

## “Delineating Black (African) Americans’ Past”

Malcolm X said: “The study of history is best qualified to reward all research.” We interpret this to mean that, if one knows an entire history, then one knows the beginning and end of the “thing”. Knowing such history, one is prepared to recount that history and to extrapolate it into the future using accurate information as a starting point. Consequently, one is likely to make a more accurate forecast than if one were extrapolating using an incomplete or inaccurate history. In other words, as part of this effort to create a long-term strategic plan (LTSP) for Black (African) Americans, it is important to prepare accurate projections/forecasts. Therefore, it is in our best interest to have an accurate history of Black Americans.

The goal, then, for this component of a LTSP for Black Americans, is to ensure that we bring to the table and place at our disposal documents and traditions that, in total, accurately represent Black Americans’ history so that we can use that history as a springboard for producing the best possible LTSP. In addition to Black American history, we must bring world history to the table so that we can place the Black American experience into proper historical context.

Possibly the best approach to operationalizing this goal is to always have excellent historians on hand to continuously review the plan to ensure that inappropriate assumptions or false concepts do not work their way into the LTSP. These historians should not only know the facts about history, but they must also be adept at interpreting historical cycles.

Beyond their roles as monitors of the LTSP development process, these historians must help ensure that Black Americans put in place tools (museums and other instruments) that can be used to archive our history and to record our history as it unfolds. It is access to that archived and unfolding history that will permit operators and monitors of the LTSP to assess progress in achieving intermediate and long-term goals.

Another important role of historians is their interactive involvement with experts who will be responsible for key components of the LTSP. For example, it will be critical that historians be integrally involved in developing, say, a religious text for Black Americans should the need arise to do so. Historians would be invaluable in helping determine the authenticity of works and could assist in decisions concerning what does and does not enter a canon. For similar reasons, historians could be instrumental in helping shape goals and strategies for Black Americans’ education and business/economics.

Of course, all of this presupposes that historians would remain hard at work continuously recording the LTSP development process and related outcomes. In the final analysis, it will be these modern day griots who will declare victory when Black (African) Americans reach their future goals.