

*Merida
Musings*

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January 2024

ISBN: 9798323383481

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Dedication

Previous volumes have recognized influential women and men separately. This volume recognizes both.

To my loving Wife Wylma; my Mother Delia; my Grandmothers Clonzie and Sallie; Mother Eva Lee, who saved my life; and Prof. Sarah, who opened my eyes to the importance of Black literature.

To my Father Walter; my Stepfather Horace, who was an important force in my life; my Step Grandfather “Papa Hodge,” who was the definition of work under hard task masters; and my Brother “Rob,” the most influential mind in my life across the years.

These *Merida Musings* reflect all of you.

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Preface

Retirement can be spent in nearly innumerable ways. For the November – December 2023 period, my wife and I decided to enjoy an extended stay in Merida, Mexico—the White City (*Ciudad Blanca*). The city boasts a little more than a one million population, is in Yucatan State near the south of Mexico, and experiences year-round warm and sea-breezy climes.

Early on during our daily walks, while listening to music in our quarters, and/or while riding around Merida, I found myself musing about life in the US and elsewhere from a purely Black American perspective. By mid-November, I decided to reduce some of the musings to writing.

Hence, you have on your screen or in your hand these *Merida Musings*. They reflect heartfelt sentiments that arise from nearly seven decades of life as a Black American who has lived a range of experiences in many locales.

I hope that you find these musings informative and insightful, and that they will influence your life in some small way. Also, I hope that you will have an opportunity to put down your own musings from time-to-time. It is a self-searching and cathartic experience that reminds you that you are, and have been, alive.

Introduction

Writing down musings is quite different from preparing formal or scholarly works with which I am more familiar. At the same time, each job prepares you for the next. Hence, while these musings are intended to be thoughtful yet casual, formality and fundamental scholarship creeps in here and there.

The topics of these nine brief musings are wide ranging. I have attempted to arrange them in logical order. They highlight, in my view, important issues for consideration by Black Americans during the third decade of the 21st century. They ask important questions and provide, hopefully, reasonable answers that are derived from informed thought, intuition, and life experiences.

They tell simple stories about what we need, where we are, what we do, and what we can do. The “we” reference is to Black Americans (African American descendants (Afrodescendants) of so-called slaves).

Many say that age brings wisdom. At an advanced age, you have a clearer vision of reality, and may be better qualified to characterize problems and configure effective solutions. But a heretofore unsolved problem surfaces: In the Spanish language, it is the clashing of *muerte* (death) and *tiempo* (time). Simply put, by the time you comprehend the state of things, what and where problems exist, the true nature of problems, and potential valid and effective solutions, you may be at death’s door. Then the quandary becomes: Do you shirk and shrink to self-gratification, or do you intensify and accelerate your efforts to improve outcomes from which you may never benefit. For at least the two months in Merida, I chose the latter.

These musings commence with “The Importance of Being Confident,” which seeks to transform/renew our minds for achieving a higher level of future wellbeing. The remaining eight musings are presented in four groups of two.

The first group characterizes what we must become and why. If Black Americans are to alter the course of history, then we need to become “Something New Under the Sun.” However, to decide and operationalize the best strategy for progress, we must establish proper goals and objectives, which can only be achieved if we pose and answer properly the question: What is real “Success?”

The second group describes what we need to overcome, and how we can measure whether we have become successful. We need to overcome where we are, which is considered in “Starting Points, Racism and Discrimination, and Expectations.” The consideration is motivated by exploring the hit movie *A Star Is Born*. We will know that we have overcome “When We Become Adults” and do as adults do.

The third group is linked to the topic that has occupied me for the last nearly 50 years—the economic system that is the framework of our lives. Actually, the economy can be interpreted as a type of strategic war game. We do just that using the personage of Jesus as a metaphor: “Jesus the Salesman.” Lest you succumb and faint after reading about Jesus’ extraordinary power to subjugate the world on behalf of his inventors, attention is brought to your power. In fact, you should never forget that “You Produce Billionaires.”

The fourth and final group picks up where the third group leaves off. Despite our great power to produce billionaires, Black Americans confront a challenging puzzle, which is exemplified in the history of a popular enterprise in my hometown of bygone years: “The Morrisons Mystery.” We

conclude the fourth group and these musings with a second very important metaphor. Blacks in America, like peoples around the world, is beginning to reflect an inverted population pyramid. We are many, and many of us have unexercised power to produce favorable change. Before we depart, we should certainly take advantage of our great “Waiting Room Opportunity.”

If the foregoing teasers do not spoil your appetite for the awaiting mental meal, which is hot from warm and comforting Merida, then proceed to the table. Take your seat, employ your table napkin (hopefully not to wipe tears), and cutlery (hopefully not to attack someone of a different persuasion near you), and recognize, revisit, and relearn small lessons that can prepare and motivate you to continue your journey that will help return Black Americans to our rightful place in the US and around the world.

I hope that these *Merida Musings* merit your time and attention. They stand as evidence that I spent two months in the growing and bustling city of Merida at the end of 2023 and mused.

The Importance of Being Confident

This musing, which is in the “economics of religion” tradition, may not apply to you, but it may be well worth reading!

You may be of the semi-elite or elite and you may be enjoying a high level of well-being. But well over 10 million Black Americans are experiencing life below, at, or just above the poverty line. This essay is for them whether it reaches their eyes and ears directly or indirectly. Should not we exhibit compassion?

This is a thought experiment designed to illuminate the path that placed us (Black Americans) where we are today. The intent is not to trace physical historical events. Rather, it invites an exploration of thought that has made many of us second- or third-class citizens seemingly with little hope of righting the boat. These mental gymnastics should enable us to comprehend why we are what we are and how to transform ourselves into favorable choice beings.

As a starting point, we request your indulgence on a foundational point: **The entire “system of things” in which we live is a lie!** Baba Lindsey “Rob” Robinson (a co-contributor for BlackEconomics.org) was the first to truly awaken us to this point. We had long comprehended that White Supremacy and many of the related implications rest on lies. However, it was not clear that the “entire system of things” is a lie.

We now know that the system is based on lies because the system’s statistics tell us so. The likelihood of Black Americans winding up at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder in so many categories (educational achievement, income, home and business ownership, wealth, etc.) must be

far into the left tail of a normal probability distribution. Therefore, our reality represents something that should not occur under prevailing rules, laws, and ordinary circumstances. Besides, scholars of many persuasions have confirmed with their research that anti-Black discrimination is the order of the day in the US and around the world. Yet, the system (the US Constitution and its attendant laws and regulations) says that such discrimination is not permitted. There is no need to carry this line of reasoning further. A thoughtful and objective mind will conclude that the system is rife with lies.

How can we crosswalk from our current predicament to an improved condition by obliterating the lies? The following questions will help answer this question. However, one additional reminder is in order before presenting the questions. Religious literatures indicate that there was once a wise and divine one who said: “You will know the truth and...” Simply put, we need truth because we live in a world constructed on, and confounded by, a particular lie. It is hoped that the truth that you will realize by answering the following questions will free all of us who engage in a sincere search for freedom. Despite *The Washington Post*’s recent announcement that we are in a “post religious world,” the questions are posed from a “Christian” perspective.¹ You should contemplate the questions and fashion your answers. Our answers follow this musing.

1. What is the nature of God that we have been, and are, taught?
2. In whose image and likeness are we told that man/woman is shaped?

¹ See Shadi Hamid (2024). “The Dilemmas of Living in a Post-Religious World.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, DC. January 9; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/01/09/religion-islam-freedom-choices-memory/>. (Ret. 010924).

