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on issues affecting African Americans
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**My Annual Graduation Message
Worrill's World**

By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill
BlackCommentator.com Columnist

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Once again, I am sharing my annual graduation speech in hopes that it will help African people in America understand the real meaning of these rites of passage for thousands of our young people who will be participating in commencement exercises affirming their graduation from elementary, middle school, high school, and college in the next few weeks.

Your life has just begun today brothers and sisters. This is probably one of the most important days in your life as you make this transition, this rite of passage in moving toward another stage in your development as young Africans in America.

I'd like to congratulate your teachers, parents, guardians, and extended family members who are with you today and who have supported you in reaching this critical stage of your life at this critical hour in history.

I want to have a brief but serious talk with you today brothers and sisters. It has been predicted that within the 21st century, if current trends continue, 70% of African men in America between the ages of 16 and 28 will be either in jail or addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Increasingly, this same trend is occurring with African females in America. One of the purposes of our educational pursuits is to turn this devastating trend around.

What does all this mean today as you graduate from this educational institution that professes to be dedicated to the academic and cultural development of young people like you? As young Black people, or Africans in America, about to enter a new stage in life, let me define what being Black and African really means.

First, it is color - your African ancestry.

Second, it is culture: practicing a lifestyle that recognizes the importance of our African and African in American heritage and traditions. I am speaking of an African culture that is geared to the values that will facilitate the present and future development of our people.

Third, it is consciousness. We should always be conscious of our strength, beauty, and potential as African people. In this connection, we should always interpret all situations from the standpoint of the greatest good for the greatest number of Africans in the world. This is called the African principle.

Fourth and finally, Black or being African means commitment. It means a willingness to work tirelessly in the interests of African people and all oppressed humanity.

So it is today that I am challenging you to continue on the path of becoming independent African people who are not dependent on others outside of our communities for the things we can do for ourselves.

I am challenging you as you make this rite of passage to prepare yourselves to become committed to the struggle for the just and common cause for the liberation and redemption of African people worldwide.

This dedication to the common cause goes beyond the resources of one generation. It means we must always learn from previous generations. We must always learn from the wisdom of our ancestors using this knowledge as a way of seeking and struggling for a better way of life for African people based on goals and objectives in own best interests.

In other words, we must stop killing each other over bruised egos, over material items and drugs that other people manufacture and bring into our communities. ***We must stop the killing!***

We must seek to prepare the generations to come to develop the skills and resources for making our ultimate freedom and liberation a reality. As Malcolm X always said, "education is the passport to freedom."

As the late, renowned, African in American educator, psychologist and historian, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III writes in *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, "We Africans... have not viewed our problems holistically. After years of living under conditions of extreme oppression, we have settled for limited definitions of our problem."

Dr. Hilliard explains; "A classic example may be taken from the period of the Civil Rights Movement. The evil and gross injustice of slavery and segregation violated the civil rights of African people and had to be addressed. However, the necessary task of fighting for civil rights was insufficient to allow for the healing of a people. Our healing requires a greater conceptual frame than that provided by civil rights."

Dr. Hilliard continues with this insight: "First we must see ourselves as an African people, or we will be unable to develop this critical frame. Second, we must understand not only the role that white supremacy has played in our subjugation, but also the role that we ourselves have played by not practicing self determination in our struggle to counter the MAAFA (this is a KiSwahili term that means disaster or as Marimba Ani has conceptualized it to mean the African holocaust of Eurasian enslavement / colonialism)."

Remember parents, teachers, and students - as our esteemed ancestor Dr. John Henrik Clarke repeatedly warned, "Powerful people never teach powerless people how to take power from them. Education is one of the most sensitive arenas in the life of a people. Its role is to be honest and true and to tell people where they have been and what they are." Most importantly, Dr. Clarke points out that the role of education and history is to "tell a people where they still must go.

This is a great day for you who have make this step in your rite of passage and transition. We congratulate you in the name of all of our ancestors and send you forward to the next stage of your development in the cycle of life.

A Luta Continua - the struggle continues and we will conquer without a doubt. Hotep (peace)!


BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Conrad W. Worrill, PhD, is the National Chairman of the National Black United Front ([NBUF](#)). [Click here](#) to contact Dr. Worrill.

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