

THE FIRE RIGHT NOW

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the dreamers who dare to believe that better is possible in our lifetime and to all the doers that will prove those dreamers right someday soon.

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Artwork by **Taylor Hill**

A dark-skinned hand controlling marionette-like figures, each wearing a KKK hood but dressed in distinct professional uniforms, suggesting the infiltration of white supremacy into institutions of capitalism, law enforcement, healthcare, and education. The symbolism of this piece flips the power dynamic as we have seen it historically. Rather than white supremacy being the invisible hand manipulating society, it is now exposed as being held, suspended, and ultimately controllable by Black and brown hands. Systemic oppression is not immovable or untouchable; it is constructed, upheld, and therefore, can be dismantled subject to the will and action of those most affected once they decide to care enough.

A Prayer for Humanity

God, help us to be the light that we are so that we may shine like the stars in the sky that ask for nothing in return. Stars that shine in the darkest of nights. May the highest spirits within us guide us to continue this journey and be grateful for the dark nights that teach us how to shine. In the depths of our existence, let us embody the resilience of those celestial bodies, casting our brilliance across the canvas of challenges like stars in the midnight sky.

Like the constellations that weave tales in the cosmic tapestry, our actions, too, tell stories of strength and perseverance. As we navigate the vast expanse of our shared journey, may we find solace in the understanding that even in the darkest moments, our collective radiance can dispel shadows and illuminate the path forward. Let the lessons learned under the cover of night be a testament to our growth, and may our commitment to shining brightly endure, a beacon for others to find their way in the vastness of life's mysteries. Amen.

Statement of Purpose

The reason why this book was written is because we are not happy. Maybe not you or me personally, but collectively. We are not happy because comparison is the thief of joy and we are all comparing our realities to the ones of others projected on social media, whether silently or aloud. We are not happy, because up until this point in history happiness has meant “winning” while there are invisible losers.

It’s the reason why we can buy new clothes and electronics and remove ourselves from the idea that someone in a foreign land likely had to slave away in a sweat shop to produce it. It’s the reason that we take pride in having the strongest military in the world, while removing ourselves from the reality that the manifestation of that strength often looks like supporting the indiscriminate bombing of women and children. We are not happy.

We are unhappy to the point that we need a new social contract. We need a new way of life. The way that we live life currently is unsustainable, and it is a matter of time before that lack of sustainability overtakes us all. The mission of this writing is to assist in creating and delivering on the ideas that will change our world for the better. Many of us are striving for a world where regular people everywhere can be equipped with the resources and information to activate their ideas and sustain substantive positive change in their local

communities and the world at large. This book was one of my contributions towards that effort.

In the shadowed corners of our world's map, where the media spotlight dims and the global audience's gaze infrequently lingers, the relentless grind of suffering continues unabated. In Tigray, a smoldering conflict with ancient roots and modern weaponry currently starves the innocent. In Xinjiang, the Uyghurs continue to endure an assault on their identity under a relentless sun. In Haiti, the colonial shadows still hang over the people as they struggle for peace and stability on a daily basis. The Kurds scatter, stateless, across imaginary borders that were drawn without their consent. In the Congo, mineral wealth fuels bloodshed rather than development. In the fractured landscapes of Palestine, a people's dreams of statehood are trapped in the crushing vice of disenfranchisement and despair at the hands of the Israeli military.

These are not isolated tragedies but interconnected failings of a global system that still, despite all our advancements, enables and perpetuates human suffering on a mass scale. It's crucial to understand that these are not merely the struggles of broken people; they are the symptoms of broken systems. Systems that prioritize power over people, systems that see war as a business, and systems that perpetuate cycles of violence through the sale of arms and the strategic play of geopolitics. Systems that fundamentally can be changed. Systems that must be

changed if we are to endure as a human race.

Suffering is not an inevitable condition of the human experience; it is often a calculated outcome of policy, of indifference, or of the machinery of the military-industrial complex that operates within and between nations. It is a testament to our collective failure to prioritize humanity over hegemony. The great powers of the world, through their foreign policies, often act as conflict entrepreneurs, investing in the weaponry and wherewithal to fuel wars, under the guise of national interest or regional stability. The result? A perpetuation of conflict that undermines the very stability these actions purport to seek.

The threads of these global military disputes often weave back to the looms of a few powerful nations. A sale of arms here, a closed-door agreement there – these are the cogs that turn the wheels of the military-industrial complex, a behemoth that feeds on strife to sustain itself. Yet, in this cycle of supply and demand, it is the innocent who pay the ultimate price, their lives and livelihoods deemed collateral in a game of thrones they never wished to play.

