

Forgive: The new mantra and practice for Black Men

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The new mantra and practice for Black Men
by

Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter

Foreword by Eric K. Grimes

with personal reflections on:

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar James Baldwin
Reginald Lewis Marvin Gaye Carter G. Woodson
Muhammad Ali Gil-Scott Heron Brian Jackson
Richard Pryor Elijah Muhammad Allen Iverson
Dwight Tribble Langston Hughes Arthur Ashe
George Washington Carver Eric K. Grimes
Teddy Pendergrass Malcolm X Jesus Del Jones
James Brown Clarence Joseph Long Les Brown
Khalil Gibran Huey P. Newton Ed Bradley
Stokely Charmichael MLK, Jr Fred Hampton
Booker T. Washington Richard Whiten
Notorious BIG Carter G. Woodson WEB DuBois
Amos Wilson Stevie Wonder Frantz Fanon

Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter

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Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men

***We say that since change is inevitable,
we should direct the change
Rather than simply continue to go through the change***
Gil Scott-Heron

This practice book belongs to:

Gil Scott-Heron



Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter

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***These Black Men helped me
clarify human contradictions,
eliminate fear and illuminate forgiveness.***

Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter

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***"It's weak to speak and blame somebody else
...when you destroy yourself."***

Chuck D

Foreword

To be a better man

Eric K. Grimes

*Unrepentant.
Traumatized.
Self-Sabotaging.
Hurt.*

Those were words often used to describe this book's author. Yep, that's right. The dude that is about to share with you mantras, quotes, songs, poems and ideas about forgiveness and the power that comes with it was one unforgiving motherfucker.

You know, hurt people hurt people!

My therapy and counseling-inclined friends used to say this trite little phrase over and over, in their attempts to understand Butch.

After all, his name is Butch Slaughter - sounds like a stage name for a WWE villain.

After all, he did crash the car a friend lent him and refused to pay a penny toward the damages. Dared him to a fight if he wanted!

After all, he did film a documentary that showed a fish out of water, slowly gasping for air. The documentary was devoted to the redeeming power of HATE!

After all, he did co-author *Why Our Children Hate Us*, with a chapter saying Black people killed Jesus. Had the nerve to follow that up with a tome entitled, *Dear Daddy I Hate You: Letters to my Mother's Killer*. Some have described it as 110 pages of pure venom. *Chapter 1 – Fuck You, Daddy!* Need I say more?

YES, I need to say more!

I am not going to spend a lot of space telling you how great a father Ulysses is. Or how great a friend he has been. Nor will I tell you that he has evolved into a perfect man.

I will say that I have known Ulysses for 20 years and he should be listened to. I have had an up close and personal vantage point as Butch has transformed into a friend who I gladly call Brother!

I have seen him engage his hero's journey – seeking the depths of hell and deciding to embrace, accept and defeat all that comes with that struggle, and to emerge triumphant. After all, his name is Ulysses.

Now I am not into any Greek hero stuff. But I do appreciate that he has reclaimed his birth name and dismissed the WWE persona (but I do think it's time for an Afrikan name, though). And I do appreciate that he heeds his ancestral calling – *Be A Better Man!*

Not only has he become a better man, but he provides insights that will motivate the better man in us all!

This book is Ulysses at his best, sharing jewels that any Black man, his family, his community and those who love him will find invaluable in completing his hero's journey into Exemplary Black Manhood!

And whether we want to accept it or not, that journey is not complete, I dare say it does not even begin, until we embrace *forgiveness!*



The Odyssey Project is human development and reconciliation concept founded in 2012 by Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr and Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Jr. The compass is a symbol of desire, direction, discipline and determination.

***Men can die from a lack of self-realization
as much as they can from a lack of bread***

Richard Wright

Richard Wright

Introduction

You're an eagle

Dr. Edward W. Robinson, Jr.

In early 1991, legendary Philadelphia historian Dr. Edward W. Robinson Jr gracefully and majestically entered my life. Ushered by another Philadelphia legend named Mattie Humphrey, Dr. Robinson walked through my front door and into my heart bringing with him magical stories of African grandeur and cosmic possibilities. A charming and polite man with a facial resemblance to W.E.B. DuBois, Dr. Robinson (author of "*Journey of the Songhai People*") is second only to my own father in his influence of my forgiving practice.

But like most of the Black Men in this book, Dr. Robinson did not specifically address forgiving as a way of influencing forgiving. In fact it was a simple story he told that captured my imagination and gave flight to my captive spirit. The story is called *The Eagle Who Thought He Was a Chicken*.

If you've heard this story before, you know the basics. It goes like this. A baby eagle is separated from his family, picked up by a farmer, placed in a chicken coop, learns the ways of chickens and soon believes he's a chicken. Eventually the confused adolescent eagle encounters an adult eagle and learns that he's been engaged in an imitation of life.

"Why are you acting like that? You're not a chicken," says the glorious brown bird to his confused young relative. "You're an eagle."

I've heard this story many times since first hearing it from Dr. Robinson. But anyone whoever heard Dr. Robinson tell the story knows he makes the simple sophisticated. As he told the story, I understood he was not belittling the chickens. And he wasn't suggesting the eagles were better than the chickens. He was saying eagles should do what eagles were born to do. And when an eagle flies it knows an authentic, unique freedom that it cannot learn pacing on the ground in a farmyard with chickens.