3. Is it not true that man/woman has many God-like characteristics?
4. The Western world “Christian” tradition is drawn out of, and is closely related to, which religious tradition?
5. Why is the Christian religious tradition the only major world religion that posits the “unworthiness” (sinful nature) of man/woman as a starting point?²
6. Does Judaism posit/emphasize the unworthiness (sinful nature) of man/woman?
7. Is there a rationale for the “Garden of Eden” myth/story and a central point of “Eve eating the forbidden fruit,” thereby, rendering man/woman unfit for paradise and unable to automatically benefit from a connection with, and the powers of, God?
8. If the Garden of Eden myth/story and the unworthiness of man is in the Biblical Old Testament, and the Old Testament (Torah) reflects, in part, Judaism’s religious literature, then why is the concept of the unworthiness of man/woman absent from Judaism?
9. Who were important early adopters of the form of Christianity widely available in the world today?
10. What was the critical and most important transformation of the Christian tradition made by Europeans?
11. If you believe that Jesus the Christ is White, and if you believe that he is the son of God, then which color must God be in an anthropomorphic sense?
12. If your primary religious personality and his father are identical in color to you, then will you not think that the most powerful forces in the universe **support** you?
13. What is the outcome when one is extended the just-mentioned expansive and unflinching support?
14. What should you **not** be able to achieve with the just-mentioned support and confidence?

² We were first informed concerning this fact by the late Warith Deen Mohammed; a leader of the Nation of Islam.

15. With such support and confidence, should you be able to:
(i) Have dominion over the Earth (the air, land, and seas), the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every creeping thing; (ii) be able to master every conceivable area of human endeavor; and (iii) invent, develop, and manage all that is required to produce for your society's needs and wants (an economy)?
16. How long have Black Americans been broadly awakened to the knowledge (idea) that God is not White?
17. Do you believe that many Black American Christians still believe that God is White?
18. If you believe largely or in part that God does not look like you, then what are the two logical follow-on thoughts about God?
19. Given questions and answers 16-18, what are Black Americans not likely to have?^{3,4,5}
20. If you do not have the belief and confidence that you are connected to God directly, then will you likely have the conviction that you can emulate God-like characteristics; i.e., that you can do many of the things that God does?

³ The late great historian, Prof. John Henrick Clarke, was an early poser of this important question. He used this question and his answer to it to help explain why Black Americans (Black People of the world) have been slow to advance since the onset of engagement with Europeans.

⁴ Adopting a psychological perspective for the analysis, the importance of confidence from an economic perspective is discussed extensively and well in Jeremy Sherman (2022), "Swaggernomics: The Economics of Confidence and Doubt," *Psychology Today*: April 28; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/jerkology/202204/swaggernomics-the-economics-confidence-and-doubt> (Ret. 010924).

⁵ A very poisonous anti-achievement venom is produced when adverse achievement/performance stereotypes are married with constrained confidence. See Eleyes Jouini, Paul Karehnke, and Clotilde Napp (2018), "Stereotypes, Underconfidence and Decision-Making with an Application to Gender Math," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*: Vol. 148, April, pp. 34-45; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.02.002> (Ret. 010924).

21. If you have no firm belief in your abilities and powers, then is it possible that you are likely to fail in achieving difficult tasks more so than those who have a firm belief in their abilities and powers?
22. If you observe another People who have a God who looks like them and they are successful because they believe (are confident) that God supports them, and you believe that God does not look like you and does not support you (or does not support you on a priority basis because you do not look like him), then are you likely to conclude that you are unworthy of success and should be relegated to second- or third-class citizenship in the society?
23. Are some Black Americans steeped in the knowledge (religion) that their God looks like them and is not White?
24. Is it logical to think that those identified in question 23 exude more confidence in themselves and in their ability to achieve their desires than those who have no such knowledge (religion)?
25. Is it logical that those identified in question 23 are more “successful” than other Black Americans in achieving difficult tasks?
26. With which percentage of certainty do you believe that you and Black Americans can achieve any desire given sufficient time?
27. Given the known history of the physical world, has not time been nearly unlimited?
28. Given information that is accessible in the media and that is taught in educational institutions today, do you believe that man has time to achieve all imaginable/conceivable goals?
29. Are there actions that can recreate global conditions that would ensure an unlimited future on Earth to achieve goals?
30. Would you like to participate in the creation of a nearly unlimited global future?

31. Do you feel empowered to reshape your mind to the view that God is not White, and that God fully supports you in achieving your earnest desires?
32. Do you feel empowered to reshape your mind to the view that you have “a right to the tree of life” as much, or more so, than any other human?
33. Given your answers to questions 31 and 32, is there any earnest desire that you cannot fulfill given sufficient time and support from God?
34. If you can do anything but fail, then who are you?

The foregoing 34 questions should help you realize that proponents of the current system of things continue to promulgate the system and convince most humans that they are not gods. This effort is sustained because “knowledge of self” (that you are a god) would unleash from you a force too powerful to overcome or constrain. Given knowledge that you are a god means that you would have confidence in yourself, could never be reduced to servitude (the plight of most humans on Planet Earth), and can achieve all that you earnestly desire and are willing to work for in this life.

As you awaken to the reality that you are a god and bask in the related confidence, realize that controllers and operators of the system will try to convince you that it is in your best interest to remain asleep because too many gods, like too many cooks in the kitchen, will produce unfavorable outcomes. Of course, we disagree with that perspective. We know that God and gods know enough to know what and what not to do so that the good (heavenly) life on Earth is not disrupted and brought to a premature end. Besides, the current system is built on the premise that the best outcomes are achieved when everyone operates in their own best interest (the so-called “invisible hand” principle identified by Adam Smith in the 18th century). Therefore, you should ignore arguments against your recognition that you are a god.

We believe that: (1) The mind is the most powerful instrument in the universe; (2) a mind that conceives of itself as a god will be confident of its unlimited potential; and (3) if Black Americans begin to conceive of ourselves as gods and leverage the related confidence, then we will recognize that we have the power to achieve all that we earnestly desire and for which we are willing to work; including resolving all of our socioeconomic concerns/problems, completing our rise to an elevated place in the current (or our own) society, and enjoying superior wellbeing.

Author's Answers

1. God is all knowing, all wise, all powerful, a producer, and a source of life.
2. The image and likeness of God.
3. Yes.
4. Judaism.
5. The answer to this question will become clear given answers later in the series of questions.
6. No! Judaism can be interpreted to posit/emphasize that the Jews are "Chosen People of God." Therefore, they are not unworthy of the blessings/favor of God, nor to fulfill the commandments of God.
7. This myth is designed to relegate all Christians as unworthy and sinful and unable to experience the magical Eden and forbidden from accessing to the powers of God without an atonement process.
8. Because that part of the Old Testament, like others, is not intended for those in Judaism.
9. Europeans.
10. They rendered Jesus the Christ White.
11. White.
12. Yes.
13. You are likely to develop supreme **confidence** in yourself and your ability to achieve your earnest

- desires—even when the path to doing so is very difficult.
14. Nothing! You should feel empowered to do and achieve everything that you earnestly desire and for which you are willing to work.
 15. Yes!
 16. Primarily, since the 1930s with the coming of W.D. Fard Muhammad and the arising of Elijah Muhammad as leader of the Nation of Islam.
 17. Yes! They may state that Jesus and God are not White, but if you could capture their mental vision/image of God when asked to “imagine God,” then you are likely to find that their vision/image of God remains White.
 18. (i) God will not support you first among those on the list requiring support; and (ii) God will not provide full support for you in your endeavors.
 19. We are not likely to have very strong confidence in ourselves and in our ability to achieve our desires even when we work to realize them.
 20. No.
 21. Yes.
 22. Yes.
 23. Yes.
 24. Yes.
 25. Logically yes.
 26. 100%.
 27. Yes.
 28. No.
 29. Yes.
 30. Yes.
 31. Yes.
 32. Yes.
 33. No.
 34. A god.