The global empathy spectrum is alarmingly skewed. Western hostages capture headlines and hearts, their personal stories resonating in the public consciousness. Meanwhile, the narratives of those in places like Palestine, Congo and Haiti are often reduced to impersonal statistics. This pattern of selective attention and empathy is not confined to

these regions. It echoes in the enduring tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia, where historical grievances continue to fester, and in the volatile feud in Sudan, where recent clashes have reignited age-old animosities. In these conflicts, individual stories of suffering and loss are often submerged beneath the tides of nationalistic rhetoric and political posturing. In recognizing this, we must also recognize that we have the power to effect change.

There have been moments in history where the international community has had the chance to intervene decisively and change the course of human events for the better. Too often, we have missed these moments. One of the most haunting examples of this is the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, where the world stood by as a million lives were extinguished in a hundred days of savagery. The international community's failure to act remains one of the darkest stains on the collective conscience of humanity. Now, we stand at another crossroads with the Palestinian people. History will not look kindly upon us if we allow inertia and the status quo to dictate our response to their suffering. The enduring crisis in Palestine is not just a regional issue; it is a measure of our morality as an international community. Will we step up to the challenge to ensure that history does not repeat itself, or will we remain passive observers to their plight?

Every global crisis is a litmus test for the world's moral fiber. Will we intervene, or will we witness yet another catastrophe from the sidelines? In every conflict zone

mentioned, from Chicago to Palestine, we see the consequences of inaction and the human cost of political gamesmanship. The cries for help are never silent; they are deafening for those who choose to listen. We must amplify these voices and transform their echoes into a call for systemic change.

This is our collective mandate: to reshape the systems that allow for such suffering. This requires more than passive sympathy; it demands active empathy. It requires the courage to dismantle and rebuild our international frameworks in a way that values human lives over strategic advantages. It demands a world order that is rooted in justice, equity, and the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and peace. As we stand witness to the suffering of millions, we must not let our paralysis become complicity.

Let the mistakes of our past fuel our resolve for the future. We must ensure that the global narrative does not merely ask what happened to the people in Tigray, the Uyghurs, the Kurds, the Haitians, the Ukrainians, the Sudanese, the Azeri, the Kosovars, the Congolese, and the Palestinians, but instead what the world did to end their suffering. The time to act is now, or we'll find ourselves mourning another missed opportunity to stand on the right side of history. We are called to reshape our international order into one that values every life equally and to extend our empathy to every corner of the globe. We must demand a world where the value of a life is not determined by geography or

politics, but by our shared humanity.

Every life caught in these conflicts is the product of a moment when the world could have chosen a different path. The voices calling for help are not silent; they are there for those willing to hear. These voices must drive us to dismantle and rebuild the systems that underpin such suffering. As we reflect on the stark disparities in our global compassion, we must also act. These lives, like all others, are not mere statistics. They have names, dreams, and the right to a future free from the shadow of oppression. The bombs that fall, the hospitals and schools that crumble, they do not discriminate. They shatter lives indiscriminately. We cannot remove ourselves from this suffering; we are part of a world that allows it.

Suffering is not inevitable—it is often a choice. Now it is time that we choose differently. Suffering, after all, is not written in the stars. It is etched by the hands of those who have the power to stop it. And we, as a collective humanity, have that power. Let us wield it with courage, compassion, and conviction. Now is the time for a ceasefire. Not only in Palestine but across all the fronts in the world.

Every day, we watch as the world around us is thrown into a constant state of transition, as has been true since the beginning of time. In many of our lifetimes, we will be subjected to the frontlines of battles that stand to challenge the very existence of humanity as we know it. In the face of these battles, war-ready

leaders have emerged. The purpose of this book is to encourage them to connect with each other so that their ideas may be manifested into actions. There is a collective awakening about our abilities to effect change that is taking place. Hopefully this read will help organize an army that will have to fight to save our shared humanity. Together, we will.

We Deserve More

The recent iteration of the escalation in violence between Israel and the people of Palestine has once again thrust conversations about power, politics, and justice into the public consciousness. Yet, a troubling aspect of this discourse is the way some people justify state-sanctioned violence when it is carried out by leaders from marginalized backgrounds. The symbolic power of diversity has overshadowed the moral responsibility that leaders have on their ascension towards power to oppose policies that perpetuate global suffering.

Representation alone cannot be the end goal if it simply enables systems of harm to thrive under a more inclusive facade. In a world where even the most progressive factions align with destructive power structures, we must reject the lesser of two evils framework and confront the fact that both options are often inherently evil. Fascism dressed in diversity is still fascism, and aspiring for more means demanding justice beyond token representation.

The idea that the presence of marginalized people in positions of power will automatically lead to justice is seductive but dangerous. Kamala Harris' position as Vice President represented progress for many, but it also demonstrated the limitations of representation when it is divorced from accountability. While some saw her as a triumph over historical exclusion, others have pointed out the complicity of her administration in maintaining U.S. support for Israel's occupation of Palestine and genocidal actions against its population, a dynamic that directly enables violence against Palestinians.

