

Introduction

I should begin by saying that I am not a Finance Professor who happens to be black. Rather, I am a black man who happens to be a Finance Professor. The goal of this work was not to create yet another book analyzing money to the nth degree, discussing stocks, bonds, charts and portfolios. While I've done exhaustive research on such matters and made a multitude of purely financial media appearances, I see money in an admittedly broad and inclusive framework. Personally, I see money as a tool for the enhancement of life and the liberation of a people. It can also be a weapon for the destruction of life and the enslavement of people. Finally, I see money as part of a nexus of critical issues that drive the world in which we live. How we process and harness the power of money plays a crucial role in our personal and collective outcomes.

This book is not going to be about money throughout. It does not contain a long list of “nuts and bolts” financial advisories, “dos and don'ts” or technical trading rules. It is a discussion, by a black social commentator who cares about America. One who also happens to be an educator and financial expert. So, imagine a person who enjoys cooking steak, chicken and carrots, but insists upon making sure the plate has a little bit of each. I have never been one dimensional in my analysis, because linear, limited thinking can cause one to consistently miss the big picture. Unfortunately, such is the limitation of many American academics, most of who are trained to focus on one tiny area of research, presuming that the world can be understood with constrained, one dimensional, half-baked

understanding. I will always feel that this viewpoint is incorrect.

In this book, you are going to get first hand views on how money plays a role in critical black issues and leadership, from The State of the black Union to Civil Rights. I will openly and honestly share my behind-the-scenes experiences with CNN, FOX, ESPN and other networks. You will hear about academia, as I take you on a quick trip into the ivory tower for a discussion of how economic incentives impact the value systems of today's "blackademics". We will discuss how millions of members of the black Middle Class, by neglecting the significance of ownership, have transformed themselves into high paid sharecroppers. Finally, we will discuss the Great Financial Crisis of 2009, what went wrong and why it was unlike any other. The trip will be long and broad, and won't just focus on money. Rather, the focus is on building capital of all types, not just financial capital.

Money, like any other powerful object, can either be incredibly constructive or horrifically destructive. It can ruin families or make people strong. It can liberate, enslave and do everything in between. You can improve the lives of those you love or ruin important relationships. Money can do many amazing things in a capitalist society. Therefore, understanding, embracing and controlling the power of money is clearly, without question, an undeniably meaningful part of the movement toward equal rights.

controversy whenever possible. After the first major sponsor or two stepped out on Imus, the rest of them ran screaming. At that point, Imus was off the air.

The most interesting part of the Don Imus case was that Imus was put back on the air just a few months later. Executives behind closed doors likely told Imus to “let those people calm down and we’ll get you right back.” The same was true for Dog the Bounty Hunter, a character on the cable channel A&E, who was found to have liberally referred to his son’s black girlfriend as “that nigger” several times during a long telephone conversation. I heard the conversation, and he wasn’t using the word “nigger” in any way other than its worst intent.

Soon after Dog the Bounty Hunter was removed from the air, A&E attempted to put him back on television. I recall doing a lot of interviews about Dog, and our Youtube.com video on the topic received thousands of views. I received over 1,000 emails on the topic, begging me to forgive Dog for his behavior and reminding me that all people make mistakes. While I agree that everyone makes mistakes, I believe that if Dog the Bounty Hunter had been a black man on a white network making the same error, he would have been blackballed forever. Like Dog The Bounty Hunter, Don Imus also received a second chance after his egregious and insulting mistake.

Additionally, while Imus was so easily forgiven and given another chance, many of these networks have rarely, if ever, given a single chance to any African-American host to grace their airwaves. I wasn’t sure why one would further the idea of giving an old boring guy another chance when there are so many interesting people of color willing to do a great job.

Chapter 1

What I learned from the Nappy Headed Hoe

As I write these words, my mind takes me to another place and time. It was an early and tiring Sunday morning, and I'd been up late working the night before. I received a call from Stacey, a producer with The Jesse Jackson Show, who also happens to be a dear friend. She mentioned that they needed me on the radio immediately and that the topic of conversation was a guy named Don Imus.