***Why are you acting like that?
You're an eagle.***

Dr. Edward W. Robinson, Jr.

This, in my opinion, is the challenge of Forgiving for Black Men today. We must come up off the ground. We must fly at all costs because flying is what we were born to do. And I'm not talking about getting better jobs, voting or buying bigger houses. The first thing we must do is reconnect to God through forgiving our ourselves, our brothers and sisters, our parents and all humans. We must strive for a new understanding and live a new reality. It begins with forgiving. We must be bigger than our faults and our mistakes. We cannot let our mistakes define Black Manhood. We must let forgiving define Black Manhood.

Dr. Edward W. Robinson, Jr.

In the same way my mother, Clarice, told me “Be better,” Dr. Robinson said “you’re an eagle and eagles soar to the heavens.” We must soar and encourage all Black Men to soar. Top flight requires forgiving.

I called Dr. Robinson one day and got no answer. I left a message and he called me back.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t take your call,” he said to me. “I was communing with our ancestors.”

At first it struck me as strange but I desired that privilege as well. I told Dr. Robinson about my mother and my father. I told him I hated my father.

***Your mother is an ancestor;
she and the others
will figure it out.***

Dr. Edward W. Robinson, Jr.

“Hmm,” he said. “I’m sorry to hear that. I’m sure you can commune with your mother if you want to. But what about your father? Who will help him?”

“I don’t know,” I replied. And there was a long silence.

“Okay,” Dr. Robinson finally said. “Your mother is an ancestor. I’m sure she and the others will figure it out.”

They did.

Dr. Robinson was the adult eagle who flew into my fowl life. He was the adult Black Man who asked my emerging Black Man “Why are you acting like that?” The question applied to everything. It applies to everything. What is this “acting?” Why do I do it? Where did I learn it? Is the act really mine? Is this the best Black Man I can be? What if I forgive my chicken-like behavior and the chicken-like behavior of others and remember that I am an eagle? What if? I wanted to find out.

Acknowledgments

The completion of *Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men* is the effort of many, many people. My responsibility was to write. Many others stood guard, protected me and made it possible for me to write. Writing is not an easy process.

Those who make it possible for an individual to be creatively productive are like a strong body through which a spirit can breathe freely. The body says yes to the spirit within and facilitates optimal passage through arteries, organs, muscles and bones. When the spirit and the body are synchronized, their expression into the universe is marvelous.

The power of my collective supporters is revealed through trust, patience, love and common vision. For a long, long time, I have believed I have something important to say about forgiving. Articulation of my experience wasn’t always easy. And for this very reason, my supporters lent me their hearts and understanding.

Through this book concept, I pledge my best effort to the men featured within. I also say “thank you” to Monique, Malcolm, Khalil, Jordan, Jalyn, Xavier and Octavius for allowing me to grow into a new man in your presence. Patience and tolerance for that process is rare.

In the critical crunch time of this process, I was able to call on my dear friends Angela Richardson, Juliette van Schaardenburg, Eric K. Grimes, Eleanor Shaw Claiborne and Sanjay Joshi. Thank you.

Additional and eternal thanks I offer to Donovan Price, Davis Northern, Dr. Phil McGraw, Oprah Winfrey, Debbie Morton, Brynn Freedman, Michael Branton and Gary Benz.

***You can't hide from yourself;
everywhere you go, there you are.***

Teddy Pendergrass

Teddy Pendergrass

The Daily Reflection Questions

Who am I?

What power sent me into this world?

Why have I traveled into this world?

What will be my greatest contribution in this world?

Where will I go after I leave this world?

Why should white guys have all the fun?

Reginald Lewis

“...why don’t more Black guys define and create their own fun?”

To be sure, this title-question from Reginald Lewis is rhetorical. He wasn’t looking for anyone to answer the question because he knew there was no legitimate reason why white guys should be the only ones to enjoy the “good life.”

During his relatively short life, Lewis was internationally distinguished as a businessman. He was a lawyer, philanthropist and the CEO of TLC Beatrice International. When he died at age 50 in 1993, his fortune was estimated near \$400 million.

When I discovered the Lewis biography ***“Why Should White Guys Have All the Fun?”*** in 1995, I was an aspiring media entrepreneur with far more ideas than energy. I wanted a lot but had insufficient will. I designed a lot but delivery was always light years away. I measured myself by Lewis’s standard but comparisons were laughable at best.

White guys were not my biggest competition. My nemesis was a mental parasite. My archenemy was an internal self-hatred that laughed at my every attempt to be anything other than a cursed nigga. Until I could banish that bullshit from my total being, fun would always be an abstract in my life.

***We are people of the Mighty,
Mighty People of The Sun.
In our hearts lie all the answers
to The Truth you can't run from***
Earth, Wind and Fire

There is grave danger in talking as if a Black Man's sole purpose in life is to exist in opposition to "white" purpose.

We are more than "the other." We are more than Black Men. We are Seeds of Divine, planted on this earth to radiate infinity. The only way to radiate infinity is to forgive.