Too many people find solace in the optics of a Black woman at the helm, overlooking the harm being perpetuated under the policies she supported. But it's not just her. It's every gay leader. It's every Black leader. It's every working-class leader. It's Cory Booker delivering a 24-hour address to Congress just to betray the spirit of those remarks not days later when he voted to support a military aid package to an Israeli regime that has already been identified as committing genocide. It's every leader whose identity is used as a shield, masking the same oppressive systems they vowed to dismantle.

When we celebrate representation and symbolism without demanding accountability, we endorse the very harm that these diverse faces were supposed to disrupt. This blind embrace of symbolic victories reflects a deeper problem in contemporary politics: the substitution of identity for ideology. Celebrating

diverse leadership within an unjust system does not change the system itself; it only masks its ongoing violence. If we reduce progress to surface-level representation without examining the material outcomes of that representation, we not only miss the point, but we betray the very principles that marginalized communities fight for.

In the U.S., we have witnessed how the Democratic party has skillfully adapted to include diversity while continuing to serve corporate interests, the military-industrial complex, and colonial power. Under this framework, oppression can look progressive when it is administered by leaders from historically excluded groups. The Democratic party's support for Israel & Wall Street exemplifies how imperialism and capitalist oppression can wear the face of progress. Just because the policy agenda is carried out by a woman or people of color does not absolve it of its violence. This version of fascism, the kind that works within the bounds of a liberal understanding of democracy, differs from overt authoritarianism but is no less dangerous. It operates under the guise of maintaining peace and order, but enables violence through military funding, surveillance, and interventionism.

This pattern of “liberal fascism” shows up whenever politicians preach democracy and free speech abroad while aligning with oppressive practices at home that label lawful political dissenters as antisemitic and subject them to expulsion from colleges and universities that are supposed to be the breeding

grounds for critical thought. Unfortunately, many Democrats are content with this arrangement as long as those who wield power reflect the diversity they wish to see. So long as conflict entrepreneurs like AIPAC continue to financially support their professional aspirations.

It is a deeply cynical trade-off, where justice becomes secondary to optics. One of the most pervasive myths in American politics is the idea that voting for the “lesser of two evils” is the best path forward. This narrative forces voters to choose between two parties, both of which are deeply entrenched in systems of harm. It demands loyalty to politicians who perpetuate injustice simply because their opponents might be worse. But accepting the lesser of two evils only reinforces a cycle where harm is constantly rebranded and made palatable, ensuring that true change remains out of reach.

It is not enough to reject overt authoritarianism offered up by many of the GOP’s leaders in their vitriolic rhetoric if we embrace softer, more insidious forms of fascism presented by liberal leaders in its place. We must recognize that both sides of the political spectrum in the U.S. contribute to global suffering in different ways. Democrats may claim to stand for human rights, but their continued support for Israeli apartheid, drone warfare, and border militarization suggests otherwise. Their inability to fight with any real intention for our interests as their base is proof. The lesson here is clear: no matter who

is in office, U.S. imperialism persists.

If we do not break free from the lesser-evil paradigm, we will continue to empower leaders who serve us less than we deserve, regardless of their identity or stated values. As a society, we must aspire for more than symbolic victories. We need a political framework that is rooted in justice, accountability, and liberation.

Inclusion within oppressive systems is not enough. To achieve this progressive politics, we must always be willing to criticize leaders from marginalized backgrounds when they perpetuate harm. It means rejecting the idea that representation alone is enough and embracing a radical vision for a world where no one, regardless of race, gender, or nationality, is subjected to violent conditions that we have the power to change as a society.

We cannot afford to be content with diversity at the helm of a socio-political vehicle that is headed in the wrong direction. It is not progress when marginalized people are placed in positions of power only to maintain the status quo of marginalizing others. Our aspirations must go beyond inclusion; they must aim for the dismantling of oppressive systems altogether. This requires rejecting both right-wing authoritarianism and liberal fascism in all its forms.

The path forward lies in building movements that prioritize solidarity across struggles, whether in Palestine, Cop City, or beyond. These movements must be guided by a commitment to justice that

transcends national borders and political affiliations. True progress will only come when we recognize that no leader, regardless of their background, can be absolved of their complicity in harm. Aspiring for more means demanding not just representation but a radical transformation of the systems that perpetuate injustice. Anything less is a betrayal of the very people these systems claim to serve.

In the end, we must remind ourselves that the goal is not just to elect people who look like us but to build a world where no one is subjected to oppression, no matter who is in power. Fascism with a diverse face is still fascism, and we deserve better than that.