Something New Under the Sun

By age 12, we have become familiar with the adage: “There is nothing new under the sun.” The concept is universal. For Black Americans in the third decade of the 21st century, this saying cannot hold true if we are to survive far into the future. We must have “Something New Under the Sun.”

Why? Because the walls are closing in rapidly. Global greed, the rampant lust for materialism, and the related hoggish consumption have placed the environment on a collapsing precipice. The latter state is causing myriad special (racial and ethnic) interest groups to form mentalities to secure as much (of everything) as possible as rapidly as possible for themselves alone. It has gone beyond, “let the devil take the hindmost,” to each interest group acting as a devil willing to destroy weak groups and to align only with groups strong enough to remain.

Black Americans and people of African descent the world over confront these conditions and, seemingly, find ourselves among the weak. Unfortunately, we have permitted the last 600 years to place us in a seemingly helpless position. Now, we appear to have but one escape: Mount counterattacks of all available varieties—physical and otherwise—to ensure our existence.

However, being the descendants of mothers and fathers of civilizations, we have infinite vision and wisdom. We know that war is not the answer, but love is. Therefore, we should only choose war as a final resort. Alternatively, we should choose love (love of life; love of what the Earth has to offer mentally, physically, and spiritually; and love of the Earth itself) to preserve our existence and that of humanity.

Love of life should engender a great desire to reproduce ourselves physically. It is by producing more (with us and with others) that we make possible the reincarnation (reinsertion) of our living spirits/souls into existing bodies that we have produced before our own demise. Knowing the science of life and genetics, we know that our nature (mentalities and phenotypes) will be preserved. Do not forget the power of the 8th generation—the octoroons. The Black man and woman, who are kings and queens of planet Earth, always return to take their rightful place throughout the generations.

Therefore, choosing to love mentally, physically, and spiritually can aid our efforts to preserve our existence. We are the men and women charged with keeping and dressing the Earth. This is strategy Part I.

Strategy Part II, has the requirement for “something new under the sun.”

What has never been done? What can and must we (Black people) do that is new that can save the world?

We say “something new under the sun” because in known human history, what we can and must do has never been done. Even the *Mamaluks* did not face our challenge.

The newness to which we refer entails a full resurrection and analysis of our history (our sciences (methods and procedures) and cultures), which can illuminate our supreme knowledge. We must use available technology to transmit that knowledge to the entire world and then work to ensure the acceptance and operationalization of that knowledge. Realization of this newness guarantees the perpetuation of our Earth for all inhabitants.

This newness can only be achieved if the world's African descendants, who possess African knowledge, experience a mental renewal and realization that what Africans possessed before encountering the European was best for planet Earth and its people.

A check of history will undoubtedly reveal great peoples, civilizations, methods and procedures (sciences), and fundamental principles from the past. Unquestionably, Europeans have played important roles in evolving the world technologically. However, while that evolution may have produced certain “advancements,” the way was lost on abiding by golden rules and principles that assure the permanent presence of humans in this world. Africans must now perform the calculus of integrating the old with the new. We must combine the eternal golden rules and principles with truly useful technologies. When performed properly, this effort will move life on Earth forward toward the natural conclusion of this dispensation of time.

The first step in realizing this newness already exists. Africans the world over are researching our ancient knowledge. The call is to teach this knowledge to our own people to produce the renewal. However, while the rationale for this action may seem transparent, we must take care to focus on and emphasize the importance of this undertaking. It is insufficient to know the great kingdoms, dynasties, and civilizations. It is not enough to resurrect the sciences. Even bringing life to dead languages stops short. What must be done is to look behind and underneath all of this and identify how our past embodied a “preserving balance” that kept the world intact and functioning in near perfect order—a system of things that was neither destructive nor diminishing.

Africans must come to know and convey to the world that “preserving balance,” which should permeate every aspect

of our lives. These actions and the related outcomes will convince the remainder of the world that we have the keys to eternal life on spaceship Earth.

It is the African Mind that contains the tools for the “preserving balance” that will permit humans to live on Earth into perpetuity without the evil that takes humans and the planet out of balance and on a course to a certain demise.

If Africans do not undergo the renewal and achieve the newness, then there will be nothing new under the sun. In fact, there will be nothing of human life on the Earth where the glorious sun shines.

Considering all of this in the context of the site for these musings, it would be tragic if people of the world would be denied the opportunity to witness and enjoy the special and warm glows that emanate from the innumerable *casas blancas* in Merida as they reflect our wonderful sun.

We must work quickly because there is not much time.

Success?

Black Americans have lived different socioeconomic, political, and historical experiences than have other Americans. No need to explain. If you are alive, then you are fully aware of this reality. However, no matter who we are, at some point in life, we are told what success is and we are urged to be successful. If we are fortunate, then we will pause and benefit from moments of introspection and consider our “success,” which we may measure by others’ yardsticks, scales, or bank accounts.

While in Merida, I considered success from a Black American perspective. In doing so, I assumed various vantage points.

Let us begin with the mental—our minds. Knowledge, which is embodied in our brains enables us to possess a mind that manages our behavior. We should never forget that knowledge is the most important “phenomenon” in the universe. The universe’s inaugurating spoken WORD(s) was(were) first conceived in the mind.

How is your mind today? Are you experiencing emotions: Anger, anxiety, confidence, depression, excitement, hate, hopefulness, hopelessness, inadequacy, joy, love, paranoia, narcissism, suicidal thoughts, terror? Whatever your emotions, we know that we are where we are because it was what it was. However, we should know where we want to go and how we want to be. At the top of the world!

Therefore, and fundamentally, we must have a renewal of our minds as Black Americans to arrive at a point where we have a deserving spirit, which of course is not synonymous with a spirit of entitlement. Success is being at a point where, no matter the circumstance, we know that we have a “right

to the tree of life;” that we deserve to live a full and successful life (however we define it); that we have or can gain the knowledges, skills, and abilities to get us to where we want to go and to what we want to be; that it is only through effort that we can achieve the successes that we desire and deserve; and that, if we really desire it, then we can use all the tools we have (the most important of which is our mind) to arrive at it.

As Dorothy learned in *The Wizard of Oz*, “all things are possible if we believe in ourselves.” Also, we learned from Whitney that such a belief is consistent with “the greatest love of all.”

What about the physical—our health? The fact that you are reading these musings indicates that you are alive. That is a sign of success. Your health suffices. It is your wealth. You can live, move, and experience being. But as Black Americans, we can certainly improve our health status (life expectancy; infant mortality; maternal mortality; cancer; heart disease; diabetes; etc.).

Interestingly, the mental and physical are not mutually exclusive. For example, consider fratricide. What has given us the mind to kill each other: Mainly young minds these days shooting each other down in the streets like dogs?

For Black Americans, we could/should define and measure success on the physical or health front by a life expectancy that equals or exceeds the best in the world. Ask the Japanese. Somehow, despite a relatively recent history that has not provided the most favorable of circumstances, the Japanese now reflect the longest life expectancy in the world. Therefore, it is not an impossible task for African-derivative Black Americans to reach this pinnacle when we remember that the Japanese, too, originate from Africa.

Spiritually, we know that spirituality is highly mind centric. We should establish as a success goal getting our spirit aligned with our “right” mind. We should have a spirit of rightness (that we exhibit a right life pattern and style); a conquering spirit (focusing on overcoming our own weaknesses and shortcomings—pointing the finger at self) without the need to feel that we must conquer others; a spirit of achievement (that we have been extended this pleasure of residing in heaven and that we will do what we can to make it even better before our departure); a spirit of love (giving those in our sphere of influence what they need (charity), not necessarily what they want); a warrior spirit (that we will protect ourselves from, and will defeat, enemies that attack us, including sending them to the cemetery if they act violently against us); a spirit of joy and thankfulness (expressing our joy and thankfulness to the creative force in our environment because it is just good to be alive); and a spirit of success (operating with the knowledge that by doing all that was just described, more, or whatever it takes, we can depart this heaven with a smile on our face knowing that not only have we fought the good fight and finished our business, but that we also did it with bold gusto).

