

Preface

Considering the genuine intentions of the founders of the United States, it is profoundly disheartening to witness polarization, discrimination, and inequality so prevalent in these modern times. And while the courage of a few with fierce determination to achieve our forefather's intended, righteous values has yielded measurable progress, our cultural norms have fallen short of the vision. In this era, when the entire United States population should be eagerly sharing congruent goals and working toward common worldly concerns like the preservation of our planet, our citizenry is still plagued by relentless divisiveness—a predicament that raises the questions: Why? What next?

Both Abraham Lincoln's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s lives were cut short way too soon. In each case, it seems, the work they started related to establishing the United States' foundational values was either significantly slowed or halted in the aftermath of their deaths. These slowdowns resulted from complacency and the willful capitulation of our citizens. Today, this level of inaction serves as the basis for the current polarized climate in which we find ourselves. For the last fifty years, I've witnessed racism, discrimination, inequality, and various degrees of calamity prevail. I've witnessed grown men, women, children, congressmen, senators, presidents, and people of all races simply stand down and drift into capitulation.

April 4, 2018—fifty years since Martin King was assassinated on that sad day. Sad because our nation is still running in place, fighting for the same social balance we once seemingly secured. And on that date of a significant milestone in United States history, we barely acknowledged (if at all) how King gave his life fighting for the future of a people and the future of our country. Here we are, more than 50 years since King's death and more than 150 years since Lincoln's death, fighting in different ways for the same freedom these iconic heroes once achieved. While it is arguable, we as a people in the United States of America have failed. We have done thousands of people who have paid the ultimate price to keep our values intact a disservice. So, as I teeter on the border of being accusatory, I'm compelled to admit my own guilt. No excuses here!

United States history and Black American history will always be tethered to the sixties decades. If for no other reason than that, we will commemorate key milestones achieved toward equality and the iconic figures who played roles in clearing those very important hurdles. As I reflect on the events-based continuum from the end of slavery, in simple terms, Abraham Lincoln laid the foundation for freeing the slaves in the 1860s, and Martin Luther King Jr. pressed on until voting rights and civil rights were achieved in the 1960s. Therefore, the freedom of all people in the United States was validated in the 1860s by the ratification of the Emancipation Proclamation. Furthermore, the equality of all people in the United States was validated in the 1960s when voting rights and civil rights were signed into law. So, as I thought about the situational and prevailing disparity in our country, it became abundantly clear to me that the single variable missing from the equation now is the accountability of the people of the United States to stand up and do their part in owning the change that has until now been evasive.

I have written *Own the Change* with purpose—the purpose of making monumental and measurable contributions to achieving the welcoming, free, equal values our country was

founded upon. At some point on the journey to completing this book, I realized my purpose is aligned with God's purpose. Therefore, I am also committed for the sake of my spirituality.

For me, it was important to cover the pains of United States history. I believe many of our country's modern-day cultural flaws are linked to the outcomes of some of the United States' extraordinary conflicts (such as slavery, the end of it, a civil war, voting rights, and civil rights). Factions of our citizenry would have preferred the status quo or different outcomes. In this regard, because things did not turn out in their favor, they perceive some of our conflicts as unsettled. It's the kind of grudge that can only be resolved by our children over an extended period of time. This resolution will not happen in days, or weeks, or months, or a few years. Therefore, I made a very conscious decision to establish the end of the 2060s as the milestone date by which our country could be forever healed and cured from the self-inflicted scars of a turbulent past. January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2069 is exactly fifty years. My thought process was simple. Because it is apparent United States and Black American history will always be connected to the sixties decades, why not work toward a plan or a project to dictate positive outcomes in the next sixties decade that comes around—especially the life outcomes of our children? I have named the effort the 2060s Project.

