

RASHAKI MASKANI PERSPECTIVE

“COSTUME PEOPLE”

I have a saying, “Man (Humans) is not far from the cave”. I say this because when examining the state of human interaction, dogmatic behavior dominates. Currently, so called world powers have enormous impact on how most people live. Examine the effect of the countries who dominate the oil industry. They establish a power conglomerate that benefits a few individuals at the expense of human lives and climate catastrophe, with very little thought about human survival on earth. They also inflict military might on any vulnerable country with rich natural resources who refuse to abide by what they desire. Many heads of states that have gone against the interests of powerful governments became victims by losing their lives and their countries became dismantled, like Iraq, Libya, etc. just to name a few. These controlling mentalities dominate our present everyday world. The question is, can man live harmoniously? Do people have the capability to become reasonable? I would say yes because I know I have the ability and I’ve interacted with others who are similar, then it’s possible. But the realities of myself and others like me aren’t magnified to the point of impactful visibility. Simply put man should be “Civil Entities”.

Currently, many government establishments have monetary systems that cater to small groups of individuals that have tremendous wealth, and the majority of the populations have minimal means daily to survive. In other words, “the few have and the many have not”.

The world has become global in a sense primarily because of the capability of rapid travel and modern technology. We are able to interact more with other cultures more so than ever before, which exposes various life styles. When people are exposed to advertised popular culture that thrives on human emotion and instant sensation, the human based values they possess are usually compromised. From my perspective, human values are; food, clothing, shelter, positive interaction, justice, rational behavior, reasoning negotiation, body enhancing nutrition, conflict resolution and more of these same attributes. But I don’t advocate violent means to settle disputes; I know that humans have the mental capacity to reason.

The so called United States which I reside in is viewed as a world power which has a strong monetary value system. From my perspective, this system focuses only on wealth for few and victimizes not only the masses in the states but globally as well. When people are subjected to minimal life necessities, they are affected mentally. This causes people to neglect value systems that sustain healthy life styles.

A particular group of people in the United States in my opinion that has been directly affected are the subject of my perspective, “Black People” (a general term for people of color), “Costume People”. When dressing in a costume, you become something other than yourself, and it’s usually for a minimal amount of time. In the case of Black People, the costume they wear has been for generations. Here are some conditions of Black People; poverty, highly exploited, broken families, highly disproportionate incarceration rates, drug afflicted, ever present legal issues, law

enforcement targets, poor health habits, low education performance and success, the list can extend even further. Also through the slavery system, Black People were stripped of their entire culture, the de-humanization process, and as a result had to survive so they assimilated into a new culture which was not meant for them, but to be a "SLAVE" only. There was no plan for Blacks to aspire to be just like the slave owners. Black People had to survive; therefore they developed a culture that was very detrimental to their mental state that produced many unhealthy habits which exist to this very day. One, in my humble opinion is self-hatred. This is the result of constant slave master degradation and not being able to better themselves through education. Many Black People don't accept the way they look due to a false paradigm of beauty presented all over the earth, which is light skin, straight long hair, thin lips, small thin nose, and light colored eyes. In many Black households, including mine, the psychological effects of the constant bombarding of an image other than oneself becomes the target for most youths. Many of the children are raised to focus purely on changing the way they look for acceptance in a society that's not originally or currently designed for their benefit. Again when you are changing your appearance from an original state to another, you are assuming a costume, something other than yourself. Other ethnic groups may have similar issues in the US, but how do they compare, for certain, research will validate that Black people are in the worst condition.

Black people did not wake up one day and say, "I want to be in the worst condition of any other ethnic group on the Earth". With understanding, people know that years of careful strategic planning and hostile takeover has placed Black people in their current position, and yes Black people also contribute to their condition! No people should be in such a condition, which equates to Black people being who they currently are, which is, "Costume People".

When people spend a sufficient amount time changing their physical appearance to appear different than what they are the result is self-hatred, which I see many Black people do often. Many Black people will emulate unhealthy behaviors to assimilate into dominant culture for false advancement, which is an arguable point. False advancement defined is assimilated success into a culture not your own to carry out an agenda to benefit that culture and to the detriment of your own culture. A question can be posed, "To what extent do you lose self to the detriment of many? Examples, popular rich Black people, President Barack Obama, the highest office/position in the United States, great accomplishment, but how does it benefit the vast majority of Black people. Well let's look at the condition of Black people, as a whole. Have the conditions changed, I say no, "hands up don't shoot, I can't breathe". That's just a blip on the screen. JayZ and Beyoncé, Rapper/Business Owner/ Pop Stars, successful people, question, do you want young Black children to exploit their bodies for people to view them in a sexual manner, and paradigm a standard of beauty not their own, to constantly fall short of the attempt to be like her? Do young Black boys look at this couple and think that men should advocate exploiting their companion for monetary gain, without looking at women as wholesome people who give birth to us all? Michael Jackson, entertainer extraordinaire had a worldwide following second to none, very rich, and an excellent businessman. He transformed physically through numerous surgeries, and developed a drug habit which ended his life. He was accused of child molestation numerous