We Will Free Ourselves

There is no doubt that the legacy of slavery still casts a long shadow over our community. From the institutional hurdles in banking and policing to the disparities in education and healthcare, we have inherited a system designed to oppress us. But let me make one thing clear: in 2025, we are free.

We are no longer bound by the chains of slavery or the segregation of Jim Crow, and while we still face systemic barriers, we have more power now than at any point in our history. It is time we seized that power. It is time we took control of our future. Too often, I hear excuses made about the violence and chaos that have crept into our communities. Some argue that this violence is simply the natural result of

living in close quarters, or that it is the outcome of state-sponsored destabilization of Black families. There may be some truth in that. But let us not lose sight of the fact that much of this is a choice. And choices, my family, are made by the free.

All my friends in D.C that were killed were murdered by people that looked like them. Try telling their mothers that Black on Black crime isn't real. We cannot continue to blame the "crabs in a barrel" mentality we've inherited from generations of oppression without acknowledging the choices we are making today. If we look at our ancestors, we see that they faced far greater obstacles but chose to build instead of destroying.

Look at Greenwood, Tulsa—a community of Black people, fresh from the trauma of slavery and the ongoing reality of second-class citizenship. Yet they chose to construct a thriving Black Wall Street, a beacon of Black success. They built, not because the conditions were right, but because they refused to let the conditions dictate their worth. And Tulsa wasn't the only place that embodied Black power and excellence.

There was Rosewood and Eatonville in Florida. Blackdom in New Mexico. Mound Bayou in Mississippi. Self-governing Black municipalities that became strongholds for Black independence and Black business. What are we doing now? We allow reality TV and popular culture to impart morals into our youth,

replacing the values that once came from our homes, our communities, and even our churches.

The church, I recognize, is not the sanctuary it once was for many. For too long, it has been a place of judgment rather than refuge for our LGBTQ family, for those who have been outcast, for those who don't fit the mold. My heart still hurts when I see how many people, especially within the Black church, are alienated because of differences in lifestyle. I believe there's a deep, missed opportunity for connection, love, and healing, and it's an opportunity the church often lets slip away.

One moment that stuck with me happened after I gave a speech at a youth day service. A young kid walked up to me, eyes full of uncertainty, and said, "You're smart, so I have a question. I think I may be gay. Based on scripture, do you think God hates me?" His words hit me hard not because of debate over doctrine, but because of the raw fear in his voice. I looked at him calmly, feeling the weight of the moment, and said, "I don't hate you. And I don't believe I pray to someone with a colder heart than mine." That exchange taught me something important: It's not our job to use faith as a weapon.

We are called to love, not to sit in the seat of judgment. We are called to show compassion, not to act as gatekeepers to God's grace. Whether or not we agree, we should trust that judgment belongs to God and only God. I have a gay little sister. I don't have to

subscribe to her lifestyle or even fully understand it to love her and respect her existence.

If the Black church truly wants to heal our community, it must start by making sure nobody walks away thinking they are hated by the very God who created them. It's not compromise; it's compassion. It's not watering down the Word; it's walking it out the way Christ did with open arms and an open heart. We are living through a time when this generation's systemic abandonment of the Black church is becoming more and more obvious.

Sunday sermons have been replaced with hookahs and mimosas. The tithes and offerings that once helped uplift our communities by building schools, funding businesses, and keeping our people clothed, housed, and educated have been reduced to tips and gratuities at venues that love our rhythm but don't want our blues. When it's time to stand with us, to be mission-aligned in the face of injustice, many of those same places often fall silent, afraid of losing profits. My invitation to come back to faith and to come back to soul work is not an indictment against having fun. I live a turnt life myself. Many of you reading this book have seen me out and about in enough functions to know that I'm not here to condemn the club or brunches or joy.

Joy is a birthright. Celebration is sacred. But if we can organize culturally to feed our flesh, can we not have that same commitment to nourish our souls? If we can

consistently show up where our bodies are entertained, can we also show up where our spirits are empowered? To be in the world but not of it doesn't require us to choose between joy and faith. It just means we must remember we are called to service and love in this life. The Black church was never perfect, but it was and can still be a covering, a sanctuary, and a launching pad. Our ancestors prayed, built, and sacrificed so that we could inherit more than just trauma; they wanted us to inherit triumph. And that's something worth coming back to. Although churches are not perfect, we should not abandon the value system it once represented to our community.

Historically, Black churches have been at the heart of our community's resilience and activism. They have served as organizing hubs for political movements, from the civil rights era to modern justice efforts, where leaders like Dr. King mobilized people for freedom and equality. Black masjids have been vital as centers for resource pooling, providing food, shelter, and support networks during times of hardship. In many ways, these institutions have helped our communities endure systemic challenges and have inspired hope and collective action, showing the power of faith-driven unity. Our history in faith-based institutions demonstrates a value system that sustained us through the worst of trials. We cannot allow that foundation to crumble. We must bring our problems back to God for resolution, but we should simultaneously be working just as hard as we are praying.

