

The Young Lions

(This excerpt is Chapter Two of the book *Future In Our Hand: Institution Building For Supplementary Education*)

by Leon Dixon, Jr.

Each generation out of relative obscurity must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 206

In the preparation of our youth, we should strive to imbue them with the sense of purpose of carrying out the "Fanonian Quest," as inferred in the above quotation: Of discovering their mission and leaving a positive legacy by fulfilling it, lest they betray it. This is no easy feat and to accomplish it requires understanding of the reality of certain aspects of our third decade of life--our twenties.

For many areas and endeavors in life our most creative and innovative years are in our early twenties. There is evidence of this in a wide variety of fields, from the humanities to the natural sciences. And furthermore, in virtually all walks of life the development we undergo in our pre-twenty years is the cornerstone for later achievement. All this does not mean that important works are not carried out in later years. Each age group has its role to play, its work to do and its responsibilities to carry out. But we need to fully appreciate the tremendous role to be played out by our young people in their twenties and how what is done during this period impacts the later years. Many, if not most, of the characteristic breakthroughs that define new standards and new ways of looking at and doing things are done by individuals in their twenties. It is primarily from them that we get the pushes and surges that propel us forward.

Consider the field of mathematics—a cerebral and abstract subject. Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh state in their book *The Mathematical Experience*, pp. 16-62:

The mathematical life of a mathematician is short. Work rarely improves after the age of twenty-five or thirty. ... If greatness has been

attained, good work may continue to appear, but the level of accomplishment will fall with each decade.

Considering the natural sciences, which are both theoretical and practical, Thomas S. Kuhn writes on page 90 of his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*:

Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have always either been very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change.

It is interesting to note that Kuhn says "very young or very new." A person who is very new to a field brings to it what the very young do--fresh ideas and a fresh outlook. Also, a person who is very new to a field can bring to it knowledge and understanding from another field from which to draw different analogies.

Our focus is the very young. All they have is new and fresh ideas and an abundance of energy to explore them with! This is why so many earth shaking concepts come from them.

The contributions coming from the very young can be increased by insuring proper preparation of our youth. This will have long range social benefits for two reasons. One: by increasing the talent pool of well-prepared youngsters, there will be more persons to make valuable contributions. And two: the contributions made by those very new to a field will, for the most part, be a consequence of knowledge and insights they have acquired while mastering other fields when they were very young. History is replete with verifications of this hypothesis that so many earth shaking concepts come from them (people in their twenties).

By way of example, let us recall that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was in his mid-twenties when the Montgomery bus boycott began. Fortunately, he was prepared for the task. The same can be said for Booker T. Washington who at twenty-five founded Tuskegee Institute (now University) and Mary McLeod Bethune who at twenty-nine opened up a school that evolved into Bethune College (now Bethune-Cookman). Also, at twenty-eight, W. E. B. DuBois had published his first major book *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. Similarly, Frantz Fanon was twenty-seven when he published his first major work, *Black Skin/White Mask*.

This dynamic is trans-discipline and trans-cultural. Consider the arts. Charlie "Yardbird" Parker and John Birks Gillispie were in this same age group when they pioneered "bebop," revolutionizing jazz. Consider the sciences. Albert Einstein was twenty-six when he published his Nobel prize-winning work on the photoelectric effect, and later that same year, 1905, his paper on special relativity (Einstein had published papers on physics as early as 1901). When Isaac Newton was in his twenties he had begun to grapple with many of the ideas that he *later* would present as theories on gravity, force, notion and calculus. Years later, Newton was persuaded by his friend Edmund Haley (of Haley's comet) to complete and publish these works. The result was the famous book *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in short, *The Principia*.

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organizations and neighborhoods, they will bring new enthusiasm, concepts and energy to burn. This fresh energy will find its way into such activities a tutoring, coaching and mentoring many of the younger children in their families and communities. We tend to take these contributions for granted, and perhaps well we should. But this is precisely the point. We need far more of our youth to be in such a position. Far too many are falling by the wayside by becoming involved in drugs, crime, gangs and other kinds of self-destructive activities. A significant amount of talent is lost and mis-directed, or trapped within the prisons of this nation.

