

INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRESENT IS A RESULT  
OF COMMITMENT TO THE PAST AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

My uncompromising dogits determination of the hour is a result of my commitment to the past and my equally dogit hopes for the future. let me explain that statement as best I can. The present foundation we stand on to day was at one time our hopes for the future. In June 1950, fourty one years ago, when I finished college, we didn't have the legal foundation, we stand on today, as a legitimate means for participating in the american economey and cultural life style. In fact 41 year ago we did even realize that we needed the legal foundation we have since created as a means of participating in this society, contributing to its economey, enjoying the fruits of our labor.

We, the African Americans of my generation, thought that the fact that we a sacrafice our well being, our lives if need be to defend this country against the most heathen, devilish, tironet the world had ever known, a greatful nations would remove all barriers to our full citizenship and greaciously greet us into the mainstream of the national life style.

In fact, our faith in the constitution, the democrating democracy, and free enterprise capitalism that it fostered was such that all we had to do was use our GI Bill of rights priveledges, educate, train and develop our selfs, become valuable human assets, priceless human capital, and certainly america if not the world would be our orister. Nothing, absolutly nothing could have been further from the truth.

We came home, and by 1960 close to a half million, of the

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three million African American troops that fought and died in WWII and the Korean Conflict, came home and enrolled in trade, and technical institutes, business schools and four year institutes of higher learning, got their diplomas, certificates of completion, associate degrees, Bachelor, masters, and Doctors degrees only to discover that the doors to the system closed, shut tight, lock, stock, and barrow. that the only thing that had changed was us. By that I mean our capacity, our expectations, and our behavior had changed but the country expectations hadn't. As far as our participating in mainstream america was concerned, the order of the day was, business as usual. The attitude was dedication to the country and degrees and american values not with standing, they go no further. The economy is full of Nigger Jobs, stoop labor, grunt labor, and menial task, and the can have as many of those as any one person can handle at a time. But that's it. They may be ready for a higher level of involvement and an enhanced quality of live but white America is ready for them to have it, and white America is controle. End of story? Not quite, not by a long shot. That attitude simply provided a sence of purpose, a reason for being, a national mission, goals and objectives for my generation. We realized while we were still in college that our hopes and expecations just be frustrated, might be off target, might be a bit pre-mature, might burst forth in a still born state of being. And we began to prepare for battle while we were still working on our degrees.

I can't speak for conditions in the rest of the nation but can with respect for Kansas. There are not predominately, Black

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Institutions of Higher learning in Kansas. Although less than fully welcome, we were allowed to enroll, at any public or private college or university in the state. Therefore, realitively speaking, from the mid 40s to the mid 60s, the campuses of Kansas institutions of higher learning were loaded with African American Students.

During the specific period that I was in school, 1946 to 50, we frequently met to share our current experiences and hope for ourselves and our families for the imediate and long turn future. most of us were married and had families, wives, and children, concequently had to work to support to support them. The GI-BILL monthly stipen wasn't enough. Some worked part time and some worked full time. But we all noticed something in common. And that was while our white counter parts, were working at jobs that were related to their course of study, the only job we were offered and could get, were again the so-called " Nigger Job", elivator operators, janitors, street cleaners, yard boys, or dish washer and fry cooks in the food service industry, or ward attendants in the local hospital industry. If we were lucky and one of the white city fathers came took a liking to one, and came his resque one might end up with a entry level production jobs, in the packings house industry, at the Atchen Topeka and Santa Fae round house, or the Good Year Tire and Rubber Company Production facility. But you can rest assured if you were an African American, there were no white color, or simi-technical jobs to be had irrespective of one's college major. As a result, the closer we got to graduation the more anxious we over the

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prospect for the immediate and long term future.

#### Reality hit home

By the mid-50s, a five to eight years or so after most of us had graduated, the reality we had expected and became alert for became a fact of life. Of the several thousand African Americans that had finished college in Kansas, one could almost count the ones by name who had gotten professional and technical job compatible with their education and preparation. However, because of the above mentioned early warning system no one was surprised. The arrival of the anticipated reality simply helped us understand our plight, and stilled us if you will for what we had to do, to change things.