I'd only heard about Imus a few days earlier. Don Imus was a radio "shock jock" at MSNBC, who decided that the women from the Rutgers University basketball team, mostly black, were a pack of "Nappy headed hoers". Why a man with a predominantly white audience would choose those words to describe women on a basketball team was beyond me. I use slang when I speak, but only with those who understand what the hell it is I am saying. I am not sure if the predominantly white, conservative audience of Don Imus would even be able to get a laugh out of his disgusting and risky statement.

Imus' words sparked a national controversy. The comment led to yet another one of those artificial conversations on race that spontaneously combusts when something happens to remind us how little we've traveled down the road toward serious and solid race relations.

Whites and blacks have spent 400 years learning how to not get along with one another. Black people have learned to survive in complete and total fear of white America, muting our voices when it is time for our voices to be heard. Even saying and doing the right thing becomes relative and subjective under the watchful and overbearing eye of those who hate us. This is not to say that whites are mean people, it is to say that this form of cultural domination keeps individuals even as powerful as Barack Obama from using the words “black man” in public (try to think about the last time you heard President Obama use those words).

I asked Stacey, the producer, if there would be another person on the phone with myself and Rev. Jackson. She said “You’ll be on with Rev. Al Sharpton.”

“Oh, okay,” I said.

I’d been on several shows with Al Sharpton in the past, and I’ve always found him to be an interesting man. No one mobilizes black people better than Al and if there were ever a black man who struck fear in the establishment, it would be him. I also learned to be mindful of just how closely aligned I became with Al, since I don’t always agree with his views. At the same time, it is our diversity of viewpoints that allows us to support one another. As a professor, I have always agreed with Rev. Sharpton’s perspective that black scholars don’t do enough to help the black community. As a pastor and Civil Rights leader, Rev. Sharpton understands my critique regarding the need for black leaders to listen to younger voices in the black community.

I eventually became a weekly commentator on Rev. Sharpton’s radio show, and it quickly became my favorite media appearance each week. We would discuss serious

issues, but we would also have fun. It's the ability to have fun while fighting for justice that makes me appreciate my time with Reverend Al.

Being a believer in free speech, I had objections to what I perceived to be Rev. Sharpton's argument that it should be illegal to use the word "nigger" in public. Being called a "nigger" means you need to get pimp slapped and beat down, not arrested. Finally, I parted with Al during the case of football star Michael Vick, who was accused of dog fighting, sent to prison and vilified by the American public. Al took the side of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) who worked overtime to throw Michael Vick under the bus. I personally felt that Vick made a terrible mistake, but that as a young man, he should eventually be given the right to play football again and repair his broken life.

Although I would have supported Al Sharpton and Rev. Jackson in past presidential elections (had they received the Democratic nomination), I quietly fear the day that any pastor is to become president. There is a reason church and state should be separated. The mind of the religious figure can sometimes be riddled with a powerful self-righteousness that can only be bestowed by a higher power. This problematic monopoly on the truth can sometimes lead one to believe that individual liberties should be put to the wayside in favor of a more paternalistic dictatorship and absolute control over human choice and condition. Every pimp in America controls his employees by presuming that he knows what's best for them, and there are honestly quite a few pimps in the pulpit. One hundred years after electing your first religious figure into the white House, you become another Iran.

The conversation with Jesse and Al over the Don Imus situation was as interesting to listen to as it was to participate. I did not feel compelled to speak more than necessary, since I have tremendous respect for Reverends Sharpton and Jackson as veterans of American civil rights. At the same time, I felt it necessary to inject a fresh, youthful, scholarly and practical voice into the conversation, as there are times when being perched high on the tree can lead one to see a reality that is simply not in sync with the common man and woman. I've always worked hard to be a man of the people, so I listen to people to learn what they are thinking.

Jesse and Al had solutions to the Imus problem that were tried, true and effective. As men of action, Revs Sharpton and Jackson had planned protests around the country to challenge MSNBC for their support of Don Imus. Black public scholars are good at talking, but not so good at actually following through with meaningful action. We are trained by academia that if you talk about something long enough, it will eventually change itself. While there is certainly room for intellectual leadership, we must be sure that words are followed by activity, or the words get lost in the wind. At the very least, scholars should provide action plans to the community that will turn our instructions into reality.

Although I respected Al and Jesse's plans for protest, my mind went in other directions. One thing I know about MSNBC, or any news organization, is that they are, first and foremost, a CORPORATION. Knowing how corporations think and what makes them tick is exactly how you gain the ability to stab the dragon in the heart.