"Faith without work is dead." This principle, rooted in the book of James, is not just a spiritual truth. It's a blueprint for how we must move in the world, especially as Black people. Faith alone, without action, becomes an empty promise. It's a hope without a hand to shape the future. For generations, many in our community have been taught to over-rely on faith systems that emphasize deferred gratification and reinforce the idea that we should suffer now, endure injustice now, and wait for our reward later in heaven.

While faith has been a powerful survival tool for us, it has also, at times, been weaponized to keep us docile, patient, and passive in the face of systemic oppression. The danger is that this overreliance can make us accept conditions that God never intended for us to accept. It can make us confuse resilience with stagnation. It can lull us into believing that liberation is only spiritual when, in truth, God's promises are also for the living here and now. Faith must be paired with action. Believing in God's promises should compel us to move, to organize, to build, to demand, and to create. Faith is the engine; work is the wheels. Without both, we are stuck.

If we truly believe we are made in the image of a Creator, then we must create. If we believe in a God of justice, then we must fight for justice. If we believe in abundance, then we must challenge systems that hoard wealth and opportunity. Our faith should not pacify us. It should activate us. To honor God fully,

our belief must show up in how we live, what we build, and what we are willing to tear down when it no longer serves our liberation. Clinging to narratives of disempowerment is a disservice to our ancestors and to ourselves. If we can own our generational trauma, we must also own our generational bravery.

We are the descendants of those who dared to learn to read by candlelight, knowing the whip waited for those who were caught. We are the descendants of those who built secret networks to escape bondage, who fought back when every option was stripped away. These are not stories of trauma alone; they are stories of courage. We carry within us the spirit of those who defied the impossible, who found hope in the darkest of places, and who, through sheer will, carved out a legacy of resilience. It's our responsibility not only to remember their strength but to live it. We are not bound by our pain; we are propelled by our power.

We honor our ancestors best by standing tall, creating new paths, and daring to believe that we, too, are capable of greatness. Yes, history has scarred us. Yes, we have been wronged. But dwelling in that pain without channeling the bravery and resilience of our ancestors is an excuse. It is a refusal to create the future our children deserve. And we have more tools than our ancestors could have ever dreamed of. We stand on the shoulders of giants who rose despite every obstacle, who built pathways so that we could walk in freedom. Now, it's on us to build further, to reach higher, and to expand the horizons they once

imagined. We are equipped to turn our pain into power, to transform our setbacks into steps forward. Let us be the generation that reclaims our narrative, lifting as we climb and creating a legacy that will inspire generations to come.

In the 1800s, our people organized the Underground Railroad, a network of routes and safe houses that carried our people to freedom. They did this without smartphones, without social media, without millions of dollars in resources. In the 21st century we have all those things, but where are our networks? Where are our social safety nets for the most vulnerable among us? We have the technology to communicate instantly, the financial power to pool our resources, and the platforms to amplify our voices. And yet, we have not constructed anything comparable to the Underground Railroad that our ancestors built with nothing but hope and courage. So, what is our excuse?

With all the tools at our disposal, we cannot continue to wait for someone else to lead the way. It's time to rise and use what we have. To build, to connect, to protect, and to uplift. Our ancestors answered the call with so much less; now, it's our turn. Let us not be remembered as the generation that could have but didn't. What would it look like to try? What would it look like for us to come together and create networks of support for our young people, our elders, our marginalized? What would it look like if we took the billions of dollars we collectively spent and used them to build Black businesses, Black schools, and Black-

owned institutions that actually serve our needs? It would look like a revolution. A proper revolution.

I know we deserve reparations for what America has done to us. But I also know that I will not hold my breath waiting for it. And neither should you. What we have always had has been enough. It was enough for Harriet Tubman to lead hundreds to freedom. It was enough for Frederick Douglass to educate himself and become a leader of his people. It was enough for the Tuskegee Airmen to fight for a country that did not see them as equals. And it will be enough for us to build a future where our children are not just surviving, but thriving.

We must stop clinging to the myth that we are powerless. The systems that oppress us are real, yes, but so is our ability to overcome them. We are not defined by our trauma. We are defined by how we choose to respond to it. And we have the freedom to make that choice. Brothers and sisters, it is time to stop accepting mediocrity. It is time to stop waiting for someone to come and save us. We are our own liberators. Our ancestors showed us the way, and it is up to us to carry that torch. The tools are in our hands. The question is, what are we going to build with them?