Earth, Wind and Fire

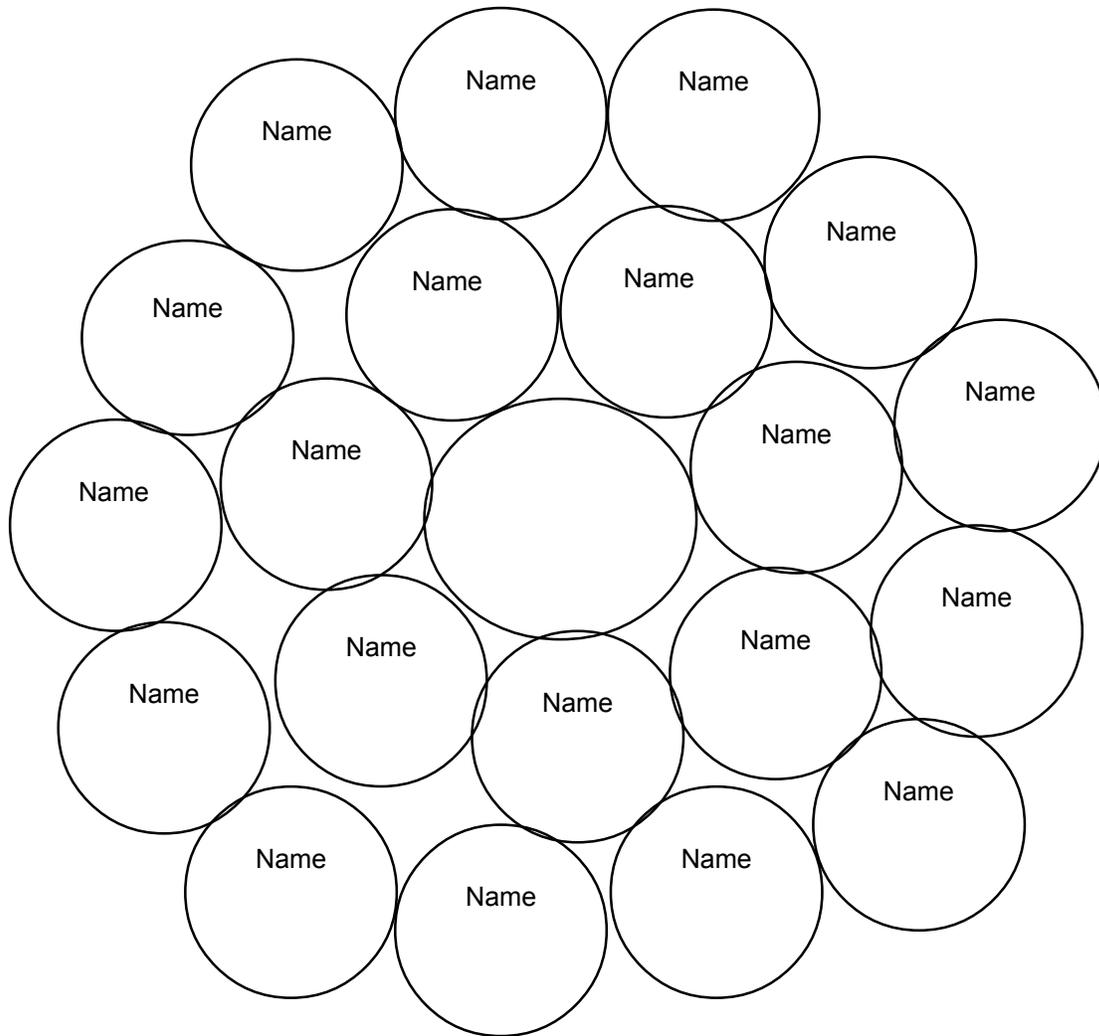


My Solar System of Black Men

You, like all Black Men, sit at the center of a unique, personal and powerful Solar System of Black Men who influence your beliefs and actions. In the center of the graphic below, write your name and in the circles around your circle write the first names of your Black Male influences.

Reflect on your Solar System of Black Men daily. Embrace the warmth of their power.

Remember these Black Men and how they aid you.





“Be better”
Clarice Joyce Slaughter

***Your self-image is so powerful,
it unwittingly becomes your destiny.***

Oscar Micheaux

Definitions

Forgive – to move beyond a previous boundary. To grow and move forward.
To excuse or pardon yourself, another person or situation (and integrate the experience
for personal growth)

Mantra – a chant or repeated affirmation

Practice – a systematic method of developing and refining skills or knowledge

Black Man – any man who witnesses and defines himself as a Black Man

Oscar Micheaux

A Forgiving Prayer for Black Men

I want to see the place some call Heaven.

I want to experience what others call Nirvana.

Nothing can stop me from finding Heaven because I am already there.

Heaven is in my heart.

Nothing can keep me from feeling Nirvana.

Nirvana runs through my veins.

I am the culmination of history.

I am the shore of the future.

I am all places and all times.

I am a Seed of The Divine.

And I believe that if I seek I will find.

I believe that forgiving is seeking.

I believe that in forgiving I will find.

I believe that forgiving is forward motion.

I believe that forgiving is the process of waking up to my sleeping giant.

Forgiving transcends all conditions and brings me closer to my God.

Forgiving is not a concession.

Forgiving is an expansion.

Forgiving is the pathway that leads straight to heaven's gates.

