

# INTRODUCTION

In today's world being uninformed can be very costly. You cannot afford to be without proper information. Knowledge is imperative for your survival. I am emphasizing increasing your knowledge and pressing forward in your educational pursuits after seeing firsthand throughout my life what can be the end result when you do not possess it. I believe that placing a lot of focus on education can have a direct positive effect on the quality of your life and the life of your family. I use the word education many times throughout this book, but I do not use it to exclusively mean formal university education in every instance. My hope is that you will increase your knowledge in any avenue available to you. This may mean night classes after you get off from work or visiting your local bookstore and picking up books on the subjects that interest you. It may mean being personally mentored by someone that is willing to teach you. Whatever source is available to you, please use it to its fullest.

Just living and getting up in the morning to collect a paycheck is not enough if you really want to live the life that you have always wanted to live. The thing that amazes me is that many of us know in our hearts that we are not living out our dreams and we know that our jobs are not going to take us there but we continue on the same path anyway. It is time to make an active effort to change our situation. You cannot expect anyone to act on your behalf. You cannot expect anyone to change your life for you.

What do you want out of life? If you ask ten different people, you will likely get ten different answers. There is nothing wrong with that, because we are all looking for something different. The first step in obtaining a lot of things that you want out of life is increasing your knowledge. Do you want a better career than you currently have? This may come after an increase in knowledge. Do you want to make more money? Many times this will require that you increase your knowledge in certain areas. Do you want to stop your sink from leaking? You are going to have to pay someone to fix it or you are going to have to obtain knowledge in that area if you do not already possess it.

We have all heard the statements, 'KNOWLEDGE IS the KEY' or KNOWLEDGE IS POWER'. Many times in the black community we complain about our circumstances. Knowledge and education can change many of these circumstances.

We are living in tremendous times in American history. Information and technology has us moving at such rapid rates. I believe that we are living in a very special time especially for black Americans. I believe that we are afforded opportunities today like no other time in recent history. My grandfather was not in a position to experience what I am currently experiencing. The opportunity to become a surgeon was not available to him. Today a young black person from the projects can one day become a multimillionaire. This country is like no other place on the planet, where an idea alone can become a nationwide movement. Just a thought alone can make you rich. Time after time we hear stories of real life Cinderella's that were downtrodden in their youth and later grew to become something great.

I believe that we must take advantage of these amazing opportunities available to us. My hope is that our youth use education as the number one weapon in their attempt to achieve success. With knowledge and education many barriers can be broken. With knowledge and education a life in the projects can be left

behind. With knowledge and education financial struggles can be eliminated. Knowledge and education can provide you with a different and more fulfilling life.

Today, like never before, we see so many black success stories. We see black judges and lawyers. We see black CEO's of successful companies. In the music industry we have young blacks that control millions of dollars through their corporations. These examples are encouraging but still too few of us are enjoying this success in our own households. To many of us, it is just a pleasant story but not something that we are living ourselves. Too many of us are being left out of the richness that this world has to offer simply because we have not used one of the greatest weapons that God has given us, our brain.

Our brain is one of our greatest assets. By strengthening our brains we can overcome many of the uneven scenarios that we may have been born into. We may not have been born in a nice neighborhood, but a good education can move us out of these neighborhoods or give us the tools to help change these neighborhoods. We may be making minimum wage now, but an education can provide a significant increase in our income. Our families may not have any money to leave to us as an inheritance, but we can change that situation for our children.

Education can literally change your world. It can make a new world for you. As blacks we are very quick to complain about our circumstances, but in my experience many of us are very slow to make changes to our circumstances. If there is a segment of life that you feel that you are missing out on then you need to increase your knowledge in that area.

You do not have to live a defeated life. The necessary tools for success are within you, but the problem is that they must be cultivated and nurtured. Your talents must be brought out of you. The keys to your success are not going to come from the television or be found at the ballgame. Neither of these things are evil, but if you are so unhappy with your lot in life then why aren't more of your efforts aimed in areas that can change this?

Education and knowledge can take you to a life that your parents and grandparents were never able to enjoy. It can put you in a position to be of assistance to others. It can put you in a position to leave a legacy for your children. It will allow you to be an example to the confused ones among us.