I believe in us. I believe in the strength of our community, in the brilliance of our minds, in the resilience of our spirits. But belief alone will not get us where we need to go. We must act. We must organize.

We must choose to build. Because no one is going to do it for us.

We Will Reclaim Our Power

It's time for a new conversation rooted in the understanding that our votes are not charity to any political party. For too long, we have been treated as though we are beholden to the Democratic Party, rubber stamping candidates who have failed to deliver the transformative change that our communities desperately need. This cycle of fear mongering, where we are told that voting for Democrats is the only way to stave off the evils of the GOP, has gone on long enough.

That tired story of choosing between the "lesser of two evils" is over. Our votes are power, and it's time we wield them with the intention and seriousness that power demands. Let's make one thing clear: Democrats owe us accountability. They have long branded themselves as the champions of the marginalized, but where is the progress to match that promise? Our schools are still underfunded. Our neighborhoods are still over-policed. Access to affordable housing, healthcare, and real economic opportunity is still out of reach for too many.

Symbolic gestures are not enough. Marching in Kente cloth is not policy. Painting "Black Lives Matter" on a street does not reform the criminal justice system. The time has come for Democrats to stop taking our

loyalty for granted. They must bargain for our votes with substance, not fear.

When Kanye West put on that red MAGA hat a few years ago, the backlash from our community was swift and fierce. And while I can understand the frustration with his choice to rock a symbol that aligns with a leader whose policies and rhetoric have harmed us, it also served as a warning shot. That moment was a glimpse of what it looks like to challenge the notion that Black people are owned by a single party. It was a statement, however imperfect, that we refuse to be treated as a monolith whose votes can be counted on without reciprocity. We are not political property.

Similarly, when Ice Cube approached then-President Trump with a plan to uplift Black Americans, many in our community were quick to throw stones, calling him a sellout. But let's be honest: was he wrong to seek a seat at the table with the most powerful person in the country? Ice Cube's engagement wasn't about endorsing Trump; it was about advancing a conversation on how Black people can leverage their political capital with more intention. And let's not pretend that meeting with Joe Biden would have been any different, because when it came time for Biden to speak to the heart of our community during moments of racial reckoning post Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, he too fell short. His words, much like the policies of the Democratic Party, did not meet the urgency of the times.

This is the truth we must confront: Democrats are not inherently better than Republicans. Both parties have failed us in different ways. Both have profited from our pain. Both have offered hollow promises while we continue to suffer under the weight of systemic inequities. The reality is our allegiance to Democrats has not been rewarded with the kind of structural change we deserve. We cannot keep being scared to the polls by warnings of a GOP boogeyman, only to be met with mediocrity from the very party that claims to fight for us. We demand more. We deserve more.

Moving forward, our votes must be earned, not assumed. We are no longer playing the game of “lesser evil.” We will not settle for crumbs when we deserve a seat at the table. Any candidate or party that seeks our support must do so with policies that reflect the needs of our communities. Policies that speak to the real issues we face, from economic empowerment to criminal justice reform, from affordable housing to quality education. We want candidates who are willing to fight for us, not just invoke our names for political gain. This is more than just elections. This is about reclaiming our power in every space we occupy.

It’s about building coalitions that center our voices, creating networks that uplift the most vulnerable among us, and demanding transparency from those who seek to represent us. Just as our ancestors created the Underground Railroad to free themselves from bondage, we must create new pathways to freedom politically, economically, and socially. We will no

longer be cajoled by fear or manipulated by empty promises. We will demand accountability, and we will vote for substance.

If a Democrat wants our support, they must prove they deserve it. If a Republican wants our consideration, they must speak to our issues without pandering or disrespect. And if neither party is willing to meet us where we are, we will build something new. We are not beholden to anyone but ourselves. Our ancestors knew this. They fought and organized, not for the comfort of party loyalty, but for liberation. It is time we honor that legacy by moving with the same purpose. Whether Democrat, Republican, or independent, we will engage with the political process on our terms. Not out of fear, but out of strategy.

Our votes will be guided by vision, not by fear mongering. The time of complacency is over. The time of blind allegiance is over. This is the era of intentional Black power. And if the political establishment doesn't understand that, they will soon. Because we are not waiting for permission. We are taking what's ours.

Conclusion

In the end, our collective liberation depends not on the optics of representation, or the lip service paid to our struggles, but on the tangible, transformative change we demand and create together. We cannot continue to settle for symbolic victories or empty promises that mask ongoing oppression under diverse

faces. True progress calls for a radical reimaging of our systems, grounded in justice, accountability, and an unwavering commitment to the liberation of all marginalized people.

As we look toward the future, let us honor the sacrifices of our ancestors by rejecting the cycle of mediocrity and complacency that has kept us tethered to the “lesser of two evils.” Instead, let us build coalitions rooted in the values of solidarity, resilience, and an unshakeable belief in our power to forge a different path.

