

BE A MAN

A BOLD CRITICAL DEMAND

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Redefining Resilience

America was intentional over the last 50 years about the damage of the Crack Era, over-policing, and the prison industrial complex—the target was Black men. They wanted to arrest our ascension, corrupt our character, incarcerate our impact, and subdue our spirits. The key was a drug, crack cocaine, so heinous that it completely dismantled the essential fabric of the village. The same village that sustained us through Jim Crow segregation, economic isolation, lynchings, police brutality, redlining, and the trauma of living while Black in America. The bigger question has always been: *what made those Black men choose chaos over community, destruction over discipline, and finance over family?*

The American Dream, a promise of riches and wealth, can drive a man insane if you do not have access to it. It can make weaker men forget their character, ethics, godliness, morals, and values with the hopes of material gain and prosperity—even if the latter is empty and hollow. The reality is that America idolizes criminals when they have a complexion worthy of protection with no greater example being, the convicted felon, President Donald J. Trump. The truth is that there are a completely different set of rules intentionally and we live in two completely different countries by default. The evidence is clear and anyone stating the contrary is boldly lying to your face—do not allow them to do so.

One of the most sinister things ever done to Black people is getting them to believe they could have success and that that success could be sustained by playing by the same rules as our white counterparts. James Baldwin put it this way:

It comes as a great shock...to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance...has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, and although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians are you.

No race and gender has been demeaned, denounced, or destabilized as much as Black men have been in America. One of our reflections during the Obama administration was that “we have never been so high in position and so low in condition ever in U.S. history.” No singular Black man in any one position can change what we face in this country daily—that narrative is untrue. We are not in a post-racial society as it was suggested after Obama was elected. After what happened in November 2024, we also no longer have a racially safe society either. We may soon have to turn back to armed patrols of our neighborhoods like our grandfathers and great-grandfathers had to do. One of man’s most consequential obligations is the protection of his community and family. That being said, there is nothing new under the sun.

We have uncovered, after years of reflection and study, that most white men feel better about themselves when Black men are failing, lost, and struggling. President Lyndon B. Johnson, in the 1960s, once said:

I’ll tell you what’s at the bottom of it... If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best-colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him someone to look down on and he’ll empty his pockets for you.

That has been the way that America has operated since the period of enslavement and it is still working. Trump ran his campaign on demonizing others, sowing division, and translating hatred into voters. No matter what his policies were or how they would hurt many of his supporters, one thing was made abundantly clear when considering the result of the election: The majority of white Americans cared more about the lie of racial superiority than the harm that would be caused, to others or themselves, by having an open racist in office. Hatred is what they willfully chose—it would be wise of us to *finally* believe what they tell us about how they feel about, see, and prefer to treat us. They decided. ***Now, what are we going to do about it?***

Muhammad Ali once posed a question that captures the moment we are living in with the looming second presidency of a self-proclaimed racist:

There are many white people who mean right and in their hearts wanna do right. If 10,000 snakes were coming down that aisle now, and I had a door that I could shut, and in that 10,000, 1,000 meant right, 1,000 rattlesnakes didn't want to bite me, I knew they were good... Should I let all these rattlesnakes come down, hoping that that thousand get together and form a shield? Or should I just close the door and stay safe?

Most Americans do not believe in the reality that they still actively benefit from the racist actions, policies, and profits that came from 250 years of chattel enslavement, another 100 years of Jim Crow, and the never-ending War on Drugs since 1975. It is no longer our job to convince them about these facts, but it is time to focus on the things that will radically change the future for the people who carry our hue and gender, our families, and our communities. We have been trying to convince the masses for the last 70 years of our inherent value—what is the definition of insanity?

Facts are real and they come with evidence—full stop. We have to learn to be at peace with those who *desire to misunderstand* Black men. Look at our depiction in media (the narratives cultivated, the mistruths broadcasted, the stereotypes adopted) and tell me that you love anything about Black men other than what we can do to be useful. Is it in the way we dribble, the smoothness in our voices, or the transcendent shades of melanin? Love, for every Black man in America, is conditional and we are forced to learn this before age 10. We are valuable only based on what we possess and the consistency we provide that value, not the “content of our character” as Martin Luther King Jr once put it.

How long can we beg for acceptance that has never come? Should we wait patiently for a benevolence that we have never experienced? That is the definition of insanity and would make us foolish and weak men. A Black man's life has more value than the external validation we have received from America. The problem is that we, Black men, as a whole, do not believe that. The proof of that is the status of our communities these last 50 years, but guess what? We are the chosen generation to change things and change them permanently. We must not raise our children under a security blanket of comfortable and convenient lies.