***He'd spent his whole life chasing Heaven,
but never seemed to find it. Cause Heaven
resides - right here- on the inside.***

Kem

“I had to do it.”
Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr.
Forgiving my father

***(My father and I) watched as
(my mother’s) breathing
slowed, her spirit vanished
and she slowly slipped
through death’s mysterious
door.***

I was twelve years old when my father, Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr. shot my mother, Clarice, in her head. He shot her twice in her head and she fell to the floor right outside my bedroom door.

On an early Sunday morning in our South Side Chicago apartment, I heard him tell her that he would kill her.

“If you try to leave, I will kill you!” he promised.

“Kill me, kill me!” she shouted.

Two gunshots rang out in the apartment.

The hammer of steel’s violence echoed across the universe.

The silence of death’s deceptive separation filled our apartment.

My bedroom door opened and my mother was lying there on the floor. She was bleeding from a huge and hideous hole in the right side of her head. My father shot her in her temple. Twice.

We stood over my mother as her body convulsed. We listened as she choked, gasping for air, struggling for life. We watched as her breathing slowed, her spirit vanished and she slowly slipped through death’s mysterious door.

“Get up, Clarice!” my father begged my mother. “Get up!”

My father tried to bring my mother back but she was already moving toward the other side. He told me he was sorry but my mother was going away.

Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr.

The format of this book

***I don't know
and I don't want to know
where I would be without
reminders I received from
Malcolm, Martin and Marcus.***

Songs have provided me keys to my life. Out of relative obscurity, a coherent personal mission has been defined and pursued. There have been messages sent to me from the grassroots. And a radical redistribution of spirit has opened the door to a priceless and life-sustaining commodity called forgiving.

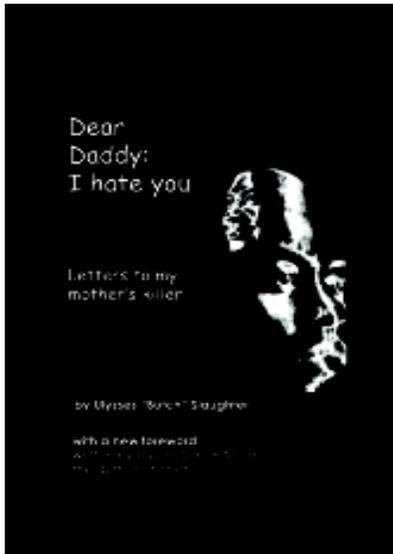
I have extracted precious elements from so many elegant Black Men, stolen so much of what they offered to me for free. In my shame and ignorance, I once denied them the rightful return on their investment in me. I childishly concealed them in my hatred. I suppressed them under my pain.

I wandered away from Black Men, angry at what I thought I had inherited from them. I fled the gift of Black manhood, misguided by distorted reflections as viewed through steamy smoke and perverted mirrors. I am their prodigal son, now desperately wanting to return to my father's home. I am the culmination of their cries, the strength of their struggle. I have used their songs and sentences for my salvation. I am their integrated ingredients, the laughter of their liberation.

I don't know and I don't want to know where I would be without reminders I received from Malcolm, Martin and Marcus. I would be blind without Stevie Wonder. I would be ill-prepared without Ed Bradley. And home would have remained the source of my hatred without Gil Scott-Heron.

The format of this book

Dear Daddy, I hate you Pieces of my past



I don't come to the conversation of forgiving as a saint who has been perfect or pious. I come as a man seeking redemption. I am a sinner of sorts. I am a man who has hated with a horror that still shocks me.

As I moved towards completion of this book ***“Forgive, The New Mantra and Practice for Black Men,”*** I decided it would be useful to include select portions of my second book ***“Dear Daddy, I hate you: letters to my mother’s killer”*** within these pages. I want my readers to know where I’ve come from. I want you to know I know something about pain, rage, hopelessness and and despair.

In Fall of 2005, I wrote letters to my father. The letters expressed my anguish and blindness. The letters represented my painful truth. I took the letters to my father’s apartment. He discovered the letters in his mailbox. You will discover portions of these letters throughout this book.

“Dear Daddy” is now out of print but as owner of this book, you can obtain a free, full electronic download of the book in its entirety.

Go to ulyssesbutchslaughter.com to request your free download.

I am grateful to my father who, just weeks before he passed away, wrote “Reflections of the past” a foreword to ***“Dear Daddy, I hate you.”***

Reflections of the past

Reflections of the past
Ulysses G. Slaughter, Sr.

I still get chills when I think of what I found in my mailbox years ago. How did it get there? Who brought it? There was no postage or package. Just a book. A book full of hatred, pain and threats.

As I read the different passages, I found myself looking over my shoulder subconsciously. Why? I asked myself. Why? Obviously, I knew the answer to that question and concern. I created a monster who was taunting and possibly stalking me.

I felt scared and angry.

“How dare he make me feel this way! Who does he think he is threatening me?”

Again I knew why and answered myself tearfully: this is what I deserve. I had hoped to be destroyed in prison. But it was not meant to be. That would be too easy.

There was a reason why I survived that place of danger.

Someday it will reveal itself to me.

Someday.

“Look what you made me do...”
Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr.

***My father talked as if
the whole world was out
to get him and he was
simply defending
himself.***

Our neighbors heard the two gunshots. I could hear them rushing from their apartment, down the hallway and to the front door of our apartment. Our neighbors – a husband, wife and their 13-year-old daughter – violently banged on our apartment door. My father, Ulysses Grant Slaughter, Sr., swung the door wide open, inviting them into his madness. The husband, wife and their daughter all covered their mouths, falling back in disbelief, collectively crippled at the sight of my mother’s fallen body.