When the W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center had its tenth year celebration, Bob Law, the host of the nationally syndicated radio show "Night Talk" was invited to speak. While he was in town, we took him to Leavenworth, Kansas, where he spoke to the inmates of the federal prison. When he observed how well organized the were, he was moved to exclaim to them: "We need you brothers on the outside...we need people who can organize like this on the outside...we can't afford to have this kind of talent locked up behind bars...brothers with this kind of ability are needed on the outside." When Ossie Davis spoke at the Learning Center's fifteenth anniversary he recounted an occasion when he spoke at a prison on the East coast. As you might guess, his remarks to those inmates echoed the same theme.

Clearly, what is needed is for our young people to be out there, available and active in our families and communities. We are at a major disadvantage when they become ensnared or bogged down by the negative forces at work on them; or when they lose their way--our way; or when the get diverted in any way from positive activities. It is urgently incumbent upon us to realize this and work to see that they get the guidance and preparation they will need. Most of our young people are not even aware of, let alone understand or appreciate, their opportunities. Listen to Lorraine Hansberry (who was twenty-nine when her award winning play "A Raisin in the Sun" premiered on Broadway) as she addressed some participants in a United Negro College Fund writing contest (page 263 from the book *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*), "...I say to you that, though it be a thrilling and marvelous thing to be merely young and gifted in such times, it is doubly so, doubly dynamic--to be young, gifted and black. Look at the world that awaits you!"

The significance of the contributions that young people in their twenties make should be appreciated. So should the continued growth and development that takes place then. For it is clear that much of the fire that will blaze in our later years will have been sparked in our twenties, if not earlier. Even though that fire may smolder awhile before it combusts, for most of us, much of the fire that will burn throughout our lives was ignited in our twenties.

I suggest that there are essentially three reasons why these bursts of ingenuity occur during these very critical years. First: Physically, our bodies are at their peak during our twenties. Second: Psychologically, while we are in our twenties, especially our early twenties, we have not quite become set in our ways. It is much easier for us to receive new and fresh stimuli, accept new ideas, perceive new insights and conceive new visions. Most of this happens because we have not yet become acculturated along the established societal and professional norms. We have not been sufficiently socialized yet. Consequently, we are better able to see some of the shortcomings of the existing ways of doing things. This is often a prerequisite to conceive new and different concepts. These new concepts may range from the unfeasible, to the very simple, to the truly revolutionary. Many youth at this age have a feeling of invincibility. They are daring, willing to try new and different things and to take risks. In actuality, they have time to recover from the failures that indeed most of them will have. As we age we become less likely to take these kinds of chances. We have acquired too much to risk losing. The older we get the more costly mistakes become. We develop a growing sense of caution, conservatism, and deliberation with the advancing years. Fortunately, we also develop knowledge and wisdom that we can offer our young people. The third reason for our burst of ingenuity in our twenties is that sociologically, most of our elders, are still in pretty good shape and do not require attention and care from the family. During that same, if we have any children, they will be young and not be as demanding as they will become as we grow older. Also, during this same period of our lives, we probably will not have become too stressed out, allowing us to focus more on our chosen areas of work. It is during this period that we have the greatest opportunity to focus on our chosen goals, areas of work, or talents.

However, we should all clearly realize that this peak period, this optimal opportunity is ephemeral. While we are in our twenties, and it is our

time to "make hay while the sun shines," the time is coming when our parents' health will begin to fade. We then will have to take on more and more responsibilities. We will need to support our parents in their efforts to make the remaining years of our grandparents as comfortable as possible. Simultaneously, we will be required to give increasingly more attention to our own growing children. (Recall the joy and pain of the teen years!) Depending on the spacings between generations, and other variables, this phase could occur at any time. In essence, what needs to be acknowledged is that we may not have as much time to reach and fulfill our potential as we think we do. And, we usually never fully recover from opportunity lost.

