

Suffering During the Presidency of A Brotha

By: Cherishe A. Cumma

Historically people of African descent were considered subhuman, and in the year 2016 we are still seen as unworthy. Brothas and Sistas, are still being unjustifiably murdered, while their communities are being destroyed in the process. The cultural connections and respectability which once shaped our daily lives are slowly becoming nonexistent. Popular culture has over taken the historical artifacts of the African American community and turned into something “new.” In doing so, people of African descent are slowly losing their identity because their heritage is being stripped away from them. In this day and age, African American culture is idolized, while African American people are still looked down upon as the inferior race. People of African descent are often put in the difficult position of accepting that their culture is heavily regarded, while their lives are not. In this essay I would like to discuss what it means to suffer during the presidency of a Brotha. Throughout this essay you will see me use the terms “Brotha” and “Sista” (spelt with an “a” instead of and “er”) when referring to people of African descent. The words Brotha and Sista, are terms of endearment used amongst people of the African American community to show love for one another. Our current President, Barrack Obama is the first leader of the United States that I could identify with physically, due to his ethnic background, and mentally because of his views and that’s why I called him a Brotha. During his presidency, which has spanned from 2009 to 2016, the African American community has been under constant attack. The issues that we are facing are effecting the world as a whole, and it will take serious reparations to finally end this prolonged suffering that people of African Descent face daily.

People of African descent are still facing real external racial issues that are heavily impacting our communities. As a race we have been very progressive academically, politically and in various other fields, but it seems our suffering continues to become more predominant. For the past 8 years while our country was led by a Brotha, President Barack Obama, people of African descent have continued to advance themselves to amazing heights. However, the unjust treatment and mass execution of young Brothas have continued to rise, making my peoples success bittersweet, as our constant suffering finds a way to diminish our joy. In the year 2016, my people are still trying to overcome the internal and external obstacles that are hindering us from reaching our true potential, as well as causing us a great amount suffering.

The term suffering can be defined as “the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship.”

However, I feel as though my people have endured a level of pain, distress and hardship that is too deep to just be called suffering. Suffering is our daily lives, because we have become so immune to being disrespected, disregarded, and discussed as though we are not worthy of the lives we were given.

People of African descent live a day to day struggle that is inflicted on us by the people that consider themselves superior to us. We have lived a life of unjust treatment since the days that we were taken from our homeland and used as tools of pleasure. Our bodies were ridiculed, and called abnormal because of our full lips, thick hips, and bountiful posteriors. However, women of other races are continuously altering their bodies surgically in order to mirror the curvaceous bodies of African women. In this way women of African descent are suffering because the beautiful bodies that are naturally theirs, are over looked while woman of other races, who have paid for the motherland curves, are praised for their “beautiful” bodies.

The struggle that woman of African Descent face daily reminds me of a quote from Spike Lee's film "Bamboozled." The character who played a comedian said, "Everybody wants to be black but no one wants to be black." This quote resonated with me, because it is basically saying that my peoples suffering comes from the immutable fact, that we are still considered to be beneath the same people that are so desperate to adapt our culture whether it be our music, our food, our hairstyles, and our essence. Our whole life consists of struggling to become successful, while constantly having to work harder than other races to not just be the best but the best of the best. Our plight is that people of other races want to adapt my people's culture, but not many people want to show appreciation, give credit and identify with people of African descent.

With all the pressure that comes with being a person of African descent, whether it be changing our whole personality to be considered for a job, or processing our hair so that it's deemed "acceptable in the workplace", we also have to make sure that we are on our best behavior so that we can preserve our lives on an everyday basis. Suffering is just the tip of the iceberg for my people, but during the last two elections suffering has become even more natural. What I mean by natural is it has become common, painfully common to wake up in the morning and see headline that another Brotha has been unlawfully killed. I have become so immune to this information that although I'm enraged by it I know deep in my heart that there is a possibility that the murderer may not held accountable for his/her actions. The repetition of this cycle where Brothas are killed, then their families are paid off, and their killers walk free, has made me so numb that suffering has become common. African American men are subjected to harsher and radical treatment based solely on the color of their skin, and the negative connotations that are associated with people of African Descent. According to "The Mapping Police Violence" a website which sources information directly from the U.S. Police Shooting Database, "African American people are killed

by police 5 times more than any other races". In 2015 alone "37 percent of unarmed people killed by the police were of African descent despite the fact that they make up only 13% of the U.S. population." I found this statistic to be extremely alarming because while African American people only make up a small portion of the population we make up a large amount of killings.