times, targeted by money hungry people who possessed the American value system, "Capitalize" through any means necessary. Again, this system will produce people to pursue money at any cost. Michael Jackson had some very good common human values, which were expressed through his music and deeds, but was a victim of a devalued environment, which focuses on greed, manipulation, and power. Exploited Athletes in the media are an excellent example of how Black people are victims of this society which places them in the category of "Costume People". Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson, two of the best running backs in the NFL, were perpetrators of violence towards loved ones. Why were they, I would say the behavior was learned through various means related to the society which they were raised in. First, through childhood punishments they received, which possibly are a byproduct of slave beatings. Second, constant exposure to violence practically everywhere in society, and last the game they play is constant hitting and tackling. They both were punished by a society that contributed heavily to their development but exploited them and now they are the victims. Lastly, Bill Cosby, famous actor/comedian, accused of numerous rapes by drugging. Cosby had an image that seems to be almost perfect in America. He at one time attempted to buy a television network, which means that his money was plentiful. But in America tragedy seems to prevail in many peoples lives, his son was murdered on the freeway, and now he's this serial rapist. Currently most of his television shows and endorsements were pulled from the networks and he was not convicted of any crime, "modern day lynching"! Also, if he is guilty of such despicable acts, how did he develop this sickness? I would say incest, early exposure of sex, or molestation, which could have happened from generation to generation, a byproduct of slavery, remember the Slave Master and his wife who chose and took any slave they desired. All of these popular people are victims of trying to fit in to something that's really not them; they wear the "Costume of an American", the so called person from the land of the free and the home of the brave.

In the U.S. there is a popular phrase, "making It", and usually a large number of Black people utter it because they are victims that come from impoverished communities. When you are poor, it's ideal and a life long goal to become financially independent. When the sole goal for success is financial, then any other necessary human attributes become secondary. If money is the value, the human becomes devalued. Example, when driving down the street or parking in a lot and I hear loud music coming from a car driven by a Black Female who is singing along and gesturing with the lyrics saying "I don't give a f**k", points to a person wearing a costume, because anybody in their correct persona would know that behavior is intolerable. This song is popular because I heard it numerous times before in public and on a high school campus. The person who sings this song is a victim of a society that allows filth to prosper monetarily to the detriment of society. Also, this artist may be viewed by the people who cater to his or her music as a person who "Made It" in America. Just think of the people who were exposed to this act and shared my thoughts of disrespect but not surprised because I know that individual is a victim of this society and she wears a costume that's multi-layered. Another example, a Black youth ceases the opportunity to sell drugs in his or her community and acquires financial stability, moves away and continues the business in the drug afflicted community. Could that also be viewed as "Making

It in America"? Yes, because all of the wealth acquired through the slave system was on the backs of the slave, so what's the difference of poor slaves and poor drug users. The costume the drug dealer wears is similar to the slave system leaders. Final example, some Black politicians aspire to be like White politicians and they are considered as people who "Made It", but many White politicians serve the interest of the U.S. which is dominance and control over the many for the benefit of the few wealthy people to the detriment of most poor people. The Black politicians are mostly showcased to give an illusion of this so called "Making It" out of the hood to this supposed good life. Question to those who considered that they "Made It"; you made it to what from where? I would say that most Black people who were born poor assumed a costume made it to a place not their own, and the result is a double edged sword. Negative struggle to a place of false secure negative struggle. Explanation, life is a constant struggle because everything requires effort, but the struggle could be positive or negative depending on the result of the action. Many Black people in the U.S. are born into an impoverished situation that's negative most of the time, and when they assimilate into supposedly affluent situations, they usually assume the personality of the dominant few who constantly benefit from the many poor. This is not how it should be, the few haves and the many have not. When pointing out achievement and accomplishment of goals is a good thing, how can our accomplishments benefit the whole of society? I heard Dr. Martin Luther King utter, "What affects a person directly affects all people indirectly". I think that's a very pertinent statement and it's critical to the concept of "Making It".

Concluding, I can go on and on about the costumes Black People dress in daily but I'll attempt to sum up this perspective and move to a place of never ending action. I mentioned earlier the phrase "multi-layered costume". This concept refers to the mental scars that Black people have from a worldwide assault by a group or system of people who dominate at all costs. Some may say the system of racism which focuses on royalism is the haves versus the have nots! The layers most Black People possess are self-hatred, ignorance of general right and wrong, carelessness, various detrimental addictions, lack of true role-models, constant negative images, constant exposure of violence, children parenting children, low self-esteem, and the list extends. How do these layers and costumes get removed? Proper education to start will begin the process, and exposure to true educators. For Black People Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X will start this process. There are more individuals who fall in line with these two but they will serve as the spark plug to incite interest about the greatness of self. Next, recognition of character flaws and addictions to begin the process of self-improvement. A person must continuously improve and maintain because like the cells of the body, they are always regenerating to stay vibrant and alive. Recognition of the need to improve and to identify bad habits is the key to change. When a drug addict thinks there's nothing wrong, and it's clear it is, then rehabilitation is impossible. Last, people are interdependent, meaning that we depend on each other to live and survive. We must use our human resources to stay mentally adept. A give and take interaction will satisfy us not me, "we mentality". If people valued people, selfishness would be minimal. These are a few thoughts on how to change our condition, which is the removal of the negative characteristics accumulated from an environment that's primitive and incorrect. For the costume people (Black

People assimilated in America), slave mentality must be removed and the costume will dismantle layer by layer.