The manner in which our young people have used their time, up to this point, is extremely critical. They will assuredly leave their "footprints" on the sands of time one way or another. They are the warrior class, the young lions. (Although we are focusing on the third decade of life, the range of this class has been defined from fourteen to forty.) These young lions have the highest energy level. They are in an excited state. It is their time to move. And, if they are prepared they are in a position to make quantum leaps forward. A point that Haki Madhubuti made in a lecture in Kansas City was that "If this energy is not used constructively, then it may be used destructively." Robert Bly express this in his book on *Iron John* (p. 179): "If a culture does not deal with the warrior energy--take it consciously, discipline it, honor it --it will turn up outside in the form of street gangs, wife beating, drug violence, brutality to children, and aimless murder."

From our young lions we get pushes and surges that propel us forward (or backwards). They serve as a barometer of the momentum of our movement. The status of our young lions is indicative of the forces at work in society and the effects that these forces and our young lions will have on the rest of us. If they are in a physical, psychological and sociological healthy state, they will have a positive impact on the development and progress of the community, family or group into which they belong. If not, their effects will be detrimental. Whenever this status is positive, other members of the group can more readily contribute toward the group's advancement. Whenever this status is negative of at a standstill, come of the participation of the group that could have been directed towards positive contributions, will have to be diverted into efforts to counteract the negativity, causing the progress of

the group to range from decreasing to reversing. Thus, the young lions are key to the survival and progress of any group.

The charge of our communities or groups is to channel the energies and activities of their young lions into positive areas. Failing to do this will, and I repeat myself, cause energy and activity of other group members to be diverted into dealing with the problems generated by the counter productivity of their young lions. This is energy and activity that otherwise could and should be directed towards the groups' overall progress.

This is analogous to the turnover in the turf battle game of football that results in a fourteen point swing (the seven points your team could have gotten plus the seven points that your opponent did get.) But the game we are discussing, the game of life, is infinitely more serious and the consequences are infinitely more dire.

If our young lions are to fulfill the productive and positive potential which our progress requires, they will have to be prepared and ready when their appointed time comes. And let us keep in mind that time is transitory, and figuratively speaking, like the life of the Mayfly, short lived. At that time the foundations and fundamentals necessary for creativity and innovation in their chosen areas of interest will have to be second nature to them. Our young lions simply will have to be well-grounded and well-versed in whatever fields their talent lay in order to make progress and breakthrough contributions. The quality and quantity of their contributions will be commensurate with their preparation. In the reality of this life, (as a fellow co-worker, Edward Ford, often quotes his former junior high school principal as stressing) "if you fail to prepare, then you prepare to fail." Not only will our young lions have to do the right thing, they will have to do the thing right, and then do the thing right away. And if they do not take the time to do it right, they will have to take the time to do it again.

The situation is statistical. The more of our young lions that are prepared (quantity) and the more that our young lions are prepared (quality), the more competent contributors we will have making positive and productive contributions. Since most new ideas will not work anyway, we will need a lot of ideas in order to extract the few that will work. The Nobel prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling, who also

"intuited the molecular origin of sickle-cell anemia" (See *Physics Today*, May 1990, p. 82), on a public television program responded to the question "Where do you get the good ideas?" by answering, "First you get a lot of ideas and then you throw out the bad ones." Figuratively speaking, for example, it may take one hundred ideas to get ten worth trying, and out of that ten that are tried perhaps one will work. And from those few ideas that will work we have to extract the even fewer that will be outstanding. That is how we increase the probability of having some truly remarkable contributions that can affect the activities of generations to come.

In order for our young lions to produce, we need institutions in which they can exercise their gifts and talents. Some young lions may seek to establish their own institutions. But most will utilize the existing ones to employ their skills and crafts. The organizational and coordinating skills need to create institutions tend to be held by older members of the group or community. Therefore, we must insure that the mechanisms exist in our communities through which our young lions can be helped to develop.

I reiterate, there is a certain amount of knowledge and wisdom that comes with advancing age. Our young lions will have to be acculturated so that they not only respect that knowledge and wisdom but actually seek it out. Among the many ways they can both acquire and learn from the knowledge, wisdom and insight from the elders is by listening to them and by reading works by and about them.

