

A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH MY ANCESTOR

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One day I had a candid conversation with my ancestor. She was battered and bruised, but more so confused as to why I was smiling. She told me that my greatest sin to this earth will be that I am the light of the world, and I refuse to shine it. She then asked me, "What is the wealthiest piece of real estate in the world?"

I responded casually and said it must be somewhere where they drilled oil.

She laughed in my face and said, "The wealthiest piece of real estate is a cemetery. The number of books, inventions, and ideas that people could have created would have changed the world, yet all those fantasies are six feet deep."

She told me, "It's nothing new under the sun, son. Constitutional slavery ended four hundred years ago, and yet, here you are, the new slave. I picked the cotton for that Gucci T-shirt you have on that you cannot even afford; you are a slave to greed. I nearly lost my mind running from canines and it pains me to know that you don't go vote because you're too lazy to go stand in a line, that is pathetic. You're a slave to sloth. I had a whip cracked across my neck and back, but when you have an issue with someone, you're so quick to grab a strap. You are a slave to envy. I nursed Massa's son from my own bosom while you'll layup with anyone with a heartbeat. You have become a sex addict; you are a slave to lust. I cried tears of joy when I saw my friends marching into freedom when I knew I had the opportunity to but let one of your brothers get the internship you didn't get. Now you pray, Father God please let my brother fail, if it sends me to heaven then absolutely send that man to hell. You are a slave to envy. You see, your issue is that you are a slave to deadly sins, that feels quite the sensation, huh."

While confused and disrespected, I only had one rebuttal for my ancestor. "How can you sit here like my generation doesn't have issues? Your generation claims that we're lazy and entitled, and I claim that we're hungry and thriving. See I made it out the mud without a father. I would call and tell him the laundry list of all my achievements, but quite frankly I would hate to bother. And I did it without. You're sitting here like I don't know pain. Like Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Eric Gardner, and Sandra Bland are just some random names. You all claim that the depression we face and anxiety we endure is fake news. My mental

health is shot of course I'm confused. I scroll down my Twitter timeline and I see teenage pregnancy and ecstasy. You all say it takes a village to raise a child, but where are you? Where are you? My generation had to find out how to grow up on our lonesome. You think I asked for this? My generation is overflowing self-starters, achieving is my prerogative, and unlike you, I did it without a father."

With passion and anger in my voice I blurted out, "You don't know me."

My ancestor smirked and said, "Baby you don't even know yourself. I stared in the mirror and you and I were the ones that locked eyes. The good Lord protects only babies and fools, so which one are you? Wake up. Black people are the only ethnicity that do not have a flag to represent themselves. You all don't know the culture because you're offset. America has stripped you of your identity but thankfully now you can be whoever you want to be, shoot high king. I want you to use the welts on my back as your road map, trust me, I've been there and done that. To be successful in this world it takes faith, consistency, and hard work; the ball is in your court.

Quite frankly, I do not care whether you are shooting or assisting, but we'll turn these dreams and nightmares into championships because they love to see you go from award shows to prison sentences. Trust me baby, let me help you. Cancel the divide between the generations and finally let love inside. You are the light of the world, now baby it's your time to rise and shine."

Now unfortunately this conversation was not a fairy tale, so wake up!

(This speech won the 1st Place Statesman Orator Award in the 2019 Otis Moss Jr. '56 and Otis Moss III '92 Oratorical Contest.)