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BLACK
C o m m e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

June 18, 2009 - Issue 329

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**It Takes All Kinds: A Father's Day Story
Unapologetically Young, Black and Female
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In 1995, Oakland, California, a young man helping a fellow church friend found himself the father of a 4 month old. This happened when the mother, who at the time had three small children, simply couldn't afford to take care of them all. What started out as helping her on the weekends with the kids, eventually ended up with the young woman asking her friend if he'd take one of the sons and raise him.

That was 14 years, 8 months ago and today, her son is 14, living in Los Angeles, holding down a 3.4 grade point average in the 9th grade. An active Boy Scout, his hobbies include baseball, participating in his school's student government, community service with the homeless, and joining the Big Brother Little Brother mentoring program.

By all accounts, he's a role model student headed down the right path with a bright future ahead of him. A future that was uncertain when he was born and in the care of a mother who couldn't properly provide for him or his siblings.

In 2005, the oldest child of the mother came to live in Los Angeles with his biological younger brother. After witnessing the murder of his best friend in Oakland, he himself was headed down an all too familiar path of young men living in the inner city. His grades were average, he had no ambition, and was an angry young man. Angry at life, angry at his mother, angry at the world.

On Friday, this same young man will be graduating from a public local high school with a 4.0 grade point average and is headed to an Ivy League University. At 17, he will double major in English and Psychology. Along his way, he directed his anger into

developing skills and hobbies which include wrestling, writing, filmmaking, football, and getting involved in his school's greenhouse project.

Both brothers easily could have become statistics in California's foster system had it not been for the young man, who at 25 and with no kids of his own, decided he was ready to be a father and stepped in to help raise these boys.

What kind of man changes his entire life to care for children who aren't even his own?

A Black male Republican, who formerly served as a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Army, made Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America (and is currently still active as a Troop Leader), and still manages to devote countless hours to community service in which he has successfully gotten his children involved.

In 1995, he wasn't wealthy, not even rich. He was a hotel manager at the time he started caring for his youngest son. He eventually moved to Los Angeles where he continued his education including graduating from law school, all while raising two boys and working full time. But he did have a little help along the way. Although he wasn't married, he was in a committed relationship that he's still in today, 15 years later. So the decision to take on raising two sons wasn't his alone to make, but one that was championed and fully supported by his partner.

To be fair, it hasn't been all fun and games for this family over the past 15 years. Anyone raising teenage boys can tell you that you earn your stripes and those gray hairs from ages 13 to 18. But through it all and working full time, they seldom missed a parent teacher conference, Back to School Night, Open House, or any other meeting requiring parents' input from kindergarten on up. And look what they have to show for it, one high school grade on his way to college with a full scholarship and another on the way in just a few years.

And if you haven't guessed by now, these two young boys were raised by two men, *two Black gay men*. Two men who I admire and respect for doing something that so many of their heterosexual brothers take for granted and have altogether forsaken.

While nothing would please me more than to print the names of my best friend, his partner, and their sons, for obvious reasons, I can't. But hopefully, reading true stories like this of Black gay families that exist throughout Los Angeles, will help to enlighten some of you about what's really important in life. As I said earlier, these two Black boys could have easily ended up in an overloaded foster care system, gang, prison, or worse - dead. But instead, thanks to the hearts of two Black gay men, these two brothers are both looking at bright futures. This family should be celebrated, not forced to live out their accomplishments anonymously on the pages of a newspaper for fear of a backlash.

In closing, Happy Father's Day, to all the fathers who took on the responsibility of fatherhood, whether they are biological, adopted, play, gay, or heterosexual fathers. A special shout out to all my mothers who hold down both roles in the household be they lesbian moms or single moms. Shout outs to some men in the community who I think are shining examples of being a Black father, [Councilman Mike Gipson in Carson](#) and my boys filmmaker [Gregory Everett](#) and [Alex Alonso](#). This Father's Day is for you and you and you. And a special Happy Father's Day to the men in my life who have looked

after my well-being and helped to raise me - my father, my grandfathers, Ayuko Babu, Mr. Mervyn Dymally and Dr. Kenneth Orduna. Thank you.


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The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, *Jasmyne Cannick*, is a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, and politics as it relates to the African-American community. Her work has been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Daily News*, and *Ebony Magazine*. A regular contributor to NPR, she was chosen as one *Essence Magazine's* 25 Women Shaping the World. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Cannick.

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