“Look what you made me do!” my father shouted at the husband and wife. “Look what you made me do!”

For years after my mother’s death my father would talk about how our neighbors manipulated him and served as puppet masters - the negative “outside influences” that led to my mother’s death. He would talk about the external seduction, the malicious whispers and the conspiracies that drove him to the madness of murder. He talked as if the whole world was out to get him and he was simply defending himself.

More than three decades would pass before my father would ultimately implode with grief and acknowledge that his actions were indeed his actions in a complex and crippling nightmare. More than three decades would pass before he would admit to me that his hand was holding the gun, he made the threats, he pulled

Ulysses G. Slaughter, Sr.

the trigger and he shot my mother. It would take more than three decades before my father would forgive the lies he told himself in a misguided attempt to avoid confronting his irresponsibility.

“If I could turn back the hands of time,” my father said to me on the 33rd anniversary of my mother’s death. “I would have just got in the car and drove away.”

What my father was saying is that if he had another chance, he would have forgiven the relationship with my mother. If he had another chance, he would have let the relationship go. But he wouldn’t let the relationship go. So the relationship wouldn’t let him go.

The reality is that my father had chances. He had chances and he made choices. He had many opportunities to forgive and let go. He accepted none of those forgiving opportunities. Instead he remained committed to an unforgiving path.

Black Men have often acknowledged institutional forces, “outside influences” and external factors without admitting to inner compromises,

“Look what you made me do.”

No one had forced anything on my father. In fact he made the decisions. He was the actor and he was the director. He was the writer and he was the producer. He was responsible for the act and his actions. Certainly there were others on the stage, but his performance was his performance.

It’s common for people to blame other people. It’s easy to say “look what you made me do.”

That statement is not far from “Look what they made us do.”

That statement is not far from “Look what they’re doing to us.”

It would take more than three decades before my father would forgive the lies he told himself

Like my father, Black Men have often acknowledged institutional forces, “outside influences” and external factors without admitting to inner compromises, collective collaboration and personal complacency. We have too long and too often reacted and failed to act, assuming that we cannot get ahead of the next move when – in fact – we are the next moves.

One day I found myself standing at a crossroads of responsibility. I was about to make a move. I was an actor on a stage that I had carefully, methodically constructed. I was the director of the unfolding moment. I was the writer of the seemingly spontaneously written script.

I was standing at my father’s house more than 30 years after he killed my mother. No longer satisfied with stalking in his shadow, I now stood under a full, fire-orange sunshine prepared to author a nightmare.

I was standing at my father’s house waiting for him to come outside. I was prepared to beat him to death with my bare hands. I was prepared to end his life as the logical conclusion to the tragedy of our family triangle.

Select Quotes

***We say that since change is inevitable, we should direct the change
Rather than simply continue to go through the change***
Gil Scott-Heron

***It's weak to speak and blame somebody else
...when you destroy yourself.***
Chuck D

You can't hide from yourself; everywhere you go, there you are.
Teddy Pendergrass

Why should White guys have all the fun?
Reginald Lewis

Can you see the things that man has done cannot set you free?
Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson

When a man starts out to build a world, he starts first with himself.
Langston Hughes

***My potential is more than can be expressed within
the bounds of my race or my ethnic identity.***
Arthur Ashe

***We are people of the Mighty, Mighty People of The Sun
in our hearts lie all the answers to The Truth you can't run from***
Earth, Wind and Fire

No one's serious and it makes me furious.
Curtis Mayfield

***No one can give you freedom. No one can give you equality
or justice or anything. If you're a man, you take it.***
Malcolm X

Your self-image is so powerful, it unwittingly becomes your destiny.
Oscar Micheaux

"Whoever knows himself knows God."
Elijah Muhammad

“Forget forgiving” Ulysses “Butch” Slaughter

Forget what you know about forgiving for a while. Just totally forget your past ideas. Give me your consideration here and now and maybe we can find a new way to be or not to be through what I call The Ultimate Practice called Forgiving.

Some people say forgiving is a response. Some say forgiving is a reaction. Some people say forgiving is all about the past or backward-focused. Some say forgiving is all about coming to terms with something that happened.

I disagree. I disagree deeply and strongly.

I say forgiving is now. Forgiving is a choice – a sustainable shift in perspective that will change the thoughts, feelings and actions you are living with right now. Forgiving can only be related to now and can only happen now because we can't change what happened. And even if we attempt to impact what will happen in the future, we must do it now.

There is only one moment that exists. That moment is called now. No matter what you've been told, no matter what you tell yourself -

As long as we are alive, we can expect even the unexpected to happen on the road of life.

Forgiving is not about the past. Forgiving is not about the future. Forgiving is about the present. Forgiving is the action of now.

there is no past right here right now. There is no future right here right now. There is only now over and over again. A series of “nows.” Forgiving is not about the past. Forgiving is not even about the future. Forgiving is about the present. Forgiving is the action of now.

You and I know that stuff happens in life. Stuff has happened in life. Stuff will happen. That's life. As long as we are alive, we can expect even the unexpected to happen on the road of life. Whenever anything happens it will arrive in a moment called now.