It was also important to delineate certain key events on the continuum from slavery to the end of it, to the struggles and challenging efforts to achieve civil rights and voting rights, and up to the current point in time, at which our country has elected its first Black American president of the United States, Barack Obama. I put these events into context because with each of the major achievements toward Black American equality, there seems to have been a counterfaction-based response, including one that we are experiencing today in the year 2019—a response to there being a Black American president of our country. Large factions of our citizenry seem so consumed with that fact, they forget about the state of the most important demographic of our citizens: our children.

Most people of all races in our country were never taught as children what it takes to succeed in the United States. You know, those very basic and fundamental things required to survive and thrive in our country. I realized late in my life that no one ever gave me the precise answers or keys to success. Consumed by my personal experience with the audacity of racism, discrimination, and the history from which those ills were born, I learned the hard way. I was never taught to focus on a plan or prepare for the future. It is this reality that has compelled me to write *Own the Change*. Over the past several years, I've found value in telling snippets of my life's story and conflating these moments in time with meaningful action items purposefully outlined to ensure young children mitigate many of the pitfalls I experienced. I seek to give all our children the answers they need up front.

My plan's success will primarily be contingent on accountable parents, adults, and teenagers doing the right thing. Therefore, I will be banking on these three critical behavioral norms coming to fruition:

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1. The hope of ordinary citizens of the United States and their belief that the required social and intellectual change I envision is possible.
2. The accountability of adults in our citizenry in terms of what they are willing to do to make our country better by appropriately guiding our children.
3. The will of our teenage children and adolescents to take the reins while guiding our country and carrying the burden of this heavily loaded agenda forward to the end of the 2060s and beyond.

Given these three contingencies, my focus will be on two distinct groups—parents and other adults with influence over children (such as mentors and teachers) and willing teenagers to take control of their life by engaging in and following the WIN Model REWARDS life principles that I will outline in this book.

At some point, every citizen in our country must realize and appreciate that they own a large part of their existence. Therefore, it matters what each person is willing to do to take advantage of the profound benefits of citizenship in the greatest and most powerful nation in the entire world, the United States of America.

After covering Black American and United States history, I will move into the modern-day place we've landed. From there, I will outline a strategy for parents and adults with influence over children and teens to encourage young minds in their quest to win in the United States. This is the goal.

The equation for success in the United is relatively simple. Once a person accepts that they are the master of their own destiny, they must strictly focus on developing certain skills that will allow them to legitimately earn money—ideally as a worker or as a capitalist. They must also keep their integrity in check as part of a plan to maintain their full rights to be free and positioned to succeed. Finally, citizens of our country must engage and do their part to support the next generation of children.

To guide parents and children with these critical tactics for success, I have developed the WIN Model, which includes three success categories: workforce development, integrity, and the next generation. Each category has certain life principles associated with it. I strongly suggest these seven REWARDS life principles—reading, education, work, accountability, respect, duty, and saving—need to be instilled in our children starting with reading at three years old.

To be clear, I have written *Own the Change* for the benefit of all children, but I believe Black American children represent one of the most vulnerable factions of citizens in our country. Further, I have read a few books that suggest certain factions of Black Americans are still affected by the ills of slavery. The knowledge I have gained in this regard has polarized my beliefs on the subject into the affirmative. Yes, I believe my life on earth was affected by the ills of slavery passed down through my ancestors for generations.

Black American people represent the only citizen group that seems in many ways forced to live a very different brand of citizenship in the United States than any other race group. This theory is supported by real and readily available data points on discrimination, unemployment, income disparity, police brutality, incarceration rates, and more. Nonetheless, while these concerns are a Black American reality, these truths are not and can never be used as justification

for unaccountability. Black American people must be responsible for their destiny. At the end of the day, being best in class will override the ills of a dark history passed down. Being best in class will transcend any special or unique brand of citizenship certain factions of our country may try to impose on Black American people. In the end, best-in-class Black American people will prevail and succeed in this great nation, which they can legitimately call their own.

So, while my views and bestowments of accountability in this book are at times biased toward Black Americans and Black American children, my greater vision is for the betterment of all children and the entire United States of America.

Now, let's go to work executing the 2060s Project! Who's in?