We are not beholden to any political party or leader; our allegiance lies with our communities, our dignity, and our right to live free from systemic violence and exploitation. Let this be the beginning of a new season where we no longer accept tokenism as progress or diversity as a substitute for justice. Together, we must craft a new social contract, one that ensures no one is left behind in the pursuit of freedom. Our ancestors showed us that change is possible, even against impossible odds, and now it is our turn to carry that legacy forward.

We will build, we will organize, and we will fight not merely for a better future, but for a world where our children inherit liberation and not oppression. It is time to reclaim our power and redefine what it means to truly be free. In John 5:6, Jesus approaches a man who had been sick for thirty-eight long years and asks him one simple but piercing question: "Do you want

to be made whole?" At first glance, it almost sounds cruel. How could Jesus ask someone who had suffered so long if he wanted to be healed? But Jesus wasn't asking about the man's condition. He was asking about his commitment to something new.

He was challenging him to confront whether he had grown so used to his brokenness that he no longer believed in the possibility of transformation. And my beloved community, today that same question echoes through the halls of our politics, our churches, and our communities:

Do we want to be made whole, or have we become too comfortable in dysfunction?

Albert Einstein once said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Yet how often do our politicians campaign with the same tired words? How often do our faith leaders preach with the same hollow calls for unity, without reaching the people where they are? How often do we as citizens, believers, and neighbors cling to old methods expecting new miracles? If we want to see something different, we must do something different.

We cannot heal broken communities with broken strategies. We cannot reach a generation that is hurting with a language that no longer speaks to their pain. We cannot afford a politics that patches potholes but ignores the foundations. Jesus didn't tell the man at

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Bethesda's pool to crawl faster into the water. He told him to rise and walk. He called him to a completely different way of being. And so must we rise from traditions that no longer serve justice. We must walk away from politics that serve power, but not people. We must force a new politics that is efficient, that is relational, that is real. Because if we do not change what needs changing, we will end up choosing the very chains we refuse to break.

The politics we settle for will be the politics we suffer under. The faith we practice without love will become the faith we preach without power. So today, read the question again: Do you want to be made whole? Do you want to be well? If your answer is yes, then stand up. Move differently. Speak differently. Organize differently. Love differently. Lead differently. Wholeness is not a dream deferred. It's a decision demanded

Acknowledgments

I'd like to give honor to God, who has been guiding my story this entire time. I know the source of my strength and I want to make sure that I honor God in all that I do. I'd like to take a moment to make some acknowledgments of some of the other folks who were instrumental in making all of this come together.

Giselle Nichol, my little baby who isn't a baby anymore, thank you for giving Daddy purpose. So much of the work that I do is driven by the idea of creating a better world for you. Being your father is the greatest gift I have ever known in this life. I did not know who I could become as a man until life began showing me who I would need to be for you. My prayer is to become more of that ideal man and father every day, because that's what you deserve. I love you. Even though you're a big girl now, you will always be my baby Gi.

Taylor Hill, my HU brother, thank you for going on this journey with me. When I initially hit you up for the cover art for this book, I knew you would execute. A Klansman with a money bag in hand, representative of the conflict entrepreneurs turning the wheels of an unjust system of wealth generation in this nation on the backs of those who are not often the beneficiaries. A Klansman with a book in hand, emblematic of the shortfalls of our public education system and a school-to-prison pipeline that dooms our youth to bleak futures. A Klansman with a clipboard in hand,

representative of the mental and physical healthcare disparities that exist in marginalized communities. A Klansman with a cop uniform, to represent the way that policing as we understand it has failed many communities to this day. What we created is something powerful that will speak volumes before the book is even opened. May your talent continue to be a blessing to the world.

To my Mom, I wouldn't be here without you. Literally. I don't have to say much here because I talk to you every day. You are the best friend that I've ever had in this one life. Your love has sustained me. Thank you for being all that you are and pushing me to become all that I can. I love you with my whole heart. To my Dad, thank you. A lot of what I found annoying about growing up as your oldest son ended up being some of the things in my toolkit that have helped me to build the foundations of my manhood upon which my family's future now rests. You are the only man that I have ever wanted to be like in this world before realizing that the only man I could be in this life is me. I love you, Bob.

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from whatever place feels the most authentic without giving too much energy to what will come after. I don't care how this book sells or any of the metrics that would validate me. I wrote this because I wanted to, and I can. In many ways this book was created because of that newfound freedom you awoke in me. I pray this book empowers people to do more positive things that they want too simply because they can. Thank you all for making this journey with me as siblings over the years and maturing with me. I love you guys.