Given the socioeconomic and political nature of these musings, it is important to draw on all the foregoing to emphasize that, combined, they can produce socioeconomic and political success. No need to produce a treatise here concerning how they would all work together for the good and cite the great minds who have discussed this topic *ad nauseum*. However, we will take a moment to share for the first time for some, and to remind others, an exemplary and concise summary of what Black America can and should do to achieve our socioeconomic and political success as stated by Bishop Noel Jones. The statement is from 2003, and from a televised roundtable on “The State of the Black Church,” which was produced by journalists Tavis Smiley and Tom

Joiner. Bishop Jones clarified a simple set of acts by posing several questions:^{6,7}

“...as I was listening to the discourse on the other side and listening to ownership and just dealing with the issues, Dr. E. Lance McCarthy in Los Angeles left me a couple of tips on my way here, and he said on any given Sunday you have approximately 65,000 African American churches. On any given Sunday that means that you have 25 million members. On every given Monday, they put in the bank \$50 million. On annually it is \$2 billion. The members spend in the American economy \$300 billion. We are richer than many nations. I am saying to myself as I thought about that and I listened to Dr. Cones about us gathering together where there are no cameras, what would happen in America if all of us would forget our denominational hangups and decided to bank in an international bank all together? Now with those statistics, Dr. McCarthy still says that 70 percent of our churches are turned down when they go to the bank. What would

⁶ The portion of the “State of the Black Church” televised Roundtable from which this excerpt was taken is available on YouTube.com; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rzmmqFcb6Q> (27:32 – 29:50; Ret. 112523).

⁷ Dr. E. Lance McCarthy is reported to be a graduate of a Canadian seminary and is listed as an economist in several press articles on the Internet. However, seminaries do not typically offer doctoral degrees in economics. In addition, we could not identify the source of the financial statistics that Dr. McCarthy is said to have provided to Bishop Jones—although the statistics do not appear to be unrealistic. Nevertheless, the scenario outlined by Bishop Jones is intriguing, and reveals the potential and awesome power of Black American unity.

happen if we, if we leveraged that money, all came together, put it in one place? Use all these brilliant Black minds that we have to give us direction? Because as preachers often times we are just creative in the bible. And when it comes to preaching every Sunday, your time is spent so much in studying the word of God and trying to deliver the word, yet we have people in our congregations who are extremely astute at business and all kinds of things. Why can't we humble ourselves a little bit, let somebody put a program together, somebody become our conscious, bring us all together, and make this thing work for all of us?"

This statement exudes the wonderful, sweet, and aromatic perfume of unity, which, if operationalized properly, would produce the type of socioeconomic and political success that we require. Black unity in the form of pooling resources to which we all contribute through one of the most important institutions that we possess (the Black Church) would not only assemble some of the financial resources needed to support our economic rise, but the resources and the unity combined would also enable us to manage political life to our significant advantage. Together, this successful and proper economic and political management of Black American life will engender the social environment that can enable us to flourish.

Once we (Black (Afrodescendant) Americans) become serious about hearing Bishop Jones' questions and about using the relevant answers to implement the powerful expression of hope that he intended, then we can certainly realize the evasive heaven that we have heard so much about from pulpits, but for which there has been a drought of

straightforward language concerning how to realize it. Now, some of us know for the first time. Others are recipients of an important reminder.

What we know is that the selective filtering upward of a few mainly light-skinned Black Americans, which is permitted by White America, is no longer sufficient or acceptable. Besides, those selectively filtered find it lonely near the top and realize that no one wants to be associated with Mr. or Ms. in-between. As we become increasingly successful mentally, physically, politically, socioeconomically, and spiritually, we will recognize the relevance and righteousness of Jessie Jackson's statement at the 1995 Million Man March (paraphrasing): **Every** man [woman] should have the right to look down on delectable apples that symbolize life's wonderful offerings and to eat; no one should be forced to swallow the rot and the worms that lodge at the bottom of apples because they eat from the bottom."

Simply put, our successes in all aspects of life will cause us to know and agree that we want to go far, and that we can only reach our chosen and desired destinations when we exercise unity and move forward together forever.

Starting Points, Racism and Discrimination, and Expectations

[The Psychoeconomics of Subordination Acceptance, the Relevance of External Cultural Capital, and the Importance of First-Order Conditions.]

“You know it's like, I dunno you... you float out... float out at sea then one day you find a port, say, 'I'm gonna stay here a few days'. A few days becomes a few years. Then you forgot where you were going in the first place. Then you realize you don't really give a shit about where you was going, cause you like where you at. I like where I'm at.”⁸

The foregoing quote is from comedian/actor Dave Chapelle in the 2018 smash hit movie, *A Star is Born*. Given his role as the most significant Black (African American) character in the movie, one should not overlook the significant subliminal nature of his role and words. One might interpret Chapelle's role and words in the movie as emblematic of Black America's role in supporting (psychologically and otherwise) White Americans in their role as guiding lights of the society.

Chapelle's entire monologue reflects the Black American historical experience. We were dragged out to sea to a new port from our homes on the African continent. Initially, after being enslaved, we undoubtedly hankered for home. But that hankering subsided as days turned into years, the years into decades, and decades into centuries. Now, many of us have

⁸ Google Noodle Tones;
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1517451/characters/nm0152638> (Ret. 111523).

lost our desire and intent to go home. The deadly dagger hidden in Chapelle's lines is: "I like where I'm at."

Also, one should not miss the significance of Chapelle's movie life as ideal: A Black man with a White spouse and "mixed-race" offspring.

But let us move beyond the psychosocial nature and interpretation of a movie to the related psychoeconomics of life for Blacks in America and for African descendant people around the world. The key point to build upon is that literally "everything" (mentally, physically, and even spiritually) that we have confronted has been made to evolve to constrain our knowledge and vision of our potential roles in society.⁹

It is an impressive individual who "breaks the mold" and enjoys life experiences that go beyond those viewed as acceptable by one's own and other social groups. In other words, outcomes—especially economic outcomes—are not only influenced (even determined) by one's own cultural capital, but by the cultural capital of others. Too often, economists' models that seek to explain outcomes fail to account for *status quo* inertia that operates as gravity to prevent economic mobility. That is, others' expectations become a mighty beast to defeat. We can conclude, therefore, that the unexplained portion of outcomes in economic mobility models that account only for own cultural/social capital is due, in part, to not accounting for others' expectations, which result from others' cultural/social capital. Accordingly, those who may reside in the far-left tail of an overt racism and discrimination

⁹ We say "potential" because, in a normally distributed world, anyone can assume any role.

distribution may still be guilty of Michael Gerson's "soft bigotry of low expectations."¹⁰

It is widely acknowledged that probably the most important prerequisite for becoming a physician, attorney, scientist, or professional athlete is to have one or more parents in these occupations.¹¹ Arguably, this is especially true for Black athletes today. Consider that it is now common to observe second and third generation Black sports stars.

Consequently, it is appropriate to ask the following questions. Is it pure chance that elegant images of female clothing models often feature Black models in more "sexually provocative" attire? When winter attire is on display, why are Black models likely to present only dresses and sweaters, while White models present the most luxurious and warm overcoats? Are fashion designers and advertising artists, who are often considered at the far-left end of a liberal-to-conservative spectrum, more racist and/or discriminatory than perceived? Or is it simply that the images seek to reflect that Black women see themselves as more sexually promiscuous and that they cannot afford the added cost of an overcoats?

A popular saying is: "The end point is more important than the starting point." Again, this pablum ignores the fact that the starting point is an essential factor in determining the ending point. Yes: First-order conditions are fundamental in determining life trajectories.