In all forms of activities and aspects of family, community, and society, the young lions leave their mark. Their impact will be felt directly or indirectly. Their consequences will show up sooner or later. They will affect the higher-ups and the lower-downs, the professions and the professionals, business and labor, the services. etc. There is no area of society that can escape their influence. One way or another they will have to be dealt with. The question is, Just what kind of influence will the young lions make? Will our young lions collectively be an asset or a liability?

This will be determined by the manner in which they have been challenged, channeled and allowed to develop. As individuals, they will be a result of all of the forces that acted upon them and the collection of

these individuals forms a basis for their group. Hence, the position the young lions will be in at their appointed time will be like a weighted sum of each member of their group. The historical impact of their group will be like a weighted sum of all their actions in their times and reactions of their times.

The development of our young lions cannot be left up to chance. Chance favors the prepared mind. If we just let them drift like a raft upon the sea, then they will be blown in whatever way the winds of society will carry them. And when we consider how the parameters of the society are set, the consequences for the African-American community are obvious. Our current drug situation, teenage pregnancy fates, rampant crime rates, joblessness, homelessness and hopelessness are in no small way a manifestation, metaphorically speaking, of the difficulty our "ships" are having trying to navigate the troubled waters of society. All of these are examples of the result of the destructive uses of energy that was referred to earlier.

I repeat, the preparation of our young lions is the charge of our communities. They have to produce enough young lions who are motivated enough to seek new horizons and are prepared to meet the challenges and champion the causes that await them.

Meeting these challenges and championing these awaiting causes, will often be the responsibility of the warrior who is in the service of a higher calling, a transcendent cause. The warrior employs strategy and discipline. A soldier simply obeys and fights. Warriors defend their space, their ideas and culture and those things held sacred. It is the warrior within that causes one to singularly pursue a certain field, discipline or profession against all odds and nay sayers, and focus his or her energy. Thus, warriors have careers, professions and/or callings, whereas soldiers simply have jobs. It is the warrior spirit that causes one to forge ahead, to conquer new territories, advance new thoughts and ascend to new heights. The warriors are defenders and purveyors of "the way."

And as our young lions, our warriors, proceed in the pursuit of their calling, it will be most beneficial for them if they do so with the blessings, and encouragements of their elders. Young lions will certainly need all of the encouragement that they can get in order to successfully

meet the challenge of the "Fanonian quest and dichotomy" by first discovering their mission and then fulfilling it.

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Also make note of the fact that at thirty, Marcus Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association, through which he mobilized the largest-ever number of Black folks in the United States. Also, Malcolm X and John Coltrane were both in their thirties when they made the world take notice. What should be emphasized for our purpose, is that much of the ground-work and preparation for these accomplishments were laid down while the purveyors were in their twenties. Even when there are good and great works performed after the third decade of life, much of the foundation for them was laid down earlier. None of the individuals operated in a vacuum or in isolation. They were products of their space and time. They and their contemporaries influenced each other while operating out of the tradition of their predecessors.

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I reiterate, there is a certain amount of knowledge and wisdom that comes with advancing age. Our young lions will have to be acculturated so that they not only respect that knowledge and wisdom but actually seek it out. Among the many ways they can both acquire and learn from the knowledge, wisdom and insight from the elders is by listening to them and by reading works by and about them.

In all forms of activities and aspects of family, community, and society, the young lions leave their mark. Their impact will be felt directly or indirectly. Their consequences will show up sooner or later. They will affect the higher-ups and the lower-downs, the professions and the professionals, business and labor, the services. etc. There is no area of society that can escape their influence. One way or another they will have to be dealt with. The question is, Just what kind of influence will

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This will be determined by the manner in which they have been challenged, channeled and allowed to develop. As individuals, they will be a result of all of the forces that acted upon them and the collection of these individuals forms a basis for their group. Hence, the position the young lions will be in at their appointed time will be like a weighted sum of each member of their group. The historical impact of their group will be like a weighted sum of all their actions in their times and reactions of their times.