Life is a happening, a collection of happenings where there always seems to be something up ahead. And either the “something” arrives when we arrive or it is already waiting before we get to that crucial crossroad of space and time.

When we arrive at the happening, we and the somethings that happens in life become one. We and the somethings reflect one another. We are unified with and transformed by what is happening. We are what is happening. We evaluate how we feel about what happened. We try to express the impact. We seek to name the experience.

Section One



Forgiving: The Ultimate Practice

*Who are the learned?
Those who practice what they know.*
Elijah Muhammad

Elijah Muhammad



Daily Practice Sheet

Gil Scott-Heron said: "...since change is inevitable, we should direct the change rather than simply continue to go through the change."

Dr. Wade Nobles said: "Every process ends in a product even though the process never ends...to drive a process without a vision of the product is to engage in activity that has no direction or vision."

The Daily Practice Sheet is a time and energy management tool designed to support the vision you desire through the changes you direct. Every day will manifest a product based on your choices of change. This sample sheet is offered here to support your daily practice in comprehensive forgiving. **The Daily Practice Sheet** includes four reflection sections: forgiving, fitness, food and focused faith. These are the four basic components of daily engagement that contribute to your optimal growth. Expanded explanations of these components are included here in Section One and throughout select parts of this book. Chronicle your activity in each of these areas every day. Notice the impact on your overall life when you are consistent and when you are inconsistent. Make life happen, Black Man. Reflect on the quotes above. Develop your self.

(Below is an example of how to fill out the sheet. Consider actions the night before, take action during the actual day and record your results at the end of the day. Do this every day.)

Forgiving (Action Considered) Call sister to talk Do five extra situps Avoid sugar	Forgiving (Action Taken) Called sister Did 20 extra Avoided sugar	Forgiving (Action Results) We reached agreement Feel accomplished No headaches
Focused Faith (Action Considered) Repeat "Master Your Journey" Read Serenity Prayer 5X	Focused Faith (Action Taken) Repeated mantra many times Repeated prayer 4X	Focused Faith (Action Results)
Food (Action Considered) No coffee today Drink a gallon of water Avoid mainstream media	Food (Action Taken) I had no coffee today I drank three quarts I avoided mainstream media	Food (Action Results) I felt more clear-headed I felt clean. Peed a lot! I felt less restless
Fitness (Action Considered) Take a 30-minute walk Stretch before bed Schedule tomorrow's tasks	Fitness (Action Taken) Walked for 40 minutes Stretched before bed	Fitness (Action Results)

We talking about practice?

Allen Iverson

“We talking about practice. Not a game. Not the game that I go out there and die for and play every game like it’s my last. Not the game. We talking about practice, man.”

Allen Iverson’s use of the word “practice” during a 2002 Philadelphia 76ers press conference was analyzed over and over again. If you’ve never seen nor heard of this classic basketball press conference, it doesn’t take much to find it, read about it or even watch it. The intent here is not to judge Iverson or his use of the word “practice” during that media gathering. Whatever he meant is what he meant.

Regardless of what Iverson meant, Black Men need to create and sustain healthy practices. Each one of us has some consistent conscious and unconscious behaviors that equal the state of our life affairs. All of us have practices, shaped through habits and time management (or the lack thereof) that make our lives whatever they have become. Look around you and you will see the results of your practices. Do you like what you see?

In a flash, I can reflect on the impact of practices in my life. I remember youth basketball and baseball practices. I remember study the night before high school exams. I remember my lack of real dedication, an absence of awareness about the connection between why I was practicing, what I was practicing and what I was becoming. I was mostly blind to the importance of practice, treating the process as an utter inconvenience. A formality that would manifest no real form. When I practiced, I would just go through the motions.

Culture Bandits Brother Del Jones

“Confusion is the enemy of revolution and the western media are experts in causing confusion and perpetuating lies, stereotypes, and his-torical distortion, as they play with our appetite for a better life.”

The late Philadelphia writer and self-ascribed “war correspondent” Del Jones wrote and published the book “Culture Bandits” out of the legendary West Philadelphia bookstore “Know Thyself” in the early 1990’s. The books examined how “white supremacy” co-opts Black culture and derails collective efforts toward liberation.

I spent many hours in Know Thyself with Del and his captivating brother and business partner Deke. Their modest bookstore was a cultural Mecca where everything from “Afrikan” gods to Black education would fall under a conversational microscope. During a time when Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) embraced Kente cloth uniforms to sell Black people chicken, Del was scraping together publishing dollars in the difficult attempt to sell Black people cultural clarity.

I’m certain Del didn’t write Culture Bandits with the intent of winning any literary or publishing awards. The book is simple, short and even shoddy by many standards. The “About Author” section of the book well personifies the beloved character I knew as Del Jones.

“He earned his associates degree from the school of Hard Knocks, his B.S. is in organizing in the streets and on the campuses of Philadelphia, his masters is in dissecting the media’s distortions, lies, half truths, and kicking it out to the people. And his Ph.D. is for surviving to run it down another day.”

That was Brother Del Jones. Rugged and righteous.

I learned a hell of a lot from Del. By far his most important lesson for me was a crucial word of caution regarding careless information consumption. In the “Culture Bandits” introduction he writes:

“Confusion is the enemy of revolution and the western media are experts in causing confusion and perpetuating lies, stereotypes, and his-torical distortion, as they play with our appetite for a better life.”