¹⁰ Wikipedia credits Gerson with coining this phrase. He was a speech writer for US President George W. Bush.

¹¹ A very recently released scholarly economics article emphasizes this point. See Anna Stansbury and Robert Schultz (2023), "The Economics Profession's Socioeconomic Diversity Problem," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*: Vol. 37; No. 4, pp. 207-30.

Whether for a Black (African) American or native-born African in the US or Europe, a Dalit in South Asia, an indigenous person (Amerindian) in Canada, the US, or Central and South America, hundreds and even thousands of years have established and superimposed adverse norms and expectations on life outcomes. Of course, the same is true for women in patriarchal societies.

Going further, this analysis renders Adam Smith's (the "father of economics") "invisible hand" concept less efficacious and relevant for describing market economic outcomes. It is true and logical for an economy to permit each agent to act self-interestedly. But such a model is far from ideal in explaining economic outcomes in heterogenous societies because it does not consider the role of starting points, racism and discrimination, and expectations.

Economists' arguments that Smith's nearly 250-year-old model is a "basic foundation" for explaining the real world today seems flawed. In a world functioning under Moore's Law and where I-phones' useful and relevant lives are two-to-three years at most, why should such a complex discipline begin with such an antiquated and outdated "basic foundation" for building up a full model of reality?¹² We are an elevated people residing in a new and elevated world, who can begin our uptake of economic science using a new model that has a "basic foundation" that is richer, more complete and complex, and representative of reality.

The fundamental foundation of the new model would recognize starting points, racism and discrimination, and expectations. This new model should be required learning

¹² Moore's Law is interpreted to mean generally that our technological world is advancing rapidly. Specifically, the capacity of computer chips is doubling at two-year intervals.

for all. It is only with knowledge of such a model that agents do not operate behind a smokey veil or naively. Rather, all agents enter life's economic wars with eyes wide open, and with improved prospects for rejecting subordination of any variety—especially the second-class citizenship kind. It is only in such a world that there can be a realistic expectation of increases in prospects for overall wellbeing.

When We Become Adults

♪“When I get through toiling down here,
Out in the sunshine and out in the rain,
I’m going home to live with Jesus,
Won’t it be grand”♪

Those familiar with the Pentecostal tradition are, undoubtedly, familiar with these opening lines to a popular and old Gospel song titled “Won’t It Be Grand.”

I can remember arriving slightly tardy for church service in a rural Florida community one Friday evening, opening the door to the just-parked car, feeling and smelling the rainy mist that lingered in the air, and hearing immediately the congregation already assembled and producing a joyful noise singing “Won’t It Be Grand.”

I was just a boy and Black Americans back in the 1960s were still a very young people; less than one hundred years on this side of slavery. Although we had produced many learned scholars and even a great Harlem Renaissance 40 years earlier, we were still largely an unlearned people, who would begin to rise faster following the Civil Rights Movement. Not only rise in knowledge, but also rise in comprehending our civil and human rights.

But beyond knowing our rights and producing an environment through which we can condition ourselves to realize those rights, if we are very objective, then we will conclude that we are still not fully grown and are often an unwise people.

In 2014, I was blessed to prepare a brief monograph entitled, *The Tragedy of Contemporary Gospel Music.* It carries as its main theme the argument that one of the most valued of

Black American traditions, Gospel Music, in its contemporary form turned the clock back and reflected melodic and lyrical sentiments that were sufficient to render us inept and unable to make progress. Gospel music then and now excludes the strong and pervasive positive messages of the 1960s and takes us back to dependence on a spook God. The music tells us very little about bootstrapping ourselves to a higher level using the innumerable gifts and abilities with which we were and are blessed.

That was Gospel Music after just over 100 years. Today with Hip-Hop celebrating its Golden Anniversary, arguments abound about the horrors of contemporary Rap music that often diminishes our women, suggests and motivates the basest and most “unlearned” of behaviors, reinforces unwhole families (the basic building block of our society), and all but pulls the trigger in fratricidal acts involving young Black Americans males.

Children need parents to prevent them from performing destructive acts. Does the fact that Black Americans continue to perform destructive acts indicate that we remain children? One argument is that only one class or group of Black Americans are guilty of such. A relevant and appropriate response could be that, only a non-adult ignores and rejects the importance and value of family. How can our “learned” in the suburbs not see that failure to assist—even rescue—our people in the inner-city hoods guarantees that we hard code fragmentation, and that when hard times arrive, both classes or groups will find themselves wanting—needing each other desperately.

So, we have work to do to rise to the level of a learned and an adult-like people. Our new-found status and wealth will be for naught if we do not birth ourselves into a new maturity. A maturity that can retain our great creativity that

produces an exciting, joyous, and ecstatic life, but either places a firewall between ignorance and knowledge (i.e., clearly comprehend that Tom Foolery is reserved only for specific times of the day or weekend and the remainder of the time must feature a business mindset), and/or fail to eat our own cooking, drink our brews, or listen to the music that we produce because we recognize their deadly harm.

When we all become woke to this requirement, then we will realize that where we are today and where we have been is a fully ignorant and unawakened state. Going back to “Won’t It Be Grand,” we must dissect the lyrics to see that:

- There is little better for African-centric people than sunshine. Our genes make us dependent upon it.
- Without rain and water, no one survives.
- We should never denigrate the value of these two essential sources of life—even metaphorically.
- Earth should be viewed as heaven. To think otherwise is not only an artifact of misinformation, but also conveys a deep pessimism that is a magnet of death.
- We should never engage in efforts to accelerate our departure from a living state to enter a condition about which we know almost nothing—especially imagining that the afterlife will be “grand.” Our focus should be on making life on this Earth as grand as possible each day—a place about which we have nearly complete knowledge!

Given this new and elevated comprehension of life, we see clearly that whoever wrote the lyrics to the song had swallowed all the poisoned Kool-Aid that is Christianity centered in White Supremacy.

Then (historically) and now, the war for survival on the planet in America and around the world pits Blacks against Whites. The latter want to squeeze all the juice (physical, knowledge, creativity, economic potential) out of Blacks, and then witness our demise. They relish in our ignorance. They have mental orgasms when they see us destroying ourselves or failing to prevent our own destruction. They get high when we do not solve our own problems and crawl to them for assistance. Then they fashion assistance that is more poisonous than the sting of a Gila monster. They can then step aside and observe us happily implementing their assistance only to end up like so many fish belly up on the seashore.

Clearly, it is time to sing a new and enlightened song in this strange land. We must create our lyrics and melodies carefully to optimize their positive effect on our minds and spirits. We need melodies and lyrics that elevate us to the top. Melodies and lyrics that call for destruction of our open enemies, not death to our brothers and sisters. When we sing such songs and hear them reverberating in our minds continuously, then we will be in the midst of our rise. It must be a rise that is inoculated against strategic responses by our enemies. We know they will attempt to prevent our rise. Even the very young learn that power concedes nothing when they first engage with the neighborhood bully.

What we need now is music that is carefully crafted to enable and sustain our rise, and that destroys our enemies. It may first become evident in the bedrooms of our new musical geniuses. Later it will waft from basement windows up to the streets during house parties. Then it will infiltrate our clubs and newly oriented religious institutions. Finally, it will be streamed the world over, entrancing and transforming the hearts of Blacks and Whites in ways that can never be

reversed. A music that rebuilds and solidifies the pyramids of our minds.

We will reach adulthood with that music. It will provide the soundtrack for our holy work. It will instruct us concerning how to use all resources at our disposal to build and operationalize programs that realign every aspect of our lives to ensure our continued and proper existence in the Earth. It will eviscerate the evil ones who are unwilling to take on the new mind of the new man/woman. They just will not be able to stand.

