrible misconception. Granted, some of the characterizations may fit certain ones, but overall this imposing stigma is evasive and too broad based to accurately describe situations.

How can I say this? Simply because there are many variables when dealing with disadvantaged youth, whether Black, Hispanic, or White. However when dealing with Black youth the variables (the many different and complex things they are confronted with) are inflated many times over, with the negatives far outweighing the positives.

I'm in no way trying to make excuses for bad behavior or criminal conduct but I *am* saying that it just makes good moral sense to investigate the variables before one proceeds to indict and subsequently punish a whole generation of youths (especially blacks) for the conduct of a few.

Consider that across the United States a large percentage if not majority of Black youth live in urban areas, areas which have been documented on P.B.S., C.N.N., and a number of media outlets as being some of the most neglected in regards to satisfactory housing, property upkeep i.e. absentee landlords, high unemployment rates, inadequate schools, and more.

Again, I do not want to appear to be sympathetic or apologetic for bad behavior, and I certainly don't claim to be a sociologist. But from my study of human nature and appreciation for Biblical principles I would have to say that *neglect* breeds anger, jealousy, a feeling of not being wanted, contempt, and in many instances (even if inadvertently) could lead to some kind of criminal offence.

The variable of *neglect* by those who have the power to make a difference may very well be contributing to what society calls *Troubled Young Men*.

'Precipitous Thinking'—People gushing headlong to conclusions—contributes to this negative stigma. Bringing fear where there should be none and fostering unwarranted suspicions.

HOW COME I WHY CAN'T I
A tribute to some African American pacesetters

How come I _____ couldn't be born

As articulate as Malcolm as

Profound as Dr. King as

Brilliant as Garvey as

Brave as Rosa Parks

How come I why can't I

BUT LISTEN

Are we all not———or have we forgotten

That perhaps

We are all articulate, profound, brilliant

Brave people like Rosa Parks

Are heroes made? Is brilliance manufactured?

Is bravery engineered?

Is being profound genetic?

Are we all not———or have we forgotten

That perhaps

We are all articulate, profound, brilliant

Brave people like Rosa Parks

Why Can't I

Look a little deeper, Deeper, DEEPER

Into myself into the issues

WHY CAN'T I—Broaden my horizons

Why Can't I

Be more inquisitive and embrace the

INQUIRING MIND

How Come I

Can't Be More Like Me

STRAIGHT TALK

The goal of this writing is neither to be politically *correct* or *incorrect*, now will it attest to being statistically accurate in every instance. The intent here is to converse, it is an attempt to hold dialogue, to engage in conversation with the reader, and with this intent we begin.

There is a saying which goes as follows: *The Whole is Greater than the sum of its Parts*.

On the surface this statement sounds like a no-brainer, for certainly the *whole* is *greater* than the *sum* of its *parts*, or is it? The answer here is probably yes, if by greater we mean better.

One scenario here is that the *parts* would have to be *necessary* in order for the whole to *be*, to *exist*, and in this case not only would the whole be *greater than* the sum of its parts but it would also be more *secure* as a result of this cohesion. We might even say it was complete. There's another well known saying which is as follows; The *whole* is the *sum* of its parts. I'm sure there are lots of credible arguments surrounding this saying, some pros, some cons. Some convincing some not so. But I will take it at face value. Certainly the whole is the sum of its parts, and regretfully depending on the parts the whole may not present a very pretty picture.

At the risk of appearing too philosophical, I will interject one more popular saying; *A chain is no stronger than its weakest link*, I doubt very seriously if this saying will invite very much argument and/or discussion, simply apply enough pressure on the weak link and it will break. And so goes the chain.

In case you're wondering, *NO*, our primary discussion will not be about chains and things that are whole at least not inanimate things. We will however attempt to relate these idioms to a race of people, an ethnicity. In this case the Black African American, and in so doing try to tackle some very serious situations.

FORTY PLUS YEARS LATER

If one is Black and residing in the U.S.A. today I think they would have to be living in a bubble somewhere off Paris Island not to know that Black folk are still confronted with some pretty dire situations.

Forty-two years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And forty-five years after the charismatic leader Malcolm X was gunned down in Harlem and the dream of a better life for tens of thousands of Black folks appears to be a long ways off.

