

CHAPTER 8

IDENTITY THEFT

‘He who defines you, has the power to confine you.’ **Dr. Jefferson Edwards**

There is an argument about human development, much like the ‘chicken and the egg’ debate: Do you, at some point, *decide* who you are, or do you, as you live life, *discover* who you are?

Regardless of which side you favor in this debate, one thing is sure - too many of our people *have decided* that their middle name rhymes with trigger, and *have not discovered*, other crucial, critical, life-producing facets of their identity.

How many young black men (and women) believe their identity is chosen or defined for them because they possess darker skin? This belief is a fundamentally flawed assumption. Those that would believe that their identity is chosen for them don’t realize that *they are determining* their identity *by deception and default* - to the demise of much of their potential. Whether you believe that the greater society defines your identity, or that your neighborhood or peer group defines your identity - in either case, *you are dead wrong*.

Do we understand what it means to be human, a human being, made in God’s image and God’s likeness? Do we realize that our complexion, our pigmentation is designed to be a blessing and not a curse? The answer, for the most part, in black America, is *a resounding no*. Most of us who were born in America never got the opportunity to receive or believe that truth. For the programming begins very young in life, as many of us have witnessed too much pain, misery, and strife. We are still overcoming the programming of generations past – and the mold of oppression and victimization into which we have been cast.

IDENTITY FORMATION

Imagine a child conceived in a family, where the child was loved, sung to, prophesied to, about their purpose in life, and their innate greatness - *from before* the time they were born, while in their mother’s womb.

Imagine this child being born, and his or her mother singing nothing but lullabies of affirmation and affection. Imagine the child’s father speaking in a deep, reassuring baritone voice, this same baritone voice resonating with words of love, and masculine nurturing.

Imagine both parents speaking to this child about his or her infinite possibilities *before and after* the child can understand. Imagine the nurturing environment in which this child is born - an environment where the parents are careful *not to subject* the child to negative stimuli - a stimulating, nurturing environment, where the child learns from the very beginning that their

ebony, chocolate, caramel, or reddish-beige skin is a beautiful manifestation of God's creation, to be genuinely cherished and appreciated every time they (the child) looks into the mirror.

Imagine a home that is a learning, living laboratory, where knowledge is not only encouraged but where education *is on steroids*. Imagine a home where a child learns a deep love and appreciation for their culture(s), and for the cultures of other ethnicities, where disparaging names for people of their own, or of different ethnicities are never heard - *a real 'home on the range.'*

For many of us, that just read these words, the words resemble nothing more than a fairy tale, in comparison to the griminess of our present-day reality. Indeed, for many of us in our community, our *true identities* never get the opportunity to form, as the environment in which we are born performs the following: it informs, conforms, deforms, and molds us *into a false identity, before* we get the opportunity to discover whom God *really made us to be*.

For the manner in which we dress, walk, and talk, is informed and influenced by the immediate environment that we are subjected to - the understanding (or lack thereof) that our parents, grandparents, and other relatives have, the preceding experiences of our brothers and sisters, and perhaps the most influential, the mutual and collective knowledge, and ignorance, that is reinforced by our 'friends,' our peers.

And if we were born into a situation where we have a second, third, or even a fourth generation of extreme dysfunction foisted upon us, beyond our control, then the 'identity matrix' that we are living in, is jacked-up and twisted, indeed.

This situation is why I conclude that most of us in the African-American community have suffered from a most vicious and virulent form of robbery and theft: *Identity Theft*.

For in all reality, the triggerized identity that far too many live behind *is a mask* - often a mask to hide the pathos and the pain. Ultimately, *it is a false identity*. Too many of us live inside the prison of this false identity *all of our lives*. Even though others historically created this false identity, *and forced* it upon us, *it was widely and wisely rejected* by our 'ignorant' fore parents.

Now, after the bells of freedom have rung at least twice, increasingly larger segments of our African-American community are adapting to and adopting this false identity - living down to and wallowing in this false identity. And, in recent history - through the lyrical lessons given, and our cultural obedience, *idolizing this false black identity*.

Children don't feel the urgency to learn because of this false identity...

Some children *don't believe they can learn* because of this false identity...

People become stunted in life because of this false identity...

People are in jail because of this false identity...

People are dead because of this false identity...

People are mentally and emotionally crippled because of this false identity...

I'm telling you in no uncertain terms that too many of our people are settling for a triggerized identity, now being stringently reinforced *by our own kind*.

For as long as we settle for this false, triggerized identity, we will not reach our God-given potential.