Many of our youth do not see a future for themselves. They don't see a future that is any better than their current circumstances. Many of us have futures that are determined by our physical limitations. When the physical takes us as far as we can go, we give up and it is the end of the road for us. The day that we realize that we really can't sing very well, our future is over. The day that we realize that we really aren't the athlete that we thought we were, our future is over. If our physical prowess can't get us there then we aren't allowed to go. If I continue to believe that the only reason why we are not getting ahead is because we are black, then we will never make it. We have a major say as to what is in our future.

Our potential and our future is limitless. How can we be limitless if we are physically limited? It is because our mental abilities are limitless. One of our greatest assets that God has given us goes untapped, and that is our minds. Knowledge and education opens doors to a different world than we are currently experiencing. When I speak of education I do not just mean university education. I believe that university education is very important, but the most successful people are not always the people with the most degrees. Bill Gates is one of the richest men in the world and he did not finish college.

I wrote this book because I have come across too many of our black youth that have not tapped into the almost limitless potential God has invested in them. Over the past few years I have seen so much wasted talent come through the emergency rooms of Detroit Hospitals that it is staggering. Our children are no less gifted and no less talented than any other children. Since this is the case, then why aren't more of them going on to greatness? Why are the jails bursting open with black men?

Our children do not want any less out of life than other children. They, like everyone else want to live in a nice home, drive a nice automobile and have money to spend. This is part of the American dream.

Many of our young men believe that the only way that they will obtain success is on a sports field. Some of our young ladies believe that the only way that they will obtain it is to marry a successful man. This does not have to be the case. One of our greatest assets is sitting right between our ears and it goes underutilized.

It saddens my heart when I ask a fifteen year old kid from Detroit about his plans after high school and he gives me a blank stare like he doesn't have a clue as to what I am talking about. Many of our youth have no plans, they are just living life and will take things as they come. They give me this blank stare because they never have even considered college as an option. They don't even believe that it is there to benefit them. I know exactly how they feel because until I was eighteen years old, I never thought that college was a possibility for me either. I never planned on going because no one told me that it was an option for me. No one explained to me how obtaining an education could expose me to a better life than I had grown accustomed to seeing in my old neighborhood. Because I never saw anyone in that position, it was difficult for me to see myself in that kind of position.

In my neighborhood we didn't have discussions about increasing our knowledge and obtaining financial independence. The only people that appeared to be somewhat independent and financially well-off were the drug dealers.

Education can get you many of the things that you desire out of life. I believe that you have a better chance of getting it through education than any other method. There isn't anything wrong with sports. If you have that level of skill, maximize it to your fullest potential. I wish that I was that gifted. For the rest of us who do not have that option, we are left to use whatever else God has given us to make a living.

For some reason, many of our youth overlook education as a way out of the ghetto. This is a sad mistake that ends up costing them over and over again. Education is one of the surest tickets out of the ghetto. It is much safer than selling drugs, I can promise you that. Since most of us cannot dunk a basketball, we should stick to education as our ticket out.

Our children have become fascinated with what is shown on the television and the fairytale lives of the athletes/entertainers. They show their homes and enormous salaries and the fantastic plays that they make. What the television does not tell these children is that they have a better chance of becoming a surgeon than becoming Shaquille O'Neal. Only about 400 men play in the NBA each season. There are hundreds of thousands of doctors in the United States.

They don't tell these children how much being born with a particular body plays into becoming a professional athlete. I am five feet ten inches tall. No matter how often I practice basketball, I will never be six and a half to seven feet tall, which is the height of many NBA players. I was not born with a lot of speed and it is not difficult to outrun me. But if I study hard, I can change my circumstances. Using our minds makes the playing field more equal and it overcomes our inability to dunk a basketball.

Where we start off in life is not where we must end up. Use the tools available to you and maximize them to your potential. The following chapters are simple and straightforward. Keep an open mind and read them very carefully.

I have used the word student in the title of the book to emphasize the point that we should be in a learning mode at all times. Do not assume that student is only for kids. This book is for anyone that wants more out of life. Successful people are lifelong learners. They never stop being students.