I knew that when it came to how Don Imus was viewed by his colleagues, race was almost entirely secondary in their perception of him. Imus' supporters didn't back him

because he was another white man. They didn't like him because he wore a cowboy hat or had a really great show. They liked Don Imus...in fact, loved him, for one reason: He was a money-maker.

The heads of major media organizations revel in the fact that Imus can connect them with a sellable product (his audience), which makes them pay Imus large sums of money to host their shows.

The system works well, as long as it's working. Media is not about entertainment. It is about *making money for Corporate America*. If you stop the flow of money, you stop the flow of power.

On the radio with Rev. Sharpton and Rev. Jackson, I was thinking out loud on ways to make sure the system stopped working. I mentioned one simple reality to Jesse and Al: Any white man will abandon another white man if he is no longer making money. The same is true for African-Americans, Asians and other ethnic groups.

When comparing a major media outlet to the drug game, one additional truth is that becoming a problem will get you "whacked". Many drug murders do not occur because of one person gets angry at another. They occur because of a conflict of interest. For thousands of years, men have killed their friends due to conflicts of interest. Well, women have too, but you get the point.

I mentioned that if we get to the bottom of the Don Imus "paper trail" (his source of income), we could have some impact on his job security. The key was not to go after Imus. It was also not to go after MSNBC. It was to go after his CORPORATE SPONSORS. Getting to the financial root of the issue was the key in all this.

Along with making a profit, corporate sponsors must answer to those from whom they are making their money, the consumer. If the consumer is not happy with the nature of the medium through which corporations are delivering their messages, they may no longer be willing to purchase their products. Most consumers pay little attention to a show's list of corporate sponsors. However, highlighting that list might bring problems for the company if their hosts are engaged in controversial behavior.

One way I knew we could turn off some of the Don Imus corporate sponsors was by relying on America's disdain for obvious racism. Americans don't like the idea of racism, especially what I call "first-grader" racism, which usually comes in the most blatant form. "First grader" racism is direct, good old fashioned racial hate; the kind that rarely occurs in today's society. However, stomping out the first grader racism is what makes Americans feel that they are doing something important.

Examples of first grader racism might include the following:

- 1) Hearing someone use the word "nigger"
- 2) Someone joining the skinheads, Neo-Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan
- 3) Someone hanging a noose on his neighbor's front door.
- 4) Someone admitting that they do not like black people because they are black.
- 5) Anyone in the South who puts the Confederate Flag on the back of his or her truck (we all know that only people from the south can be racist, right?).

Although most Americans hate the idea of racism, they are quite ready and willing to keep the practice of racial exclusion alive. Americans won't agree with Imus using terms like "Nappy Headed Hoe", but they will certainly applaud the likes of Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity, who spout incredibly racist rhetoric week after week.

Many Americans are the first to attack those who use the word "nigger", but they are the last to challenge the prison system and its Jim Crow-like incarceration of millions of black men.

Americans are quick to go after the skinhead and boo him on Jerry Springer, but they are the last to show any concern for the fact that most universities in America have at least 20 or 30 academic departments that have never tenured (or even hired) a black faculty member in over 100 years of existence.

Many Americans think that electing a president who is 50% black implies that racism is dead and buried and that there is no need for leadership within the black community. Such values remind us that when it comes to race and racism, America clearly needs to learn a few lessons.

That is the great American Hypocrisy when it comes to race. What is most interesting is that there are times when this hypocrisy can be used as a weapon to cue up social norms to help your cause. Most Americans believe they are not racist, so it's easy to get them to mobilize against blatant racism. The tradeoff is that there is a tremendous backlash when you work to get America to confront the subtle, damaging and poisonous venom of institutionalized racial inequality.

The Don Imus situation was, relatively speaking, a slam dunk. Even people with little understanding of racism were made uncomfortable by the term “Nappy headed hoe.” Of course there are those in the Right Wing (and black commentators paid to support their rhetoric) who will defend nearly any vile thing that anyone says about black people. But in this case, they were in the minority. I explained to Jesse and Al that if they simply put Imus’ sponsors on the spot, they could get Imus off the air. Corporations are, by definition, relatively conservative and completely disinterested in even the slightest bit of controversy. The show with Jesse and Al lasted an hour, and at that time, I had no idea that this was going to be the biggest news story of the month, and perhaps even the entire year.

