The Black Paper

An Urbanized Music Opinion Piece

Africa's children are under attack all over the world, and everyone knows it. Discrimination against Black people is rampant, sanctioned, and normalized. Why are African descendants so disrespected and marginalized? It's 2025, and we still struggle, fight, and march for our humanity everywhere we live. The cultural genocide of Africans has been so insidious that many of us don't even recognize how traumatized we are. The Human Rights Office of the U.N. says, "Systemic racism persists partly due to a failure to fully reckon with the legacies of enslavement, the trade in enslaved Africans, and colonialism," reinforced through "cycles of structural discrimination and inequalities that have lasted for generations."

No wonder it's so hard for us to move forward. Epigenetic research even confirms that the effects of trauma are passed down to children through cell division, proving that trauma an ancestor experienced can impact the well-being of every subsequent descendant. DNA remembers everything, which explains a lot about the baggage we carry.

It also explains a lot about our resilience despite the atrocities of slavery. Our ancestors endured displacement, disconnection, and the violent disruption of their history and legacy. We are now at a state of being so far removed from our authentic selves, we are barely recognizable as African people. We've got the remedy to push beyond this oppressive state, and we don't need any help accessing it. It's embedded within us—in our DNA! Individually and collectively.

It's a simple theory: the remedy for displacement, disconnection, and disruption is replacement, reconnection, and reunification. African people carry a rich cultural encoding—a power to heal and renew not only ourselves but others.

So, instead of solely fighting injustices by pushing for equity within institutions that begrudgingly offer tokenized slices of perceived opportunity, let's implement a radical new approach—one that harnesses our collective spirit as Africa's children with a force so powerful there can be no ambiguity in our determination to rise. It's time to establish new pathways for cultural restoration, independently of non-African involvement. It's time for descendants of Africa to develop our own systems of empowerment that bypass Western approval and draw from something more profound, innate, and deeply rooted.

The weight of historic tragedies has shaped who we are, how we view ourselves, and how others perceive us. But there are ways to change the trajectory and redirect our future by tapping into what makes us *us*. We must reclaim our cultural identity by honoring ancestral practices and turning our energies inward to affirm our identity as African people.

By reconnecting to who we are, we can heal the pain of separation and restore our lost identity—an identity taken away to weaken us so we could be exploited. That time has come to an end. We already have the tools to do the work.

Every day, often unknowingly, we activate a powerful cultural core. We don't even know we're doing it when we hug, gather to share stories, celebrate, or worship. All of those acts honor our deeply spiritual ancestors. Whenever rhythm moves us to dance, we're answering a cultural call. Our footwork, hip movements, arm waves, and chants are expressions of an unbroken identity. These vibrations are rooted in Africa. Even our palates carry the memory of ancestral foods—recipes across the diaspora differentiated only by locally available ingredients. Our ancestral practices still exist within us; we just don't recognize them. But they are everywhere! Reflected in the way we move, speak, dress, dance, eat, and commune. The way we gather for cookouts, block parties, and festivals is African! We are attune, compassionate, and warm people. We are peaceful, and at our core, we seek harmony and spiritual balance.

Many times throughout history, African people have been victimized by aggressors who sought only to exploit our bodies, resources, and culture. It's time to reclaim all that has been taken, reveal what's been hidden, and reestablish the connection to our roots, like our ancestors hoped we would. For Africans to get relief, we don't have to force people and institutions to let us in, but go inward—to strengthen our cultural core and raise the collective vibration of all Africa's children. The reverberation will be resounding. We have given the world everything—now it's time to reclaim the lost honor of our ancestors

If a baby is ripped from its mother's arms and forced into slavery, should their grandchildren no longer claim their identity? Just because they don't speak the same language, don't they still share DNA with their biological family? Does their lineage now begin with enslavement? It does NOT!

The process of reconnecting doesn't have to be weird or uncomfortable. You're likely already doing it—but intention is critical. It's a healing process.

As an artist, for me, Hip-Hop is one such path. And I don't just mean "hip hop," the music genre—I mean *Hip Hop*, the culture. Hip Hop is one of my generation's strongest connections to our ancestors' artistic experiences. It taps into unbroken lineages of music, storytelling, worship, community, and values.

It carries the legacy of enslaved Africans in the diaspora and is a testament to the resilience that survived the Middle Passage. In Hip Hop, emcees narrate, preserve, and document history, weaving double entendre over polyrhythms inherited from our ancestors while the deejay provides the drum beats that connect B-Boys & B-Girls to the heartbeat of the earth. In cyphers, we gather to create inclusive, communal spaces grounded in love, peace, and unity. I'm not speaking about the consumerized product the media peddles—I'm speaking of a culture created by Africa's children as a remedy for our trauma.

Born from oppression, we upcycled the sounds of funk, R&B, blues, jazz, and gospel, and changed the world with a potent tool for reflection. Kool Herc's break was both a genesis and an intersection. So whenever I write a rhyme, rock a mic, throw a show, or sample a funk loop, it's in celebration of all that my ancestors did to make sure I survived. And I know they are pleased.

I know people who've repatriated to Africa because, for them, going back home was vital to healing. Many have left organized religions for traditional systems to reclaim their ancestral heritage. Some changed their government names and stopped using hair relaxers. It's different for everyone. The one thing that's consistent is we don't need anyone's permission to reclaim what was stolen from us. To heal our people, we must remember who we are and what we are capable of.

This is a call-to-action for all of Africa's children, especially in diaspora. I implore you to fiercely engage in practices that affirm and strengthen your cultural core, not just reclaiming connection to ancestors, but to one another. We need this now more than ever! Though we may be divided by colonized languages, we are one African family spread across the globe.

Our time is NOW. Let's reconnect!

Our ancestors have waited long enough.