It will be clear evidence music that confirms our passage from childhood to adulthood. It will be consistent with the knowledge that adults put away childhood things. This new, melodious, eternal music will be the joyful noise that will permeate the atmosphere of the new heaven right here on Earth where any sane mind wants to reside forever.

Jesus the Salesman

Any long-term sales strategy involves a logo or icon.

Nearly 2000 years ago, Europeans decided that their logo would feature whiteness. They decided that they would engage in an endless campaign to convince the world that: “If it was not white then it could not be right.” But then there is duality. Therefore, for completeness, Europeans also had to convince the world that: “If it is black, then it must be whack.”

Yes, you can wear white clothes. You can paint walls and buildings white. You can even make the face of clocks ubiquitously white. You can confirm without limit that whiteness is associated with purity, cleanliness, and with the very best.

But what was probably the most enduring aspect of Europeans’ strategy to conquer and subjugate the world, was to characterize and label their pinkish or yellowish skin tone as white.

However, undoubtedly, the most important and powerful aspect of their strategy was to take an otherwise fundamentally pure message of unconditional love, transform it into a “religion,” and then characterize/label the personality linked to that message as a White person.

Jesus as a White male was sufficient to set the stage for all future actions to swarm around the world—hither and thither—as locusts raping knowledge and material resources (human and otherwise) wherever they landed. But taking what they found was insufficient to sustain their desired position in the world. They knew that what they took would not sustain them forever. That where and what they raped

would be restored by time. That it would be necessary to return and rape again and again. Therefore, they deposited their “religion” into the rich soil (human minds) where they swarmed.

By planting their “religion,” they established an insurance policy the premiums for which would be paid in the form of periodic religious proselytization that would condition and recondition the environment repeatedly with the notion that only good can come from white and that good can only be accessed through the ubiquitous icon of their religion—Jesus.

This brings me to the core of this Merida musing.



Galeria Shopping Mall

My first notable observation in Merida broadly was that the Western World in the form of US corporations were in no way absent. Whether your favorite commercial enterprises are Costco, Sam’s Club, Walmart, MacDonalads,

Burger King, Krispy Kreme, or Star Bucks, you should not fear that these enterprises would not be here. Accordingly, it was logical to find that US clothing, shoes, information technology equipment, toys and other goods and services would be on display in the Galeria shopping mall located immediately across from my Merida residence.

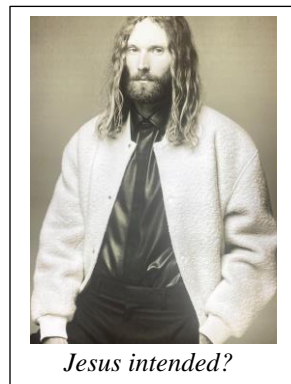
While promenading around the mall, my first blush realization was that the manikins and photographs almost never reflected the skin tone of the people for whom these advertising devices were intended. Not to say that the range

of skin tones in Merida does not span the spectrum. But most of the people here would not be considered “White” by a Black American—irrespective of the US Government’s recognition of most Spanish speaking persons as White.

Of course, the entire arrangement (the roads, the streets, the cars, the homes, the food, the stores, the schools, the churches, etc.) is ultimately organized/designed to ensure the sustainment of White superiority, which means that White-owned firms sell back to so-called “people of color” the very products that those same “people of color” produce. And, oh by the way, the purchase prices of these products include hefty markups that support the grand lives of those who have organized the production and who have subjugated the people.

While continuing the promenade around the first and second floors of the Galeria shopping mall, I was startled/shocked unpleasantly by a particular image that graced the walls of a clothing store. The name of the store is not important. What is important is the image that looked seriously and convincingly back at me.

The image was of a White male, who possessed the iconic visage of Jesus. The identification was immediate and certain. This image is pervasive in old King James versions of the Holy Bible. You can find it on fans that were (and may still be) available and used on Sunday mornings in tightly packed and nearly sweltering churches in the heat of summer throughout the Southern US. It remains on innumerable stained-glass windows in churches all over the US and around the world.



This image of Jesus, as always, was White-faced with middle parted shoulder-length hair and a full-faced beard. This despite the *Book of Revelations* declaration (1:14-15) that he possesses burnished bronze skin and hair of lamb's wool. In this case he did not wear a white flowing robe. He was dressed in a black silk shirt, black trousers, and a white jacket. This image megaphones: It is simple and clear in black and white that if you purchase this outfit or one like it, then you will have the best, and you will be the best that you can be because you will be like him. The him that is perfect. The him that is holy and right. The him that is White. Your wearing of these textiles will place you in touch with the divine and you will look and feel divine. If true, then who would dare reject this proposition?

Whatever Jesus was, did he ever imagine himself 2000 plus years later serving as the logo, the icon, for enterprises the world over? Did Jesus see himself as the ultimate salesman?

What a strategy for global domination—economically, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

At least now, Black/African people of the world know what we must do to effect and complete our rise. Take 2000 years to invert and obliterate the lie and convince the world of the truth: Blackness (in all its aspects) is consistent with the nature of the Creator and humans. In that context, we must identify a logo, an icon, that possesses a lived herstory of greatness and righteousness. Then push that icon around the world through actual—not phantom—good deeds and good will.

Can Harriet Tubman be as successful a salesperson as Jesus? Like Jesus, Harriet can help us transform the world to embody loving and caring principles that were embodied in the original teachings of Jesus and the original teachings of

all other great religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. By so doing, Black men, women, boys, and girls, can bring the world back to its originally intended condition where there is peace on Earth and goodwill toward all.

It is important to recall that even the Europeans record Jesus as despising commercialization of that which was holy and righteous (i.e., the temple). It would only be just and right that, given the chance, he would dispel from the hearts, minds, and consciousnesses of humans those who have featured him as “Jesus the salesman.”

You Produce Billionaires

For Black Americans living—nay residing—in poverty, knowledge about billionaires, who have a lifestyle that is seemingly unlimited in consumption, pleasure, and opportunity, is a very cruel artifact of consciousness. Even the two certainties of life do not seem to apply to billionaires. For example, efforts are ongoing to determine how to transfer the consciousness of the wealthy into machines or cyborgs so death will have no sting for them. Also, the rich have accountants who eliminate the prospect of taxes—or at least minimize taxes to a level of relative irrelevance.

Yet, the poor do not arise/revolt in righteous indignation and demand a halt to this cruel reality. One party has wealth sufficient to support a grand existence nearly eternally. The other is unable to plasticize income so that enough calories are available until the next round of compensation. This cruel reality becomes more appalling when the “have not” is a child who not only does not receive enough nourishment to support proper brain development during critical early years, but also only has prospects for a lifetime of poverty, pain, and/or imprisonment.

But the underlying cause of the rich versus poor reality is often clouded significantly by a lack of knowledge that is endemic to the lives of poor “have nots.” The latter, and even some on higher rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, do not realize that they contribute significantly to producing the very billionaires who flaunt their wealth, exploit the entire society to the hilt, and take every action to avoid the sight of human suffering even when they are integral to causing that suffering through poverty and could help alleviate it.

Name a billionaire and it easy to link their wealth and “success” to government and its resources. Consider the following selected realities:

- Automobiles (gasoline, hybrid, or electric) would be virtually unsaleable if government did not construct roadways.
- Almost all green technology derives from research initially undertaken by scholars at research universities and institutions who benefited from government research grants.
- Social media only exists today due to the availability of digital communications, which was enabled largely by research at government laboratories.
- Rapid delivery of goods to all corners of the nation is only possible because government constructed highly efficient and functioning transportation facilities and networks.
- Wealthy financiers and investors are mainly successful because of the nation’s mainly government-controlled banking system has developed what are known today as FINTECH systems that manage voluminous financial transactions day in and day out.
- Wealthy goods producers take it as given that the government’s military will provide for secure passage through the air, on land, and sea of the final or intermediate goods or raw materials whose sales are the source of their wealth.
- Billionaires, who are investing in space technology today so that they or their descendants can become trillionaires tomorrow, stand on the giant shoulders of government, which laid an excellent foundation for space exploration.

