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“Trust for Us”

Discussion of structural problems within the Black community is open and unabated: i.e., discussions about poverty, crime, high incarceration rates, high unemployment, etc. However, Black America faces a psycho-social conundrum that is seldom at the center of our dialogue: **Trust**. We address “trust” here because its absence produces many of the economic outcomes about which we are concerned.

What is “trust?” In its simplest form, it is faith: Faith that you will be told the truth; faith that you will not be relieved of your hard-earned possessions; faith that you will not be left high and dry by a partner with whom you entered into a relationship and invested considerable time, energy, and resources.

The most awful feeling in any relationship is when trust is broken. That pain is ever so jarring when it involves an economic transaction that leaves you shafted.

Trust is often absent from Black American relationships. Therefore, projects fail when: Not enough is invested to make the project successful; a partner walks away before the project is completed; or one partner unilaterally cashes in on the project’s benefits to the exclusion of other partners. A perpetual history of these types of occurrences makes it more and more difficult for Black Americans to trust each other enough to make small projects successful—to say nothing of large, more important and complex, projects.

If Black Americans trusted each other more, it would be easier to care about each other. If we cared more about each other, then we would not sell drugs to each other; we would not shoot each other down in cold blood; we would have stronger families; we would have safer neighborhoods; we would be willing to enter into more long-lasting and beneficial business relationships; we would have more jobs; we would have higher incomes; we would have more wealth; we would be respected more by the outer community; and we would have greater control over our lives.

So how do we arrive at trust? One occasion at a time; one transaction at a time; one person at a time; and one relationship at a time. Just as the longest journey begins with one step, building trust in the Black community requires that we each decide within ourselves that we will trust our grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, friend, and neighbor, and that we will be trustworthy.

We are ordained to rise as a people, which means that we must and will develop trust. Will we build that trust on our own, or will we be forced to build that trust by others' actions? Escaping slaves trusted, and learned to love, each other because they had no choice. Let's hope that conditions do not deteriorate so severely in the U.S. that we suddenly realize that we are our only protection, which will force us to begin again to trust and love each other.

Whatever the cause, when we begin to trust one another, our individual lives, and the lives of all Black Americans, will begin to improve.

During the 1995 Million Man March, the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan admonished Black men to always stop and help another Black man or woman in need. How many times have you seen a Black man or woman stranded on the highway and failed to stop and help because you did not trust the stranded person? What if you were the stranded person? Can you be trusted?

As 2011 approaches, let's make a resolution to begin to trust more and to be trustworthy. One positive experience after another will make trusting easier. And even if there is a negative experience along the way, it will be anomalous, and it should not cause us to stop trusting each other.

If we are going to reach our higher calling, we must begin to trust today!

Dr. B.B. Robinson

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