Shoutout to my family. I grew up watching my aunties Eark, Reesie & Auntie in my Granny's kitchen playing setback and spades while my twin cousins Destiny & Deshae sang either gospel or R&B somewhere in the background in an adjoining room. I just witnessed my little cousin Malcolm graduate from middle school, and it made me wonder if we will continue in the traditions that I was raised in for the remainder of his upbringing or if it will be something completely different. I grew up fishing with my Uncle Wayne. Just chilling with my Uncle Pootsie. Playing basketball with my Uncle Willie and his son, my first cousin Chase. Chase's twin sister Chassidy used to kick it with me in Atlanta when she was in undergrad, and I was figuring out my life. I remember a time before adulthood when I was sneaking in the cooler at the family reunion and grabbing beers with my cousins Dayla and Tia. Then going off and running out into the red mud of Virginia, wrestling & playing football with Noose, Chummy & Quan. I am who I am because of Lindt

chocolates every year as a kid from Auntie P and Uncle Edward. My Nana's constant love and support. And her sense of justice. Growing up, she really hated to watch Roots because of her fundamental belief that white supremacy got us messed up as a people. I'd tend to agree. In a way, a lot of my revolutionary outlook has been her gift to me in this life without even realizing. I get my mellow sentiments from her son, my Uncle Stephen, who demonstrates daily what it means to be laid back and cool. I've been to cool events with my brother-in-law Olden. I couch surfed in Philly at my cousin Stacey more times than I can remember. My life is largely just a byproduct of the strong support network that I've been blessed with. I didn't just grow up, but instead I was raised. By a village. I know it made all the difference.

Mr. Timothy Leonard, my 5th grade math teacher, decided to spark my interest in the pursuit of knowledge beyond what the classroom required of me. Thank you, NUPE. Mrs. Thennie Freeman gave me my first real shot at being a young professional in government. She is one of my most trusted advisers when it comes to life's pressing issues and her wisdom is always spot on. God has placed her in my life for a reason and I'm thankful every day to be able to enjoy the blessing of being connected to her. Stasha Rhodes, thanks for taking a chance on me and the rest of us. You have been a catalyst for amazing things in my life. As I sit in Mexico poolside sipping rum punch writing these final acknowledgements, I know that a lot of what good I have been able to experience in this life as

of late is a consequence of being your co-conspirator at 51 for 51. Happy hour soon! I want to acknowledge KH, my supervisor at the first job I was ever let go from. While I chose not to name you due to the way things unfolded behind the scenes, that experience taught me invaluable lessons. It also reminded me that not everyone who positions themselves as a mentor or elder has the best intentions. Some folks are simply holding on to past relevance and struggling to make space for the next generation. Your actions reinforced my commitment to becoming a leader who unapologetically challenges outdated systems and makes room for growth when the old ways no longer serve our collective future.

RIP Uncle Godfrey! RIP Granny! RIP to my Grandpas! RIP Amotio! RIP Rodney! Gone but never forgotten. RIP TJ Henry! You were larger than life. We'd find ourselves talking design concepts and dreams over cheap alcohol in your apartment often because we were both just some young hungry dreamers who believed that it was always 5 o'clock somewhere. The world misses your energy, but you are legendary, even in absentia. RIP Christopher Adams! I'm still carrying you everywhere I go. White House. March on Washington. In the time since you left us, you've been everywhere I've been. I plan on keeping it that way. RIP Grant Dosumnu! RIP Jamahri Syndor! RIP Jonathan Sadler! RIP Saige Ballard! You all should still be here. RIP Marion Barry! The work you did in the District of Columbia was not in vain. It helped to inspire a generation of leaders. I remember delivering

the keynote address at the DC Summer Youth Employment Program closeout ceremony a few years back. After my remarks, you walked up to me and shook my hand. You followed me on Twitter and told me to keep in touch. Although you passed shortly after, that interaction reinforced my passion for leadership both in the District and in the world at large. RIP Terrence Jones! Still missing you brother. You are all my guardian angels. Beyond the worldly notions of right and wrong, there is a field in a place unseen. I will meet you there one day after I have completed my life's work. In the interim, keep watching over me.

Free all the good men! Prayers to anybody spending time behind walls designed to break the human spirit. I'm praying that these words find their way to you. God never said that the weapons wouldn't form. God's only promise was that they wouldn't prosper. Word to the RIP tributes, I've seen loss. I've known many obstacles, but my support system was always right there to hold me up when I was down. They were always around to help me continue to fight through the chaos this world has tried and will continually try to bring. I am extremely thankful for that.

Before I go, I just want to say thank you to the reader. It means a lot to me that someone cared enough to read this because I poured my heart into the text. Hopefully my passion on the front end translates into a positive experience on the back end as you appraise

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this text and attempt to find worth in my words. God bless the dreamers.