

Messages from the Mound



In 2007, I began my prison ministry where I facilitated my Relationship First Aid spiritual based personal development classes at Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit. After Mound closed in 2012, it is suspected that the facility got its name because of the many ancient mounds that were found all over Detroit, and I believe the most concentrated and/largest ones were along what is now known as Mound Rd.

"Messages from the Mound" is named after the newsletters that I send out to the inmates since that is where we all initially met. Because the classes that I was teaching them focused on spiritual elevation allowing the negativity within them to die, thus ultimately elevating their consciousness, I thought it an appropriate name because a "mound" is defined as: an "elevation" formed of earth overlying ruins, a grave etc., a heap or raised mass. The following articles are from men that are currently incarcerated or released and this serves as an opportunity for the voiceless to have a voice. If you have a loved one that is currently incarcerated and would like for me to send them newsletters, please forward their contact information with a MDOC number to: Relationshipfirstaid@yahoo.com or contact me at: Relationship First Aid, Attn: Ma'at Seba, 15224 W. 7 Mile Rd., Detroit, MI. 48235. To help defray the costs of printing, postage, supplies, etc., donations can be sent to the address below, or, Cashapp: \$Moundministry or Paypal either: Ma'at Seba or Relationship First Aid

Some of the greatest minds are in prison

By Bobby Bostic
SPECIAL TO THE SUN



Prison is a place where you can find scholars of every kind. The system can lock up a person's body but they can't incarcerate our minds. Right here, we have some of the world's great-

We can train ourselves to be legal scholars in order to obtain our freedom so that we can get laws changed to benefit us. We can change this prison culture. All we have to do is put our minds and energy into it.

Through self-rehabilitation, we can transform ourselves. I am not a model prisoner because prison does not model me. Still, I am determined to be the best that I can be.

We have excellent examples of prisoners who have come before us. Jon Marc Taylor got his doctorate degree while in prison. Just think of the fortitude that it took to get a doctor-

ate degree in a violent chaotic place such as prison. Imagine the hurdles that he had to overcome with the prison administration to get this done. Reflect on the obstacles that petty guards and small-minded inmates put in his way along the course that he was traveling on.

Picture the tens of thousands of dollars he had to pay for such a degree. Ponder a minute on the violence and ignorance that he was surrounded by in the different

prisons while he pursued his degree and studied for his lessons with all the noise of these jails. The challenges that he faced would have been insurmountable for some people. Yet in his own right he was a prison scholar. His efforts and accomplishments prove that some of the world's greatest minds are in prison.

We must not allow our talents to go to waste. We have to organize our creative energy with haste. The library is full of hundreds of books that we must start reading. Right there in the library, we can train ourselves to be scholars. We are not meant to be crooks. We are sitting in prison because we were not great criminals. But we are psychologists, accountants, and professionals of all kinds. The world has locked up some of its greatest minds. Once we tap into our own greatness, we can free ourselves from prison.

The smartest people do some of the dumbest things. That's how so many great minds end up in these prison wings. We came into prison as the problem, but now we can be the solution and help to heal the world. We have to succeed against the odds and claim the greatness that each of us possess. It is from the lowest depths that greatest of people has risen. Some of the world's greatest minds are in prison.

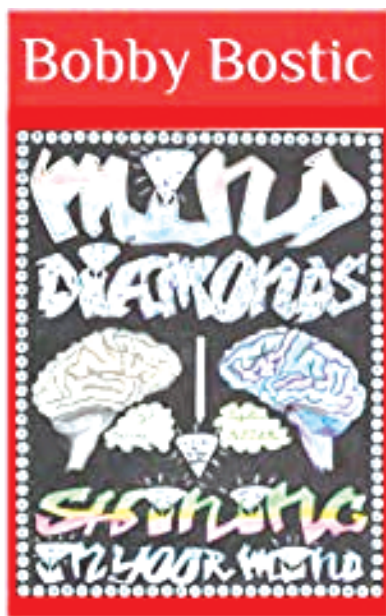
est minds. We have scientists, mathematicians, and preachers. In fact, many of you have excelled in the most difficult of all politics - prison politics. These politics can get deadly and messy. But people in here network to make things happen on scales great and small. We must continue to apply ourselves and not settle for a label that society has placed upon us.

The mind can accomplish what it will. It is stronger than concrete; razor wire and steel. The mind is an architect that constructs the plans that build the structures that house the institutions that change the world.

Throughout history, it has been right here in these prisons where scholars have used their minds to change the world. For documented evidence of this we have the examples of Nelson Mandela and how his words, from his jail cell shook the world. It has been from these dungeons that some of the greatest words ever written have originated. These works came from the ink of a scholar's pen.

Look at the famous letter that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from the Birmingham jail cell that changed the course of the Civil Rights Movement and helped change the course of Kennedy's presidency. Angela Davis was interviewed in a California jail, inspiring a generation of Americans who wanted freedom for their communities. Paul wrote some of the New Testament of the Bible from a jail cell.