The seven foregoing realities highlight your role in producing billionaires. Your tax dollars contribute to the financial pool that funds government operations, investment in infrastructure and research and development, system and network development, and provision of security.

Whether income, excise, or property taxes, or the myriad fees that you pay during the normal course of everyday life are contributing in numerous ways to the pool of funds that ultimately facilitate the arising of billionaires.

But it is deeper than that. In route to becoming, and once, billionaires, those preordained or fortunate enough to navigate to economically powerful (wealthy) positions flip the script and then use their wealth and power to motivate politicians to enable favorable conditions that ensure the former's continued economic success. How? *Inter alia*, the wealthy cultivate politicians to provide government contracts and research funds to them, and/or to lubricate regulatory wheels so that opportunities to sell their goods and services to the public fall without fail into their laps.

This description of reality makes no reference to merit. Therefore, we can conclude that social mobility in our society is not associated tightly with merit. In other words, the pablum we are spoon fed throughout life about smart and hard work leading to success is largely erroneous—it has little substantive “nutrient” value.

Under these circumstances, “what’s a sister and brother (Black and White) to do?” The question hints at a problem, which can be answered through research and, potentially, by innovation.

As a starting point, consider working with what you have: i.e., your socioeconomic and political life. Seek to optimize wellbeing through the following actions:

- Adopt a long-term view.
- Pursue individual/small group self-sufficiency and reliance.
- Treat spending as personal protests or economic warfare-related actions.
- Associate with others to pressure for a purer democracy and for a more meritorious society.¹³
- Prepare for potential crises that may occur due to the unsustainability of certain aspects of the current economic system.

In a perfect world, life would be “fair.” Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world. Consequently, one must work diligently to produce an environment that is consistent with your requirements. Without doubt, you should be empowered to act because not only are you a survivor in a cold, cruel, and uncaring world, but you contribute regularly to producing billionaires.

This musing does not ask whether you aspire to become a billionaire? That question is of secondary importance. The point of relevance is that you and the rest of the society are, willy-nilly, producing billionaires. Given this role, it seems credible to question who decides who becomes a billionaire? When the latter question surfaces, the secondary question resurfaces as: What is preventing you from becoming a billionaire? Answers to that question may motivate you to work to change the fundamental nature of the society.

¹³ In connection with this action, consider Brooks B. Robinson (2022), *A Purer Democracy under Cyber Governance: Future Implications for Black America’s Political Economy*. BlackEconomics.org. Honolulu.

The Morrisons Mystery

The Morrisons Cafeteria that existed once upon a time in Gainesville, Florida was, and is, a mystery. The location was not a mystery. It stood adjacent to one of the first important shopping malls in the city just north of 23rd Boulevard on Northwest 13th Street. The cafeteria's patrons were no mystery. Many Blacks and certain Whites frequented the establishment. The staff was no mystery. While Whites often worked in the cafeteria, Blacks were the backbone of the establishment. They served in the steamy kitchen preparing special recipes to perfection year after year. They served up patrons' requests on the food line. They were sharply outfitted and served professionally and expertly in transporting fully loaded trays from the food line to customers' chosen tables. It was also no mystery that White staffers would be the ones ringing up bills after you selected your favorite dishes, and collecting your cash or credit card to settle your bill as you exited the cafeteria after a wonderfully sumptuous meal. Another non-mystery was the owner of Morrisons. I never researched the topic. Didn't need to. There was very limited formal Black business ownership in Gainesville during my time in the town and, given what I knew about business then and now, and especially knowing the cafeteria's prized location, I simply knew that it was owned by a non-Black entrepreneur.

What then was and is the mystery?

I will address that question in a moment, but now that we are discussing Morrisons Cafeteria, which no longer exists in Gainesville, I want to reminisce fondly and attempt to retaste the wonderful foods that were available from that once fine dining establishment, which was a go-to destination on many a Sunday during the early years of my life.

Sunday was always a special day for Black Americans. Black people prepared to experience heaven on their Sabbath. They would have toiled all week long on somebody's job doing the most menial or burdensome of tasks knowing that they had no choice if they wanted to stay afloat economically. While the compensation was not, or barely, enough to meet requirements, Blacks would skimp and save incessantly so that they could experience certain simple pleasures of life. The pleasures included going to the beauty parlor or barbershop on Saturdays to be made new in preparation for heaven on Sunday. Having their Sunday best attire cleaned and pressed to perfection—removing those spots and wrinkles. Ensuring that shoes were cleaned and shined at the shoe shop or at the barbershop. Carefully washing and polishing cars, with special attention to the small or wide white-wall tires and hubcaps and chrome bumpers. Monday through Friday (and sometimes half-days on Saturday) might be owed to the bossman. But whatever part of Saturday was available was dedicated to preparing for Sunday.

And Sunday was the Lord's Day! While the uninitiated may have thought of the "Lord" as being in heaven on a pie-in-the-sky-after-you-die basis, the initiated (the Masons, Elks, Eastern Stars, and others) understood that God is nothing but the life force, and that the breadth in their bodies was life itself. Therefore, they knew that references to the "Lord" were to themselves alone—just like European Whites have titles like Lord this and Lady that. Whatever the perspective, Blacks landed on, and stuck to, a largely nonnegotiable arrangement where Sundays were reserved for the Lord—be he/her esoteric and ephemeral or one's natural self.

On Sunday morning the first order of business was to get to Sunday School and/or Morning Worship. Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, there was no time to consume breakfast

before departing for church. Not to worry: A special treat was in store. What was the treat? Morrisons Cafeteria!

I recall going to Morrisons on many, many Sundays. No question about it, I consumed innumerable great dishes in numerous combinations. The food line started with fresh salad options, which were plentiful: Cole slaw, tossed vegetable, carrots and raisins, or fruit salads. The dressings were to die for. Morrisons was unusual because it lined up the desserts immediately following the salads—not at the end of the food line. The pies and cakes were endless. I won't even try to list the many options. However, I must tell you that I always fell for the strawberry short cake. I can taste the sweet and tangy glazed strawberries with rich whipped cream right now. However, I learned from my mother that their simple egg custard was most flavorful and satisfying. I would try it too. When it came to the main entree, it was always hard to pass up the fried chicken, the liver and onions with yellow rice, the fried fish fillets with almonds and tartar sauce, the prime rib, or the meatloaf. The just given list is not all inclusive, but I will go no further. Otherwise, you might get happy and head up 13th Street looking for Morrisons. The mashed potatoes and gravy, candied yams, macaroni and cheese, or potato salad were always amazingly flavorful. The vegetables included greens, string beans, yellow squash, black-eyed peas, and giblet corn. There was a large selection of breads: Cornbread, whole wheat or white rolls, breadsticks, and biscuits. But as I grew older, I became partial to those slightly sweet bran muffins. If you selected one of the warm breads, then there was the creamy butter with a hint of salt that would melt on top and the combination in your mouth. All the traditional hot and cold drinks were available. However, everyone in my family, like so many other Black Americans, were addicted to the sweet tea.

Okay! I'm full. So, before I pass out or take a forced nap, let me explain the Morrison Mystery. [By the way, one should have no illusion that such cuisine can be found in Merida. Yet, as a cosmopolitan city of many ethnicities, one can certainly find cuisines that satisfy your palate.]

It is a mystery that has repeated itself *ad infinitum* across America. The mystery concerns the composition of Morrisons' staff. As already noted, Black Americans comprised most of the staff. That Black staff worked seamlessly together and with the few White employees under the direction of the White manager and/or owner. Many of the Black employees seemed to have worked so long at Morrison that they should have been close to retirement when the cafeteria ceased operations. In other words, the Black employees, beyond a shadow of a doubt, had to know Morrisons' full and complete operation.

