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by ROBERT 'WOODY' WOODARD

PRH WRITERS BLOCK

GET ON UP



Have you seen the movie “Get On Up” – the biopic of James Brown, the Godfather of Soul? The script by brothers Jez and John-Henry Butterworth (Directed by Tate Taylor) made an impression on me and my friends at the barbershop.

When he was born, James Brown was already a man – the perfect example of what the strength and willpower of a human being can accomplish. He had no childhood but was forced to push himself to his highest heights. In one scene, he took a pair of shoes off a dead man – a dead man hanging from a tree. Living in the South, there were many Blacks who were put to death by neighborhood Klan members. Imagine what it was like for children to endure this horrible experience at a tender age. The atrocities, both mental and emotional, that these children endured were overwhelming. Encounters such as these have been embedded in the blood of many “children of slaves” living in America today. These fears, unfortunately, have been passed down through generations and have an enormous effect on the confidence and attitudes of urban youth. With that kind of stress on young minds, I can only wonder how much depression can affect their daily lives, possibly even moving some to contemplate suicide. Some children are stronger than others. They can find a way when there is no way. James Brown was one of those children. Nevertheless, an evaluation needs to be taken of the fears of the “children of slaves.” We as a human race need to do the work to create a study by professionals in the mental and emotional fields in every university in this country. This is the least that we can do for the damage that has been done.

Through his music, Brown became a finan-

cial entity in this country and around the world. He achieved his goals for musical perfection and aspired to reach even higher. He gained knowledge of the music industry by watching the people around him – like his manager Ben Bart - conduct business. In times of slavery, literacy was forbidden. If slaves were caught reading a book, the masters punished them by blinding an eye or amputating their fingers so they could not see or turn the pages. Fear was created in the minds and hearts of the children who witnessed these events. This fear continues to be passed down through the bloodlines of the millions of “children of slaves” living in America today. And it is affecting our society.

Fear is what Brown learned to challenge as a child. He became a man even though he was a little boy. Once he became an adult, his childhood fears constantly pushed him to the top. He learned to talk to the man inside of himself and mentally became a cheerleader to lift up and promote his inner superman - *Mr. James Brown*.

This movie told a great story about a remarkable man. We as Americans from every cultural and ethnic group should see ourselves as one nation, concerned about how we can help repair the damages done to our fellow Americans. Although it was not in the movie, one of Brown’s greatest hits was “Living in America.” Let’s learn how to live in America as one human race, concerned about ourselves as fellow citizens of a great and growing nation of many cultures and ethnicities. This will help us prepare ourselves to walk into the future of tomorrow together, united as one.

Robert ‘Woody’ Woodard is a barber at the renowned Woody’s Barber Shop. Visit www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org

The Barber’s Pole represents the History of Barbering. Barbers were the original Doctors and Surgeons. PRH