Regardless of the global origin – western, eastern, northern or southern – media or the medium of any information should always be critically analyzed by Black Men who practice forgiving. Del knew that media is not simply some “clear channel” of information flow. Both intentional and unintentional interpretations within media influence our perspectives, emotions and decisions.

For sake of bringing this discussion of “careless information consumption” right to you the reader, I am suggesting that media includes your closest friends and family as well as cable television. It’s easy to think about media as it flows through our phones, laptops and televisions; we’re not so quick to see how it informs the media-influenced words and behaviors of those closest to us.

I’m amazed when I hear people ask “How will I know what is going on in the world if I don’t watch television?”

During a time when Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) embraced Kente cloth uniforms to sell Black people chicken, Del was scraping together publishing dollars in the difficult attempt to sell Black people cultural clarity.

Television and other media are quite ineffective at delivering transparent truth yet very effective at distracting and/or deceiving millions of complacent and compliant consumers every day. And media is everywhere: bus stops, billboards, shopping carts and park benches: everywhere.

Playing off the foggy deception about 9-11-related wars, journalist, Tavis Smiley, properly refers to the mass media bombardment as “weapons of mass distraction.” Reality shows, mini-series, sports and even news takes audiences into deep, dark rabbit holes where there is minimal chance of maximum humanity.

Tavis Smiley, properly refers to the mass media bombardment as “weapons of mass distraction.”

Brother Del Jones

I don’t remember Del voicing the matter in this way, but his simple clues led me to this profound discovery: media not only attempts to define life and death. It also attempts to define God. If you think this is exaggerated, consider how many times every single day the media attempts to mediate your connection to the meaning of everything on a single planet in a boundless universe. The media and its agents are arrogant enough to advocate their answers as the last words and hopes for all of humanity. Many Black Men believe mainstream media, rely on mainstream media and seek out mainstream media to validate why their Black lives matter. It is a strange addiction at best. Perhaps more a syndrome...like Stockholm.

Section Three



Clarity Precedes Gratitude

*Some people feel the rain,
others just get wet.*
Bob Marley

Bob Marley

Clarity Precedes Gratitude

My mother's name is Clarice.
Her name means clarity, beautiful and famous.
The meaning of her name informs my belief
that clear insight and acknowledgement of
beauty comes before gratitude of beauty. It's
simple: you must see and acknowledge the
presence of beauty in order to give thanks.
People frequently talk about the importance of
gratitude for circumstance before they talk
about seeing beauty. If you can see clearly,
gratitude is the natural response.



Section Six



Thinking is overrated

*Knowing how to think
empowers you far beyond those
who know only what to think*

Neil deGrasse Tyson

Neil deGrasse Tyson

...control a man's thinking...
Carter G. Woodson

***“When you control
a man’s thinking you do
not have to worry about
his actions.”***

Recognized by many as the “Father of Black History,” Carter G. Woodson is the Black Man and mind behind what is now called Black History Month. A trailblazer in turbulent times, Woodson offers powerful and timeless insights into human behavior in general; Black folk behavior in particular.

“When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his ‘proper place’ and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.”

I’ve often said that “thinking is overrated.” Woodson’s quote helps me to prove this point because all too often people aren’t thinking at all. They’re moving someone else’s information back and forth through their own minds. They’re repeating, like parrots, what they’ve been told by someone else. They believe - without question - the so-called facts of life as interpreted and delivered by someone else.

Thinking, I believe, should always bring about new revelations, new advancements and new pathways to God. And thinking should be simple, not complex. It is said that you get closer to God - not by addition - but by subtraction.

Carter G. Woodson Less is more. True thinking is forgiving.

In the new mantra of forgiving, Black Men are challenged to challenge what they hold as “gospel.” Through this new mantra, Black Men are challenged to leave no stone unturned. As current inhabitants of this place and time we should see that our very purpose is to turn every stone, expand every boundary and forgive every limitation. Indeed the main reason why we arrived in this place is because there are questions that remain unanswered. Each new Black Man passing through this realm is an answer to a profound question.

Here I will give honorary Black Man status to

Character, not circumstance...

Booker T. Washington

“Character, not circumstance, makes the person.”

Booker T. Washington

By most accounts, Booker T. Washington was brilliant. Thankfully for the thousands that have benefited from his work, the author of the classic text *Up From Slavery* was more action than talk.

I was introduced to the great Booker T. Washington through an unnecessary comparison to the great WEB DuBois. The same way some people debate the non-violence of Martin versus the perceived pro-violence of Malcolm, it was expected that I should and would choose sides between Washington’s industrial pursuits and DuBois’ intellectual pursuits. I guess you’re not supposed to have them both: intellectual and industrial. Take one or the other. It’s utterly ridiculous.

The above-mentioned quote from Booker T. Washington speaks directly to the new mantra of forgiving for Black Men. The word “circumstance” reminds me of the question “what if?” Or the question “what about...?” When I talk to people about forgiving, they often outline a set of personal circumstances that they believe will make forgiving difficult, if not impossible in their unique case.