Part of this syndrome of this identity theft is that we have a segment of our people that are looking for respect, dignity, and *some form of self-worth - at any price*. However, in so many cases, we're looking for these desirable traits from fountains of bitterness, fountains of philosophical corruption, which cannot slake our legitimate thirst *for true value and significance*.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? A DATE WITH DESTINY...

While we're talking about the subject of identity, a closely related topic is the naming of our children. We have to be strategic about this critical, destiny-impacting exercise for our offspring...

Ponder this for a minute. Do you honestly believe that it was some form of 'cosmic coincidence,' that the recognized leader of the modern Civil Rights movement possessed the name *Martin Luther King Jr.*?? This name with all of its' historical context and symbolism? And the surname that serendipitously rung with royalty? And that he *was a junior*? That the liberation and freedom that the family did not see in one generation, they were hoping and praying to see in another??

Talk about setting someone's destiny through a name!

Malice Green. Tell me, why would *anyone* name a child, Malice?

Or, take the name of Tupac Amaru Shakur. Do you know what the names Tupac and Amaru mean when combined? They mean 'shining serpent' as he was re-named by his mother. As the story goes, she named him after an indigenous Incan chief who fought against the Spanish conquistadors.¹ And, Mr. Shakur definitely shined brightly in the spotlight, for a moment in time.

I know others have covered this ground as well, but I have to bear witness to the truth of the principle here. *You do not* give a child a name because *it sounds pretty*, or *slick*, or because you think it's *cute*, or *cool*.

¹ from trackrecord.net, "The Secret Revolutionary History of Tupac Shakur's Name," June 23, 2017, accessed 2-24-18

You *do not give a child a name* based on what's popular or 'down,' or 'hip,' or 'fleck' this year (or any other year). *You do not give a child a name* based on your own selfish or vicarious desires.

I believe that you should pray about *the name* to give your child, as you are helping to set a child's destiny by the name that you give them. For every time you call that child's name, the true meaning of the name is resounding in the atmosphere, for all to hear - *especially the child themselves*.

You can encourage victory, or promote defeat in your child's life - *by what you name them*.

ISOLATION, ALIENATION & ASSIMILATION

"Anytime you segregate yourself, you isolate yourself, and you diminish yourself." TD Jakes

This statement, as spoken by Mr. Jakes, has been one of the hallmarks of 'triggerization,' as the triggerized mindset embraces segregation, and isolation.

Cultural myopia = cutting myself off from the rest of society.

Self-imposed limitations based upon a culturally myopic worldview.

Our perspective in life is often compared to a lens. Using this analogy, let's discuss 'triggerization,' as 'triggerization' gives you *such a narrow lens* - this particular lens does not allow in much-needed light - but blurs, obscures, and distorts our view as to what life is all about.

The aperture, or scope (the triggerized lens that we see life through), if we allow it, becomes a microscope - as we enlarge our problems to monstrous proportions, and this lens can also become a telescope - where we make our opportunities seem so far away.

And, all too often, we use that 'microscope' to intently focus on things *we can't control*, instead of the things *we can control*.

For example, we can, for the most part, control the environments of own homes or apartments, and can make these domiciles a sanctuary, or a haven from the crudeness and insanity of the outside world, even our immediate neighborhood. Many of us, however, allow our living environments to become something crazy, and spin out of control, based upon the undue influence from the media or letting our children dictate the atmosphere of the home - from the bottom up.

We need to learn 'life lessons' from the great leaders that preceded us:

For example, Martin Luther King was not culturally myopic - he studied, adopted, and deftly used what he learned from other cultures *for our overall benefit*. As an example, he modeled much of his strategy and participation in the civil rights movement after the non-violent practices of Gandhi in India.

King drew great inspiration from Gandhi's monumental example - how that Gandhi was the catalyst in freeing over 361 million people (India's population in 1960) from British-imposed colonialism. The well of inspiration that King drank from *benefitted all of us*. The lesson here is that King did not limit himself *to just a black example, or just a white example*, he drew *the best models* from the well of wisdom that existed in his world, at the time. Again, Dr. King had *a working grasp of the world* - not just the 'hood,' not just the South, or only the United States.

And, Dr. King didn't spout platitudes about 'global' this, and 'global' that, *he practiced global thinking*.

Martin Luther King Jr., a member of the so-called minority, understood overall American culture better than many of the 'majority' white people that were in power during his time. As a 'maestro' of history, he made 'beautiful music' with the 'symphony' of our nation's historical 'instruments' - the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, and American history in general.

And, Martin Luther King Jr. did not ignore America's schizophrenic beginnings - in fact, he 'called out' America on her 'original sin.' And, he offered prescriptions to America, for her healing from this foundational iniquity...