

PraiseSong for Good Black Men

by Qaraandin



Millions of our children are doing the right thing every day. They deserve our full support so that they stay the course. Their story goes so unreported in the media that the broader society is losing sight of the fact that our children are an asset, not a liability, to society. We owe it to these youngsters to tell their story, loudly and relentlessly, until their accomplishments are widely acknowledged.

*Hugh Price
President, National Urban League*

“There are more young Black males in jail than in college.” The statement is always made as if there is cause for great concern. Does this statement really indicate that the Black community is in a crisis?

We know that our young men are perceived as a threat by the white supremacist system. What better way to keep our warriors from protecting our community than to lock them down?

We know that colleges - including the historically Black ones - do not teach our young men the importance of being a value to themselves and their global Black family. Why should we be proud of sending our young men to institutions that are going to return them to us confused, hating themselves and all people and things Black?

One statistic cited is “one out of every four young Black males is under the supervision of the criminal justice system.” We already know that means, then, that three out of four are not. That one in four, or 25%, includes men in jail, men in prison, men on probation, and men on parole.

Why do I make a distinction between men in jail and men in prison? To quote Angela Davis,

“...jail and prison are two entirely different institutions. People in prison have already been convicted. Jails are primarily for pre-trial confinement, holding places until prisoners are either convicted or found innocent. More than half of the jail population have never been convicted, yet they languish in these cells.”

Every day we see more and more stories of Black men being released from prison because it became clear that the only thing they were convicted of was being Black men in the US. Just may pretend to be blind; that’s just one of the many pretenses she uses so she can get away with railroading Black men.

Quiet as it’s kept, the vast majority of our young Black men are not in college and they are not under the supervision of the criminal justice system.

Who are the members of this “silent majority?” Where are all of these young men? What are they doing?

This “silent majority” is made up of our brothahs, sons, husbands, nephews, cousins, grandsons, lovers, and friends. They are all over, everywhere. Trying to make it through another day. Not bothering anybody that doesn't bother them.

College and the criminal justice system are not the only options open to our men. Skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen are not necessarily college educated. They are, however, essential to the health of our community.

We need shoe repairmen, truck drivers, auto mechanics, welders, barbers, painters, cooks, and yes, janitors.

Somebody's got to bag groceries, landscape our parks, deliver our mail. It is no shame when some of these folk are our young - and no so young - Black men.

It's okay to be a laborer, to get your hands dirty, to sweat. I like to see my brothahs working on a roadway, putting up a new building. A man has a right to be proud of himself when he is good at what he does.

Booker T. Washington said,

“No race can prosper until it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.”

Remember, in a capitalist society the job of some people is to be employed. Some of our males will wind up doing that. Let's not assume that the only way to survive unemployment is through crime.

The Black community has reason to be proud of our young men. They are being attacked from every direction, and the majority of them are standing strong and true.

We should be concerned about our young men who are under the supervision of the criminal justice system. That is proof that the Black community has been failing our youth. It is absolutely wrong for the Black community to throw up our hands in disgust or lose hope and faith in our young men.

Most of our young men are living productive, crime-free lives in spite of the negative images this white racist society tries to super-impose onto them. When we get from in front of the tell-lie-vision and actually listen to our youth, we will find that we have every reason to be very proud of them. When we pay attention to what they have to say, we can learn quite a bit from them.

As a young rapper from Philly asks his elders,

“What? Are you serious? All this noise we be makin', you ain't hearin' us?”

The next time we start to diss our young Black men, we need to remember it is ALWAYS the young, grassroots brothahs who serve as our frontline in times of struggle. From the day we arrived on these shores until the present day, young people have not only been present, energetic, and on the frontline, they have also served in leadership capacity.