A few days later, when I saw Jesse and Al holding a press conference, I listened carefully to their words. Even though they’d implemented my idea of going after Imus’ corporate sponsors, they didn’t mention my name. That was actually for the best, since I’ve often felt that my university hates me enough for speaking out on issues of race. It amazes me that many northeastern campuses claim to embrace liberal thought, but even they break and bend the rules of free expression when it comes to black issues. The disease of racism affects us all, and it has its greatest impact on those who think they’ve been cured.

Soon after our conversation on the radio, the strategy of going after the corporate sponsors of Don Imus and his Show started to work. Once I heard that one of Imus’ major sponsors had jumped ship, I knew he was done. The other predictable element of American behavior is the Band Wagon Effect. When one major individual or group agrees or disagrees with an idea, the rest of the world can easily end up following suit. This effect is especially strong among risk-averse corporations, who avoid

The experiences of Dog the Bounty Hunter and Don Imus were great reminders of the following truisms about America:

America is a capitalist country.
America is more capitalist than it is racist.
America is more capitalist than it is sexist.
America is more capitalist than it is homophobic.
America is more capitalist than it is democratic.

I agree with the late great actor Ozzie Davis who said, "America will forgive you for being black, but it will never forgive you for being poor."

You can be a lot of things in America, but having the right amount of money trumps nearly everything. Even President Bush, a cowboy from Texas, would embrace the gayest, blackest, woman on earth if she had enough money in her pocket. Capitalism is America's building block and also the ultimate trump card.

In America, money overrules nearly every value system we hold dear. Prestigious academic institutions across America pimp themselves out to television networks and regularly accept unqualified students in order to make money through NCAA sports. Politicians regularly sell out the American people to special interest groups who bring enough cash to the table. Baptist ministers were bought out with faith-based funding during the 2004 Presidential election. Otherwise repulsive men become "woman magnets" if one part of their body is massive enough: their wallet. So yes, size really DOES matter in relationships.

Human beings need resources. In America, a country that has been eaten alive by its excesses, the need to obtain the financial drug that keeps us high is both alarming and perpetual. Americans under save, under invest,

overspend and over borrow. All of this behavior is fueled by VH-1 episodes that make us want to live like Paris Hilton.

It's too bad that Martin Luther King was not a Finance Professor. If only he'd had a financial expert next to him during his movement, he might have come to understand the missing, yet most critical element of his drive toward equality. Martin Luther King was a fearless man who realized that African-Americans may have been poor in cash, but wealthy in faith. Faith in God is what keeps people moving, even when they are weary and weak. It is what allows you to look in the face of any obstacle and realize that there is light at the end of the tunnel, even when you've seen certified reports stating that the tunnel is dark from beginning to end.

Beyond our tremendous faith, we all need liberation from the thing we fear most: Not being able to provide for our families. Many powerful movements in the black community started with great ideas and a large amount of spirit. Through time, however, many movements died because the life-sustaining force of resource acquisition and allocation was not part of the movement's infrastructure.

"I would keep going, but I got bills to pay," says the former activist, who now takes a full-time job with IBM and can no longer work with the community center.

"I used to wanna keep it real, but now I have to keep it REALISTIC," says the student who takes the corporate job after college, cuts off her dreadlocks and only uses "radical black language" when she is at home at the dinner table.

“If we keep acting this way, we are going to ruin our careers,” says the doctor, lawyer, or professor in graduate school, who fears speaking out against blatant injustice in the workplace.

If you ever want to know why someone does something you don't understand, the money trail is a good place to start. If you want to figure out why politicians make laws that their constituents clearly don't support, find out who is giving them money. Everything from why a hooker hooks to why an attorney represents a child molester almost always connects to money.

Given that many human incentives usually have a paper trail, it is critical to understand how these trails work. One must know how to sniff them out and analyze the paper trail of others, while being mindful of your own. Once you've determined your own paper trail, it becomes critical to learn how to dictate and create the kind of paper trail that will create the right incentives for you. It's much easier to do the right thing when you are not being penalized for doing so.