The development of our young lions cannot be left up to chance. Chance favors the prepared mind. If we just let them drift like a raft upon the sea, then they will be blown in whatever way the winds of society will carry them. And when we consider how the parameters of the society are set, the consequences for the African-American community are obvious. Our current drug situation, teenage pregnancy fates, rampant crime rates, joblessness, homelessness and hopelessness are in no small way a manifestation, metaphorically speaking, of the difficulty our "ships" are having trying to navigate the troubled waters of society. All of these are examples of the result of the destructive uses of energy that was referred to earlier.

I repeat, the preparation of our young lions is the charge of our communities. They have to produce enough young lions who are motivated enough to seek new horizons and are prepared to meet the challenges and champion the causes that await them.

Meeting these challenges and championing these awaiting causes, will often be the responsibility of the warrior who is in the service of a higher calling, a transcendent cause. The warrior employs strategy and discipline. A soldier simply obeys and fights. Warriors defend their space, their ideas and culture and those things held sacred. It is the warrior within that causes one to singularly pursue a certain field, discipline or profession against all odds and nay sayers, and focus his or her energy. Thus, warriors have careers, professions and/or callings, whereas soldiers simply have jobs. It is the warrior spirit that causes one to forge ahead, to conquer new territories, advance new thoughts

and ascend to new heights. The warriors are defenders and purveyors of "the way."

And as our young lions, our warriors, proceed in the pursuit of their calling, it will be most beneficial for them if they do so with the blessings, and encouragements of their elders. Young lions will certainly need all of the encouragement that they can get in order to successfully meet the challenge of the "Fanonian quest and dichotomy" by first discovering their mission and then fulfilling it.

The Young Lions

(This excerpt is Chapter Two of the book *Future In Our Hand: Institution Building For Supplementary Education*)

by Leon Dixon, Jr.

Each generation out of relative obscurity must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 206

In the preparation of our youth, we should strive to imbue them with the sense of purpose of carrying out the "Fanonian Quest," as inferred in the above quotation: Of discovering their mission and leaving a positive legacy by fulfilling it, lest they betray it. This is no easy feat and to accomplish it requires understanding of the reality of certain aspects of our third decade of life--our twenties.

For many areas and endeavors in life our most creative and innovative years are in our early twenties. There is evidence of this in a wide variety of fields, from the humanities to the natural sciences. And furthermore, in virtually all walks of life the development we undergo in our pre-twenty years is the cornerstone for later achievement. All this does not mean that important works are not carried out in later years. Each age group has its role to play, its work to do and its responsibilities to carry out. But we need to fully appreciate the tremendous role to be played out by our young people in their twenties and how what is done during this period impacts the later years. Many, if not most, of the

characteristic breakthroughs that define new standards and new ways of looking at and doing things are done by individuals in their twenties. It is primarily from them that we get the pushes and surges that propel us forward.

Consider the field of mathematics—a cerebral and abstract subject. Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh state in their book *The Mathematical Experience*, pp. 16-62:

The mathematical life of a mathematician is short. Work rarely improves after the age of twenty-five or thirty. ... If greatness has been attained, good work may continue to appear, but the level of accomplishment will fall with each decade.

Considering the natural sciences, which are both theoretical and practical, Thomas S. Kuhn writes on page 90 of his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*:

Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have always either been very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change.

It is interesting to note that Kuhn says "very young or very new." A person who is very new to a field brings to it what the very young do-- fresh ideas and a fresh outlook. Also, a person who is very new to a field can bring to it knowledge and understanding from another field from which to draw different analogies.

Our focus is the very young. All they have is new and fresh ideas and an abundance of energy to explore them with! This is why so many earth shaking concepts come from them.

The contributions coming from the very young can be increased by insuring proper preparation of our youth. This will have long range social benefits for two reasons. One: by increasing the talent pool of well-prepared youngsters, there will be more persons to make valuable contributions. And two: the contributions made by those very new to a field will, for the most part, be a consequence of knowledge and insights they have acquired while mastering other fields when they were very young. History is replete with verifications of this hypothesis that so many earth shaking concepts come from them (people in their twenties).

By way of example, let us recall that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was in his mid-twenties when the Montgomery bus boycott began. Fortunately, he was prepared for the task. The same can be said for Booker T. Washington who at twenty-five founded Tuskegee Institute (now University) and Mary McLeod Bethune who at twenty-nine opened up a school that evolved into Bethune College (now Bethune-Cookman). Also, at twenty-eight, W. E. B. DuBois had published his first major book *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. Similarly, Frantz Fanon was twenty-seven when he published his first major work, *Black Skin/White Mask*.