Most people who are tuned in to the Black African Americans plight would have to agree that the needs have never been greater, nor the consequences more dire; one dilemma after another keeps presenting itself, some examples: Funds for public schools (which millions of AA kids depend on, especially in *Urban Areas*) being sliced, college tuitions increasing and a probable limited access to grant money, there's serious talk of cutting money from Head Start (a major pre-kindergarten program serving poor kids), longer waits in emergency rooms at many hospitals due to lack of funding and inadequate staff.

True, these unthinkable cuts in funding for *public taxpayer programs* affect across the board, but as unsettling as it is, poor blacks are hit the hardest.

This is true because poor black folk find themselves in the precarious position of depending to heavily on government. This way of thinking; this *mindset must stop*. Future generations of Black kids must understand that government and government programs are not a *life line*.

A Bible Verse

Nowhere in the bible (a book African Americans rely heavily upon) does it say my help cometh from big government or government programs, but it does say on several occasions "*my help cometh from the lord.*"

To be clear, let me say here that I'm not referring to some subliminal feeling or religious high. What I am attempting to point out is that the Almighty empowers man—*men and women*—with intelligence and fortitude, strength and resilience, in order that he could master his environment, his circumstances, turning a bad nearly impossible situation around making it work.

The point here is, no one is going to deliver *Black Folk* out of their present dilemma but *Black Folk*.

A DIVERSE CULTURE

As much as some of us like to brag and say '*we are a diverse culture, there's not a Black or White problem*' we know it's a gigantic lie.

In my travels across this country; as I read, talk to people, listen to cable news shows like CNN and PBS. I'm reminded that *Black Folk* in many areas are still residing at the '*bottom of the barrel*' still feverously struggling to make ends meet... Look around you.

This brings us back to the *Whole* and the *Link*:

If the *Whole* is greater than *the sum of its parts*, then according to our scenario—pg 1. Each *part is necessary* in order to bring this into fruition, and the subsequent reality is the *Whole* not only becomes

greater than the sum of its parts but becomes *better-off* as a result of same. Such is the case with a people, any people and Black people are no exception.

THE PARTS: The financially astute, the professor, the oracle of common sense person, the family. All must be able to express their individual worth, thereby *making the whole greater than the sum of its parts*.

The *Whole* can become a *self-sufficient, self-reliant, self-serving people*, or they can maintain this *downward spiral*, depending on government programs, and government hand-outs.

I Think It's Time We Teach Our Children Different.

OF FAITH and BONDAGE

Christianity—The religious belief which suggests each individual believer is endowed with certain innate powers which enables them to overcome insurmountable obstacles, *via faith*.

However, for those who subscribe to this belief, the sticker is, it seems everyone has their interpretation of what faith is; what it means, how it looks, how it works, and subsequently resulting in estrangement from it.

It has been my observation (I only speak for myself) that most feel they can only view it (faith) through some kind of very high powered telescopic lense, always feeling it's just over the horizon, you know—"it's, it's right in my grasp... I've just got to do a little more praying, a little more fasting." When it actuality it's none of the above.

The *Holy Bible* says that it is near. Consider Romans 10:8—"But what Saith it? The word is nigh (near) thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart. That is the word of FAITH, which we preach." Here, according to the scripture, faith is as close (near) as the words you speak through, via, from your mouth. In other words, an essential component for Christians' growth and maturity is as close as forming words in one's mouth; so simple a child could do it.

It is impossible for the Christian to be alienated from his/her faith, for faith is inherent in being a Christian, in other words, *it is part of the package*. It is—as they say—only a trick of the devil deceiving Christians into believing their Faith is estranged or distant.

In Fact, scripture further proclaims "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Romans 12:3.

Faith which is a problem solver, a bridge builder, a demon chaser, a finance builder, is not estranged, it is not a distant, unreachable entity that one has to keep gaping over and over about. No, it is near, it is the beliefs in your heart, the words you speak from your mouth.

Of course it is important to know what *words* to speak, and it is impossible to know these words without being familiar with the *WORDS* in the *HOLY BIBLE*.

For instance, if you are going through a particular situation—*test or trial, worry or stress, pain and/or suffering*—*it is important to know what God says about it*. For example search the scriptures for someone or some peoples who has an incident or problem like or similar to yours, see how the holy spirit dealt with the person or persons in regards to the situation. Consider what *words* they spoke and actions they engaged in in order to overcome or be delivered from this bondage.

REMEMBER! Those same *words*, those same principles i.e. that same—*measure of faith*—is available for your deliverance.