Washington makes it plain. Your character is what makes you, not your circumstance. In other words, forgiving has no pre-determined constraints, no hard, fast rules that can’t be transcended. Forgiving is always an option. After all the questions are asked, all the “facts” considered, forgiving is always an option and maybe the final answer.

Some of these people do not want the Negro to lose his grievances, because they do not want to lose their jobs.

Booker T. Washington

Fitness
Forgiving
Focused Faith
Food



Exercise: Character, not circumstance

Check with your doctor if necessary before performing this or any other physical exercise in this book.

When conditions seem to be difficult, people often implode, give up and return to familiar comfort no matter how uncomfortable. A conditioned body and mind can be forged through dedicated practice.

If you are in better physical shape, use only one forearm to balance yourself or lift one leg at a time, alternating every 30 seconds for five minutes.

You are going to perform a plank and hold it for a set amount of time.

Lie face-down on a clear floor. Position yourself as if you are going to do a pushup. Place your forearms underneath your chest with your palms facing down. Tuck your toes. Push up

onto your forearms. Do not execute a pushup. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Hold your head up and look straight ahead. Stay in this plank position.

On the first day, hold this position for one minute. Do this three times every day for seven days.

This exercise, like so many others, is a method of building strong character through difficult circumstance. Remember here also what Kareem Abdul-Jabbar tells us about centering yourself. You are going to hear all kinds of bullshit racing back and forth through your mind. You are going to see images, hear voices and come up with every reason to abandon this and other exercises. Gather yourself. Center Yourself. Commit yourself. There are two “yous” at work here. There is the “lower” you who might always seek an easy way out. There is a “higher” you that can establish whatever order he desires. Listen to

“If you can think about a situation, you can deal with it. The big struggle is to keep your head clear enough to think about it.”

Richard Pryor

It's your world

Gil-Scott Heron

"The ground beneath my feet I know was made for me. There is no any one place where I belong. My spirit's meant to be free and soon now everyone will see life was made for us to be what we wanna be. And it's your world"

Few Black men have impacted my life like poet, musician and singer Gil Scott-Heron. Long before I could make any sense of the songs "Home Is Where The Hatred Is," "Johannesburg" or "The Bottle," his deep, raspy, voice served as a hypnotic channel through which his liberating lyrics settled subliminally into my impressionable young mind. His seeds were planted deeply in my mind, creating precious protective neurons, repeating themselves at will and on-demand over the course of difficult decades.

Interestingly enough, Gil Scott-Heron comes from a rich collection of my father's 70's "Soul" and jazz music. Our household chaos, notwithstanding, there was always incredible music rotating on slick, black vinyl under dust-filled needles. Donald Byrd, Stevie Wonder, War, Earth, Wind and Fire and Roberta Flack were the consistent sounds of music in our home no matter what the state of our comfort.

Gil Scott-Heron was of particular interest to me as I could hear both resistance and promise in his soulful cries. His song "It's Your World," presented a crucial, existential conflict for my consideration.

"It's your world," he told me.

At first, I thought he was mocking me. I thought he was laughing at me. I thought he knew what I was going through and was saying "this is it, little nigga. Accept it."

In fact he was imploring me take flight and own my world. He was saying "don't be fooled by the foolishness and lies. You're free, young Brother."

If you believe it. You're free. It's your world.

***My spirit's meant
to be free.***

Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson



Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter is available for lectures, workshops and panel discussions. Contact him at ulyssesbutchslaughter.com and ubslive.com.

***"Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow,
not some more convenient season. It is
today that our best work can be done and
not some future day or future year."***

W.E.B. DuBois



Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men

Forgive

The new mantra and practice for Black Men
by

Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter

"Songs have provided me keys to life. Out of relative obscurity, a coherent personal mission has been defined and pursued. There have been messages sent to me from the grassroots. And a radical redistribution of spirit has opened the door to a priceless and life-sustaining commodity called forgiving."

From the book *Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men* by Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter.

Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men is a call to remembering, redefining and recommitting to the higher possibilities of Black Manhood. A practical tool for self-exploration, *Forgive* challenges individual Black Men to reassess the unique messages and circumstances of their lives and convert pain into power for the benefit of collective human advancement.

Though he never came face to face with many of his forgiveness teachers, Mr. Slaughter credits their songs, lectures and books with providing the nutrients necessary to forgive his father for killing his mother. His featured forgiveness teachers include Stevie Wonder, Gil-Scott Heron, MLK, Jr. and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Forgive: the new mantra and practice for Black Men is an excellent everyday tool for Black Men interested in moving through the world with power and purpose.

with personal reflections on:

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar **James Baldwin**

Reginald Lewis **Marvin Gaye**

Dr. Edward Robinson Carter G. Woodson

Muhammad Ali Gil-Scott Heron **Brian Jackson**

Richard Pryor **Elijah Muhammad** Allen Iverson

Dwight Tribble Langston Hughes **Arthur Ashe**

George Washington Carver Eric K. Grimes

Teddy Pendergrass **Malcolm X** Jesus **Del Jones**

James Brown Clarence Joseph Long

Les Brown Khalil Gibran Huey P. **Newton**

Ed Bradley **Stokley Carmichael** MLK, Jr

Fred Hampton Booker T. Washington

Richard Whiten Notorious **BIG Miles Davis**

Carter G. Woodson WEB DuBois

Amos Wilson Stevie Wonder **Frantz Fanon**

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