Young Brothas were also faced with unlawful, and racially biased Stop and Frisk. According to the racial justice Stop-and Frisk data, on the New York Civil Liberties Union website, African American men had the highest rate of Stop and Frisk incidents between 2002 and 2015. African American men were stopped at least 50 percent of the time, compared to other races. The statistics also state that about 80 percent of the people who were subjected to Stop and Frisk were actually innocent. These statistics go hand in hand with my point, that men of African descent face harsher treatment from authoritative figures, based upon the amount of melanin in their skin.

In the year 2016, the African American community still face unjust treatment, and the only reason this issue is being acknowledged, is because of the constant documentation of the brutal and racist encounters found on social media. People of African descent do not deserve this immoral treatment. People of African Descent are hardworking persistent people who have struggled to break down the barriers and stigmas placed on our race. We have people of African Descent who hold positions in all capacities such as Public Advocates, Mayors, Senators, Congressmen/Congress woman, Council members, Assembly members, Borough Presidents, Surgeon generals, Secretary of state, four star generals, Supreme Court justices and most importantly we have a President who is a MAN of African Descent. After all that we have achieved as a people, we are still dealing with the same adversities as in the early days of slavery. Each and every day a person of African descent risks losing their lives just because of the color of their skin.

After all the lives that have been lost, and all the hate that has been cultivated in our hearts, how can we come together and live in peace? To this question, I would say we as people must first learn to become more unified. There is so much hate in the world and it seems to be becoming more predominant since we have elected a Brotha into office. So many crimes have been committed against people in the African American community, and it seems like these unlawful killings are becoming a reoccurring trend. In the past few years the death toll has risen in our community, which is causing an uproar within the younger generation. People have been affected by all the continuous malicious killings, and they are protesting. These protests are necessary in order to shine light on the major issues of racism that are running rampant not only in the United States of America, but THE WORLD. However these killings will not stop until people are no longer judged by the amount of melanin in their skin, or the neighborhood they come from, or by their shape and stature. Until people finally come to the realization that we are all human beings, nothing will change. We all require the same basic necessities to live whether it be food, water, clothing and shelter. Each and every one of us breathes the same air, and requires sleep to function effectively. Being that all people have the same basic similarities and needs, why is it that some lives have more value than others? If we were all created equal, then why are some people treated differently than others?

In conclusion, I would like to restate that suffering is, has been, and always will be a natural part of the life of my people. We have dealt with so much trauma that we are forced to live our everyday lives expecting the worse at all times. To be a person of African Descent during the presidency of a Brotha is not an easy lifestyle to live. Young Brothas live a life on edge because they are constantly targeted and mistreated by authoritative figures. Young Sistas are degraded

because of their natural beauty, which does not conform to mainstream standards. People of African descent are constantly facing adversities, which are increasing the constant state of suffering we endure daily. However, in order for reparations to start making changes in our communities, we must become united. During the presidency of President Barack Obama emotions have been on all-time high. The most predominant emotion that has filled the hearts of people of African descent, and other races is hate. With hate there cannot be any serious progression, and there will always be constant uproar within the communities of the oppressed. People must learn that unification and fighting against a cause can do more than hate. During the presidency of a Brotha a variety of impulses have been triggered in people of all races. Yes, there has been mass suffering during our current president's reign, but there has also been an extreme movement of unification. I believe that our collective suffering is fueling a change in perspective. People are seeing what is happening in their community and they are coming together. This process of becoming one body is encouraging a change of heart, a change of mind, and a change of spirit. Although there have been so many horrific occurrences in the past few years, we are growing together, and slowly changing.