Want to see a state-sponsored recipe to covertly attack Black men in the name of public safety? Add the heinous murders of Black revolutionary leaders publicly, sprinkle in a heroin epidemic in the 1970s, add some Reagan Era economics with a pinch of international cocaine trafficking, incorporate stereotypes all white Americans can believe (i.e. Willie Horton), infuse a pinch of three strikes laws to fill prisons, inject billions of dollars to equip law enforcement with the tools to over police in our communities and disinvest in quality music that uplifts Black people while amplifying lyrics and songs that teach self-hate. Bake this mix for 50 years. Voila! Now we have two to three generations of men defeated by conditions in their communities they took no part in creating. The outcome of that left was not accidental, it was deliberate.

Now, we have over two-thirds of Black households without men living there. There was an intentional plan to disrupt the Black family, which financially powered the Civil Rights Movement, by removing Black men from their homes. Since 1970, the U.S. government has also actively participated in the separation of families through the weaponization of government assistance and the welfare system. In policy, no woman can receive benefits while a man lives in the home—so many women chose the convenience of assistance over the benefits of a man at home raising his family. The boys who had to survive these atrocities and were victims of the absence of their fathers have made up their minds that we are and will be chainbreakers.

The Re-Definition of Manhood

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times, but it is ***the*** time when the future will be defined. Yet, times of great uncertainty produce the bravest warriors who lead change, drive impact, and create opportunities in communities for everyone around them to benefit. Once upon a time, this was the standard in Black America, but we have watered down what it means to be Black and male in this country.

Many men, ourselves included, often ask: **What does it mean to be a man?** What does it mean to be the leader in your community, within your career, for your family, and through your home? We can read books, consult social media, and even find older mentors who learned from the generations of men who came before us to understand how to be a Black man.

We face these questions almost daily as we are bombarded on social media (and every other source) with differing opinions and ideas on what being a man could and should look like. When we think of manhood in today's modern times, most of us get our direction from the commercial aspect of manhood portrayed on film and television where, unfortunately, Black men are rarely portrayed accurately. Being a Black man in today's time means you must choose examples of men, in real life, who operate with a standard of excellence within their behaviors, career, family, and relationships—they all contribute to his most valuable assets: his brand and his name.

The demands on men are the same: to lead, to protect, and to provide, but the processes and requirements adopted have grown increasingly more complex. ***What makes this generation of men so different from the ones who came before us?*** The answer is very simple: Men stopped defining themselves for themselves. Men stopped sharpening each other. Men stopped uplifting one another. Men stopped holding each other accountable for the things that created other strong men. This was done by design, but we have no time to complain, throw tantrums, or whine like many men do in this generation.

Our best option is to adapt, change, and discipline ourselves with military-style precision. We can start by talking about our experiences and opening up about our emotions. By doing this, we will be able to have better relationships with ourselves and others in our lives.

Strong men embrace this nuanced world of masculinity by going beyond traditional expectations of strength and stoicism. wHe adds to his repertoire include being an active father, having emotional maturity, and practicing empathy all while also respecting the needs of others. This type of man does not shy away from accountability and firmly takes full responsibility for his actions and inactions. Most importantly, he is challenging the idea of “toxic masculinity” by being open about his vulnerabilities, after finding safety in people who have earned him, and requesting support when needed. Here are a few core things he navigates, possesses, and values:

Active fatherhood: taking an involved, nurturing, and present role in parenting;

Conforming to Traditional Gender Roles: obedience to societal expectations of being the breadwinner and serving as the rock for everyone can be stressful;

Emotional intelligence: being comfortable expressing a range of emotions and not just suppressing them until there is an uncontrolled blow-up after trigger;

Equity and Respect: respecting and valuing people of all genders;

Interpreting Women’s Safety: Understanding and adapting to changing expectations around gender dynamics and permission;

Self-Care: Prioritizing mental and physical health, seeking help when needed;

Social Responsibility: Engaging in community service and advocating for positive change;

Stigma of Independence: overcoming the difficulty of reaching out for mental health support due to cultural norms.

Men with sound character have no desire to resemble anything less than a man who has these values. We have committed ourselves to our children, leaving a legacy, and we are ready to re-assume the role that our communities so desperately need us to, which is leadership. Even the CDC says Black men are the most active fathers in America in their children's lives. We are more afraid of the consequence of not being a good man for our children than the temptations of having everything material. These men are not led by their emotions, we are led by the fulfillment of purpose.

