

## Local Politics Matter

# Where are our Black Men

## Lost Souls



My wife once asked me where all of the Black men living in Baltimore City could be found. I grew up in East Baltimore but it has been roughly 30 years since I last lived in the City. I still had strong ties to the City but I was stumped by the question. In January of 2016 I actually took a job working in West Baltimore. This meant that I now spend a considerable amount of time in inner city Baltimore. It also means that I now have a much better perspective on where our men who live in Baltimore's inner city can be found.

Before providing an answer let me say that the question that my wife asked was a bit of a loaded one. For years she has been saying that when you go to a mall or to a super market in the city, rarely do you

see Black men. She also noted that you especially don't see Black men with their families in any of these venues. This has always been an interesting conversation as I have tried to find ways to defend my "Brothers".

During my daily trips to Baltimore I have come across scores of Black men both young and old. I have come across them in the workplace as well as outside of the workplace. Certainly the workplace encounters have been very positive and refreshing. On the other hand the encounters outside of the workplace have not been positive at all. These encounters involve scores of Black men doing what I call "hanging out". Honestly this is a phenomenon that I have not observed in any other culture at the same level that it seems to occur in the black culture. Black

men of all ages can be found in Baltimore City simply "hanging out". They can also be found at all times of the day. Typically the elder Black men can be found during the early part of the day, some as early as 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. As you get closer to the noon hour you start to see that the demographic changes and you start to see more middle aged Black men carrying the torch. Finally, as you get to the end of the school day and in to the evening hours there is another change. The torch is handed over to a younger generation of Black men and they carry it with pride. The corners are theirs for the remainder of the evening or at least until the last stores and bars close. The question that I ask is how did this become the thing to do for Black men of all ages? How many of these men have families at home? How many of these men have young children? Are these men interested in pursuing employment?

While I don't have the answers to any of the questions posed I know that we have to stop ignoring this phenomenon. As a Black man it pains me to think that those who once patrolled our neighborhoods ensuring that our women and children were safe are now nowhere to be found. Those strong Black men who ensured that drugs and other illegal activities were kept out of our neighborhoods, who kept the corners cleared are no longer visible. Those who could moved to cleaner safer neighborhoods taking their ideals and ethics with them. Those who stayed lost clout when their numbers dwindled. They've gone quietly into the night being replaced by men of undetermined character hanging out on the corners. My wife's question keeps ringing in my ears. Where are our Black men?

Where are they?

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