

Black Youth, Where Are You Heading Today and Tomorrow?

This has been a topic of conversation for a long, long time. Questions with no answers always come up. Why? What's the problem? These are not answers: "I don't know." They're just rebellious." "They're just a lost generation."

Our beautiful Black brothers are a target of genocide. The fruit of life, going, it seems, to a depth of no return, of not ever getting up. We ask "why?" What's happening to our children? Does anyone love them? Do we, as parents, have no control over them at all? Do our children care any more what happens to them or anyone around them? Have they become so "fed up" with the system that lies, steals and tricks them, that they just say "forget it" (a softer term) and go out and do whatever their minds direct or whatever someone suggests to them to do, not caring about the consequences of their actions or the pain that it may bring? Is there hope in the minds of our Black youth for a better day? Who do they trust? The statistics on Black youth (males) in jail today are astounding. The number of deaths is frightening. The rate at which we kill one another is overwhelming and is on the rise. What can we do about it? Is there a power greater than all of us that is causing this dreadful happening? Is there a power greater than all of us that can stop the killing?

Have you ever heard the term, "the die is cast?" It means the path fixed; you're on a course of no return. Does it seem that that is what's happening to our youth? They're set on a course of self-destruction? Well, it could be, but I don't think so for long because out of 100% dissatisfaction, there must come a change. We are near or at 100% dissatisfaction among our youth, and a change is due to come. It has to be for the better, a changing of the winds.

I spoke recently with a very prominent individual who deals with youth often. He shared with me some of his experience and observations concerning our youth and what they're confronted with daily. His first response, when I asked about our youth, was, "It's a very bleak situation for Black male children. Their hopes of being successful are low. They can't see themselves getting the better things of life working for McDonald's or Burger King."

"They are tempted constantly," he continued, "by dope pushers, many of them their own age, offering and promising amounts of money they

know they will never make working at these food chains." He said it's very hard to turn down the offers, even though they may realize the

alcohol, crime, and violence. That needs to be said loud and clear, and we need to give them the recognition they deserve for stand-



Today's Teens

By Lateefah Razzak
Phoenix Staff Writer

dangers involved. "They don't see the light or darkness at the end of the tunnel. It really doesn't matter," he says, "they see no hope in the system or getting some of the things they desire." He described what our youth face daily as a "Turf War." Society sets up a social trap, where the rich get richer and the poorer get dead. The people who really get rich from drugs are those in high positions (some), the "untouchables," the masked people. He says in his observance, the older people and Black Americans are victims of the system.

I asked about the educational role. He said, "There are no male or Black role models, very few in the schools. Knowledge of Black heritage is nil. Many suffer from low self-esteem." Just listening to my friend, I had to agree with what he was saying. But it all was so sad, somewhat hopeless.

Our youth are our future. It is they to whom we will have to look to make decisions about our well-being and to carry on with life, community, home, social and moral ideas. We need to reach out to our youth with trusting love and concern and be there to guide them on the right path. But of course, we have to be on the right path first, doing the right thing ourselves all the time or as often and as much as our human capacity is capable of. All our youth are not into drugs,

ing firm. We thank you for being strong and holding on to your ideals and goals and to life. We hope and pray you will continue to hold firm and be strong.

I spoke to a few young people from various high schools around the city concerning drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence. Here are some of their comments:

Walidah said that crime, in her opinion, is on the rise because of the lack of security, the security being that of being able to trust others. "They feel that they can't trust anyone so they turn to weapons as security and trust. Drug use is not as high in my school as school as selling drugs. It's a quick

way to make some money."

Omar said that driving and drinking is very dangerous. There was a boy who was killed in a car accident, because he was driving while intoxicated. I asked Omar why he thought people would drive while drinking. He responded saying, "They do it to be in the in-crowd or to be cool, to bring attention to themselves."

Ayisha said, "Violence comes from frustration, usually from home or a broken family. When they come to school, tempers rise and the frustration is taken out on others." She said she thinks drinking and taking drugs are wrong for youth to do or for anyone to do. "It's horrible. Parents are at fault a lot of times. They can be better role models for their children." She added that most who sell drugs or use drugs come from broken homes, and they do it to be popular and get some of the things they want.

Akil said that the laws of the school system may be too strict. "When a person gets in trouble or misses days in school, I don't think they should be expelled. Drugs and alcohol are seen very often in school. The death of my friend affected the students very much."

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