This dynamic is trans-discipline and trans-cultural. Consider the arts. Charlie "Yardbird" Parker and John Birks Gillespie were in this same age group when they pioneered "bebop," revolutionizing jazz. Consider the sciences. Albert Einstein was twenty-six when he published his Nobel prize-winning work on the photoelectric effect, and later that same year, 1905, his paper on special relativity (Einstein had published papers on physics as early as 1901). When Isaac Newton was in his twenties he had begun to grapple with many of the ideas that he *later* would present as theories on gravity, force, notion and calculus. Years later, Newton was persuaded by his friend Edmund Haley (of Haley's comet) to complete and publish these works. The result was the famous book *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in short, *The Principia*.

It also noteworthy to point out that most of the memorable pictures of these people were taken in their later years, this subliminally overlooks the fact that much of the profound work that they did was done while they were young.

Also make note of the fact that at thirty, Marcus Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association, through which he mobilized the largest-ever number of Black folks in the United States. Also, Malcolm X and John Coltrane were both in their thirties when they made the world take notice. What should be emphasized for our purpose, is that much of the ground-work and preparation for these accomplishments were laid down while the purveyors were in their twenties. Even when there are good and great works performed after the third decade of life, much of the foundation for them was laid down earlier. None of the individuals operated in a vacuum or in isolation.

They were products of their space and time. They and their contemporaries influenced each other while operating out of the tradition of their predecessors.

It should be realized that most of the contributions made by people in their twenties will be made on the family and community levels. Their energies are needed to inject new life and new ideas into both their families and their community. They will help their elders by doing such common place things as helping them understand and fill our various forms or to operate the latest technological gadgets. As they join community groups, including churches, social and political organizations and neighborhoods, they will bring new enthusiasm, concepts and energy to burn. This fresh energy will find its way into such activities a tutoring, coaching and mentoring many of the younger children in their families and communities. We tend to take these contributions for granted, and perhaps well we should. But this is precisely the point. We need far more of our youth to be in such a position. Far too many are falling by the wayside by becoming involved in drugs, crime, gangs and other kinds of self-destructive activities. A significant amount of talent is lost and mis-directed, or trapped within the prisons of this nation.

When the W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center had its tenth year celebration, Bob Law, the host of the nationally syndicated radio show "Night Talk" was invited to speak. While he was in town, we took him to Leavenworth, Kansas, where he spoke to the inmates of the federal prison. When he observed how well organized the were, he was moved to exclaim to them: "We need you brothers on the outside...we need people who can organize like this on the outside...we can't afford to have this kind of talent locked up behind bars...brothers with this kind of ability are needed on the outside." When Ossie Davis spoke at the Learning Center's fifteenth anniversary he recounted an occasion when he spoke at a prison on the East coast. As you might guess, his remarks to those inmates echoed the same theme.

Clearly, what is needed is for our young people to be out there, available and active in our families and communities. We are at a major disadvantage when they become ensnared or bogged down by the negative forces at work on them; or when they lose their way--our way; or when the get diverted in any way from positive activities. It is

urgently incumbent upon us to realize this and work to see that they get the guidance and preparation they will need. Most of our young people are not even aware of, let alone understand or appreciate, their opportunities. Listen to Lorraine Hansberry (who was twenty-nine when her award winning play "A Raisin in the Sun" premiered on Broadway) as she addressed some participants in a United Negro College Fund writing contest (page 263 from the book *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*), "...I say to you that, though it be a thrilling and marvelous thing to be merely young and gifted in such times, it is doubly so, doubly dynamic--to be young, gifted and black. Look at the world that awaits you!"

The significance of the contributions that young people in their twenties make should be appreciated. So should the continued growth and development that takes place then. For it is clear that much of the fire that will blaze in our later years will have been sparked in our twenties, if not earlier. Even though that fire may smolder awhile before it combusts, for most of us, much of the fire that will burn throughout our lives was ignited in our twenties.