So we must establish what it means to be *aman of influence* who shapes the world around him and challenges the status quo daily. Becoming a man that lesser men compare themselves to and copy. He transforms into a man who leads and elevates the people around him for the better. He is powerful and he knows it never wavering with his confidence. He has done the work to learn about himself and to know what serves his future. He simplifies his life by eliminating the habits and people who do not serve the direction of his life.

He is open about his emotions and aware of his mental health. He also is brutally honest with himself and others about what he is going through so that he can seek the necessary help. He does not hide behind the pretense of masculinity. He knows that he is a prize and that it is an honor for others to share his space. He does not believe this arrogantly, but humbly understands the value that he brings into the lives of the people around him. He has earned his place through self-discipline, the truest form of self-love, and learning what it means to care for himself. Every day he pursues to be the best version of himself from the moment his eyes open until they close. He demands that his mind, body, and soul have to continually develop so that he can embody honor, power, and strength.

He is attuned in his relationship with the Most High and understands his divine assignment. He understands that his family only works well when its steps are ordered: God over man, man over woman, women over children. This man studies his ancestors and the examples of great men to bear witness to how strong spiritual presence has aided their progress. He knows unequivocally that through the strength of his faith, his self-belief will empower his future greatness—without this spiritual growth is not possible.

This Black man is steadfast. This Black man is immovable. This Black man knows he is the head and not the tail. This Black man does not believe what the world says about him. This Black man cultivates everything around him and leaves everything he touches better than he found it. This Black man has found a way to love himself in a society that has never loved him. He is the original man on this planet and he knows it. He cannot be tricked out of his position or fooled into believing he is lesser than anyone else. He knows his power and uses it to uplift others. This Black man knows that if he were not great they would feel the need to oppress him at every turn.

We want to cordially invite you to an experience like none other. We extend membership into a fraternity built on brotherhood, love, and unity fighting to become the greatest versions of ourselves. We will change the world and make it better for our grandchildren (as ours did for us). Thank you for accepting that the status quo is not good enough. Thank you for your commitment to change the lives of everyone in your sphere of influence.

Welcome to I AM NOT BROKEN.

Challenging Your Narrative

Every Black man has the responsibility to be his own man. No one is going to hold your hand through life to make it easier for you. No one else is going to be there with you in the quiet moments with no one watching. That is when your character has to show up and compel you to do what is right and not simply what is convenient. The reality is this: Simplicity is more complex in the 21st century. Here are a few rules to simplify how you navigate life.

- Be an asset to yourself before being an asset to someone else.
- Build, feed, and give back to your community.
- Don't make anything the focus before you lock in on who you are.
- Empower young men coming behind you by blazing a trail.
- Humble yourself enough to study the greatness of other men.
- If you fall, get back up and walk with your eyes focused on the sky.
- Never compromise your morals for material wealth.
- Remove people quickly when they are disruptions to your purpose.
- Re-trace your steps when you make mistakes to prevent repeating them.
- Understand your purpose and live it daily.
- Vigilance is essential to ensure that you are aware of those around you.

We not only wanted to give you information, but we most importantly wanted to give you the tools to self-assess where you are as a man. Below you will find a list of 15 things that great men do and 15 things that great men do not do. Take this time to ask yourself whether or not you qualify to consider yourself a great man or not? This is your moment to reflect on what is working and what is keeping you from becoming your greatest self.

This is the beginning of a journey for you to create change in your life and begin your journey to become a man you, your family, your spouse, and the world can be proud of. Welcome to the first day of your new life—we are happy to be a part of it.

I AM NOT BROKEN

An Intergenerational Guide to Manhood

I AM NOT BROKEN was written with the goal to empower the masses of Black men who struggle to define manhood and who are fighting daily to become their best selves. We are teaching men how to love themselves unconditionally starting with improving their knowledge of self. Our mission is to empower these men to become better brothers, fathers, husbands, and sons and to create positive outcomes for those who depend on us.

I AM NOT BROKEN'S co-authors were fortunate to have been molded by some of the most influential leaders in America of the 20th century who changed the livelihood of Black Americans. This intergenerational text came together to reassert masculinity – for men by men. It is written as a guide filled with wisdom gained from years of leadership experience and forged by the fire of trailblazing innovation.

I AM NOT BROKEN was designed to give every man the opportunity to ascend to greatness and to become agents of change in all areas of their lives.

www.iamnotbroken.life