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### **“Gathering the Dust”**

Making up our minds to do work can be challenging; especially, if the work is something that we loathe. However, we should realize that all aspects of life and work can be meaningful. As an example, consider my challenge of sweeping the house. Frankly, I had put it off for a few days, but awakened this morning with the determination to get it done.

I retrieved the broom from the closet and began to sweep, only to find that dust was everywhere. This realization was then linked to my persistent preoccupation with Black American lives in the wilderness of North America. When I saw the dust, I recalled hearing someone recently quoting the great athlete and scholar, Kareem Abdul Jabbar (aka Lew Alcindor), who likened racism to dust. He said that (paraphrasing) “just observing the society from an unfiltered perspective, it may be difficult to see racism—specifically systemic racism. But when viewed from the correct angle, and with assistance from the sun (light), you suddenly realize that dust (racism) is in the air, just everywhere.” In this case, the light to which he referred is the knowledge required to observe the reality from an informed perspective.

While sweeping, Mr. Jabbar’s analogy and the dust took on new meaning. I realized again that racism is a BIG problem in America for Black Americans. Why have we been unable to solve this problem? On the one hand, one might answer this question by arguing that Black Americans cannot solve this problem because we are not the racist here. Rather, it is White America that instigates and perpetuates racism. Note the present tense form of the verbs in the preceding sentence. In other words, if Whites stopped practicing their racism religion, then racism would cease.

On the other hand, racism is a problem of the kind implied in the following statement: “If you owe me a small amount of money, then it is your problem; but if you owe me a large sum of money, then it is ‘our’ problem.” Therefore, although we cannot force White America to halt practicing the racism religion, racism is such a problem to us that we must take action to halt the practice of the racism religion against us. It is not just White America’s problem, it is “our” problem.

What does this have to do with dust? Simply put, we (Black America) are dust in this analogy. (A great Black religious leader used this analogy for Black Americans back in the 1970s.) Meaning what? Meaning that we have been fragmented into particles that float aimlessly—without an intended and sustained purpose to achieve planned and valued outcomes.

When Blacks were slaves, we were united in work. But for the entire post-*Bellum* period, a key objective of White America has been to fragment us. We have had a litany of leaders with varying philosophies and opinions. During Jim Crow, fear mongering was used to separate us into so many particles of dust. Civil Rights and the resulting integration permitted the superimposition of White superiority and the assimilation into Whiteness of a few, which was also very divisive and fragmenting. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the mantra is income and wealth inequality, which is greater among Blacks than any other subgroup of the American population. So, by design we are fragmented—we are dust.

What to do about the dust? If you have ever done cleaning, then you know the answer to this question—at least in part. You can use a dry dust cloth or mop to wipe up the dust. But that process is insufficient to ensure the complete removal of the dust. The only way to ensure the complete removal of the dust is to add water to the process. Water will ensure that the dust particles are trapped together successfully so that they can be removed.

Just as light is used by Mr. Jabbar as a symbol of knowledge, water can serve that same purpose. We all know the adage that water (knowledge) seeks its own level. One with less knowledge cannot survive among those with more knowledge unless more knowledge is obtained.

Given all of the foregoing, let us now go on to solve the problem of racism for Black Americans. In an equation, the solution is expressed accordingly: Dust (Black America) + Water (knowledge) = Trapping Black Americans Together Successfully So That We Can Remove Ourselves from the Effects of White America's Racism Religion.

Once Black America (dust) adds sufficient knowledge (water) of who we are (founders of great civilizations), what we can achieve (from building the pyramids to America), and of our right to live independently (we were an independent people living in the Americas before the arrival of Europeans, and we were independent in Africa before being brought to America—and recognizing that White America severed its ties with its British master to become independent and that we can do the same), then we can operationalize a strategy to remove ourselves from a racist environment.

The starting point as you can now see is adding water to the dust. Every Black American should now begin a process of observing the world around us to recognize all aspects of life that seek to ensure our fragmentation so that we remain dust. We must then seek knowledge about all of these divisive factors and find ways to overcome them. Once we have enough water (knowledge), then we can gather this dust into a unified people who can evolve a strategy for freeing ourselves once and for all from American racism.

To produce significant change, it is usually necessary to engineer a storm. For the storm to materialize, storm clouds must gather. Let us use the rain (water) from that storm to gather the dust.

B.B. Robinson  
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