I suggest that there are essentially three reasons why these bursts of ingenuity occur during these very critical years. First: Physically, our bodies are at their peak during our twenties. Second: Psychologically, while we are in our twenties, especially our early twenties, we have not quite become set in our ways. It is much easier for us to receive new and fresh stimuli, accept new ideas, perceive new insights and conceive new visions. Most of this happens because we have not yet become acculturated along the established societal and professional norms. We have not been sufficiently socialized yet. Consequently, we are better able to see some of the shortcomings of the existing ways of doing things. This is often a prerequisite to conceive new and different concepts. These new concepts may range from the unfeasible, to the very simple, to the truly revolutionary. Many youth at this age have a feeling of invincibility. They are daring, willing to try new and different things and to take risks. In actuality, they have time to recover from the failures that indeed most of them will have. As we age we become less likely to take these kinds of chances. We have acquired too much to risk losing. The older we get the more costly mistakes become. We develop a growing sense of caution, conservatism, and deliberation with the advancing years. Fortunately, we also develop knowledge and wisdom that we can offer our young people. The third reason for our burst of

ingenuity in our twenties is that sociologically, most of our elders, are still in pretty good shape and do not require attention and care from the family. During that same, if we have any children, they will be young and not be as demanding as they will become as we grow older. Also, during this same period of our lives, we probably will not have become too stressed out, allowing us to focus more on our chosen areas of work. It is during this period that we have the greatest opportunity to focus on our chosen goals, areas of work, or talents.

However, we should all clearly realize that this peak period, this optimal opportunity is ephemeral. While we are in our twenties, and it is our time to "make hay while the sun shines," the time is coming when our parents' health will begin to fade. We then will have to take on more and more responsibilities. We will need to support our parents in their efforts to make the remaining years of our grandparents as comfortable as possible. Simultaneously, we will be required to give increasingly more attention to our own growing children. (Recall the joy and pain of the teen years!) Depending on the spacings between generations, and other variables, this phase could occur at any time. In essence, what needs to be acknowledged is that we may not have as much time to reach and fulfill our potential as we think we do. And, we usually never fully recover from opportunity lost.

The manner in which our young people have used their time, up to this point, is extremely critical. They will assuredly leave their "footprints" on the sands of time one way or another. They are the warrior class, the young lions. (Although we are focusing on the third decade of life, the range of this class has been defined from fourteen to forty.) These young lions have the highest energy level. They are in an excited state. It is their time to move. And, if they are prepared they are in a position to make quantum leaps forward. A point that Haki Madhubuti made in a lecture in Kansas City was that "If this energy is not used constructively, then it may be used destructively." Robert Bly express this in his book on *Iron John* (p. 179): "If a culture does not deal with the warrior energy--take it consciously, discipline it, honor it --it will turn up outside in the form of street gangs, wife beating, drug violence, brutality to children, and aimless murder."

From our young lions we get pushes and surges that propel us forward (or backwards). They serve as a barometer of the momentum of our

movement. The status of our young lions is indicative of the forces at work in society and the effects that these forces and our young lions will have on the rest of us. If they are in a physical, psychological and sociological healthy state, they will have a positive impact on the development and progress of the community, family or group into which they belong. If not, their effects will be detrimental. Whenever this status is positive, other members of the group can more readily contribute toward the group's advancement. Whenever this status is negative or at a standstill, come of the participation of the group that could have been directed towards positive contributions, will have to be diverted into efforts to counteract the negativity, causing the progress of the group to range from decreasing to reversing. Thus, the young lions are key to the survival and progress of any group.

The charge of our communities or groups is to channel the energies and activities of their young lions into positive areas. Failing to do this will, and I repeat myself, cause energy and activity of other group members to be diverted into dealing with the problems generated by the counter productivity of their young lions. This is energy and activity that otherwise could and should be directed towards the groups' overall progress.

This is analogous to the turnover in the turf battle game of football that results in a fourteen point swing (the seven points your team could have gotten plus the seven points that your opponent did get.) But the game we are discussing, the game of life, is infinitely more serious and the consequences are infinitely more dire.

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