Yet, when the enterprise folded or was sold, Blacks had not positioned themselves to take ownership and extend the life of the business. Not necessarily under the Morrisons brand (but that, too, may have been on the table), but with the same delicious menu and customer service that had popularized, and generated massive goodwill for, the brand all around the State of Florida and beyond.

The mystery is ensconced in simple questions: Why can Black Americans be the "heart and soul," the elixir-like blood, and backbone of an enterprise when it is owned and operated by Whites, but cannot operationalize that recipe and spirit for success when promulgating enterprises owned by Black Americans? Why have we had such difficulty working together and building powerful, flourishing, and growing enterprises—particularly after desegregation?

Let me caveat the questions that are at the seat of the mystery by saying that in the late 1960s before the full onset of desegregation, the US Census Bureau recorded that nearly 30 percent of Black businesses were vibrant enough to have employees. However, for the most recent year for which statistics are available, 2019, the Census Bureau reports that around five percent of Black enterprises have employees beside the business owner. In other words, we used to know how to work together to forge successful and growing businesses. How and why have we lost that skill and capacity?

The answers are, no doubt, multifaceted and intricate.¹⁴ But there is one fact about which there is no mystery. If Black America is unable to recapture the spirit of unity, the backbone of pride, and the managerial know-how to create goods and services producing enterprises that mature well and grow, then our status in the US will deteriorate from bad to worse. Simply put, we must solve this mystery or slide back down the mountain that we have been climbing for 400-plus years.

I am thousands of miles from Gainesville now. However, when Black Gainesvillians—or Blacks anywhere in the US—solve the Morrisons Mystery and develop a restaurant that replicates the flavors, quality, simplicity, cleanliness, ambiance, and kindness of Morrisons Cafeteria, then send me an urgent message. You will find that I, many other former Gainesvillians, and persons from untold places will beat a path to that cafeteria's door.

Please hurry up! I'm getting hungry all over again!

¹⁴ Consider reviewing Brooks B. Robinson (2015), "22 Reasons Why Black Businesses Fail," [BlackEconomics.org](https://www.blackeconomics.org), Honolulu; (<https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/22reasons.pdf>). (Ret. 112323).

The Waiting Room Opportunity

Typically, there are two hospital waiting room scenarios. In the first, you pass through a waiting room urgently on your way to an emergency room. This is the less preferred scenario. In the second, there is an injury or problem too severe to be managed at home, so you visit a hospital or clinic waiting room and await the availability of a medical professional to assist in resolving the problem. This is the non-life threatening and preferred scenario.

These waiting room scenarios are part of everyday life. While we desire life to be perfect (and it usually is in this heaven we call Earth), occasionally, something goes awry, we are checked, and we face a reminder that we are not in complete control. Accidents happen! The body can breakdown! Fortunately, wise ones among us have been astute enough to recognize this and prepare for these eventualities—not necessarily out of the goodness of their hearts, but because the services provided in waiting rooms bring sizeable financial returns for those delivering medical services. Most importantly, the mindset is: Let us fix this so that you can return to your life path. In fact, it is critical that you return to your activities to produce the income required to pay for your costly waiting room experience.

But there is a third hospital waiting room-like scenario. I take the liberty to characterize post-retirement as a type of waiting room experience. You have fought a good fight. You are close to finishing your course. Yet you are not at the heaven exit point. This type of waiting room tenure could be short, medium, or long. This waiting room experience does not entail an extraordinary draw down of your financial resources. You are sitting pretty, doing many of the things that you continue to be able to do after a full life. It is a period of enjoyment and contemplation as you prepare to make the

decision to walk through the final exit. You have time to remember all that has happened. You can consider the possibilities on the other side. You can travel. You can visit family members and friends. You can go to places on your bucket list. You can do things you always wanted to do, but never had the opportunity—like reading good books of the *Merida Musings* variety. If you are fortunate, then this is that easy time of life where living with moderation and prudence enables you to keep your financial concerns well in check. You live comfortably, unencumbered, and free. You live without fear—other than the fear that some unforeseen event could arise to cut short your waiting room experience and force an untimely exit. Partly unknowingly (early in life) and partly knowingly (as we mature), we push through the entire life experience to get to this point of “life enjoyment” and freedom.

Does this sound somewhat dull and boring? For some it is, and the way they like it. They thrive on the peace and quiet of later life. To others it is somewhat boring. However, it is better than being in a less favorable situation.

Well never fear! We have a proposal to spice up your waiting room experience. The spice that we propose is unrelated to the type of events, activities, or experiences imagined when we hear: “Spice up your life.” The spice that we propose is to step on the stage and engage in battles of: Good versus evil, right versus wrong, justice versus injustice, and intelligence versus ignorance. Your willingness to spice up your life will: Earn you more “good karma;” cause you to meet humans you would never meet otherwise; challenge your ingenuity; and most importantly, make the world a better place to live today and tomorrow.

Whether you are Black or White, sometime(s) during your life (if you are Black, then potentially pervasively in your

life), you have experienced or witnessed the evil, the wrong, the injustice, and the ignorance of racism. However, given your waiting room freedom, you can be BOLD and take risks that you would avoid otherwise. You have the mental, the financial, and time freedom to do something grand: Help change the world for the better.

What is the motivation for awakening to this spiced up waiting room experience? To open the door of life and of opportunity for a racist, a victim of racism, and for yourself. If you are able to make a difference by confronting racism during your waiting room tenure, then you can make life better for those you convince that racism is not an option, for those who gain entrance to a new room of life that was previously denied, and for you who may be so affected by this experience as to see life from a new perspective, which can then transform and/or extend your life. We cannot underestimate the power and impact of change. In this case, change ignited by dropping a little spice into your waiting room experience bowl.

Whether Black or White, we encounter the evil, the wrong, the injustice, and the ignorance of racism, but we are challenged to act to disrupt the *status quo* because we seek to protect our family, our job, our financial resources, our living environment, our small world. We are not taught to be aggressive change agents. But as we approach the end of our heaven experience, we should be bold enough to put it all on the line and say: “I have nothing to lose and everything to gain!” and “I can be killed, but I am on the way to death as it is!” Therefore, this is to urge you to consider being bold and to sell out on good, right, justice, and intelligence.

Admittedly, we have argued elsewhere that racism is a “non-reinsertable mutant genie” that cannot be forced back into a

bottle.¹⁵ However, the world's waiting room population will increasingly represent the majority. If a critical mass of the waiting room population can find usefulness in life and not be afraid or ashamed before men of being criticized for seeking to transform our world, then it may very well be possible that those in the waiting room can eviscerate that racism genie and not have to force it back into a bottle. In fact, the waiting room population may be that generation that has the wisdom, knowledge, and overstanding required to ensure that the racism bottle disappears altogether.

Life is at its best when we confront great challenges. Great writers need great readers. Great athletes deliver special performances when the competition is stiff. Science is at its zenith when a life-saving solution must be identified. Love is most intense, rich, and ecstatic when lovers go through something difficult together and come out on the other side forever changed. Racism is a great challenge that requires your A-game to defeat it.

And if not racism, then why not sexism, ageism, elitism...

It is your decision to use the great blessing of power and fearlessness that accompanies one in life's waiting room. What you cannot now deny is that you did not know that life's waiting room can offer these wonderful opportunities.

May your waiting room be filled with the joy of vigorous efforts that produce the bright light of change. The type of light and change that I found in Merida.

¹⁵ See Brooks B. Robinson (2023). "Racism: A Non-Reinsertable Mutant Genie." [BlackEconomics.org](https://www.blackeconomics.org). September 29, 2023. <https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/ranrmg092923.pdf> (249 KB).

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