I declare today that some of the world's greatest minds are in prison. We can do what we put our minds to, and even these walls can't stop us.



Black Wall Street and Black Bottom

By Dion "Bantu" Dawson
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The current landscape of black history is thematic with renewed calls for black economic empowerment, in the wake of protest against police brutality. The call harkens back to distant black histories either forgotten, never known by black millennials, or perceived by those who have heard the call for decades, as a black utopian pipe dream unable to be realized. But African (Black) people have realized communal self-sufficiency in this country dating back to the 18th century, an experience that arguably culminated in Detroit. Let us journey back into these nostalgic times.

As early as 1738, freed and runaway slaves founded a settlement on land given to them by the Spanish in exchange for fighting with them against English colonialist. Their settlement was called Fort Moses, lying two miles outside of St. Augustine, Florida. Under a Mandingo leader, Captain Francisco Menendez, Fort Moses was surrounded by homes owned by blacks, had an armed black militia, and provided priestly services, baptizing their residents into Catholicism. The African (Black) settlement would experience a level of black freedom and autonomy that wouldn't be seen for another one hundred-plus years, following its eventual destruction by the English.

Then in January of 1865, following the Civil War and issuance of the Emancipation of Proclamation, Special Field Order No. 15 granted freed slaves 400,000 acres of land along the coast of South Carolina. This is where the 40 acres and mule thought derived from. On these lands, self-governing black communities was established. Section II of Special Field Order No. 15 read: "...on the islands, and in the settlements hereafter to be established, no white person whatever, unless military officers and soldiers detailed for duty, will be permitted to reside; and the sole and exclusive management of affairs will be left to the freed people themselves." The freed slaves achieved economic self-sufficiency, that is, until President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and Andrew Jackson, Lincoln's successor, evicted blacks from the land, allowing former slave owners to take back the lands.

Also during the 1800s, we saw the creation of Brooklyn, Illinois, a city Phil Christman, author of Midwest Futures, wrote was "the first all-black town in America...", a utopia of sorts founded on communist principles for free black Americans. The renowned Little Africa, as it was sometimes called, was the most famous all-black community known to the world as "Black Wall Street" (a moniker given by Booker T. Washington after visiting the all-black district).

Black Wall Street, residing in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1921, like most American cities, was a tale of two cities, one white, one black. Because Tulsa was such a racist city, blacks was not permitted to live amongst the whites, or patronize

their business establishments. So blacks developed their own district, starting at Greenwood Avenue, intersecting Archer and Pine Streets (this is where the R&B music group The GAP Band got its initials and name from), encompassing 36 square blocks and a population, variously reported, reaching 15,000. Before Black Wall Street was literally burned to the ground in a racist riot, ultimately waged out of jealousy leaving as many as 4,000 blacks jailed, and an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 dead, black folk in America had again successfully built a communal infrastructure. The all-black district entailed over 600 businesses, including its own bus line, high schools, hospitals, two newspapers, two theaters, three drug stores, hotels, a public library, churches, a bank, and over 150 two and three story commercial buildings, housing clothing and grocery stores, cafes, rooming houses, nightclubs, and professional offices with lawyers, doctors and dentists, and half a dozen private airplanes.

Black Wall Street was the epitome of black enterprising excellence, a black community that produced black pride, self-determination, and black economic self-sufficiency by investing black dollars in the black community. It has even been said the black "dollar circulated 36 to 100 times, sometimes taking a year for currency to leave the community," according to Ronald E. Childs, co-author of Black Wall street.

The only other all-black city that rivaled Black Wall Street was yours truly, Detroit's own, Black Bottom. The life-span of the Black Bottom endured from the 1920s through the late 1950s. The exact borders of the Black Bottom is still a topic of great debate. Based upon my personal research and studies, I draw these borders between Warren and Jefferson (North to South) and John R and St. Aubin (East to West). Within the borders of this black city within a city, it was estimated to contain at least 350 all-black businesses ranging from flower shops, schools, restaurants, shoe shine shops, hospitals, oral surgery, grocery stores, clothing stores, mortuaries, newspapers, pool halls, drug stores, car lots, ice cream parlors, soda fountains, you name it. Paradise Valley was Black Bottom's entertainment district, full of night clubs and hotels. While the center of Black life in the Black Bottom was on St. Antoine Street because the majority of businesses was there, the main artery through the Black Bottom was Hasting Street.

In the late 1950s, the city decided to build I-75 (Chrysler Freeway) over Hasting Street, right through the all-Black community-city marking the end of the Black Bottom. Many propose the move was race based to deal a blow to black economic and cultural progress. If black people could build collective self-sustaining economic communities during slavery and Jim Crow, certainly black folk living in the 21st century's age of progress can replicate what their ancestors did one hundred years ago. If not, shame on us!

