

Smoke Screen Junkies

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney
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Don't you just love watching magicians perform?

From the great Harry Houdini to David Copperfield, we always seem to have the same reaction.....wonder and amazement.

I mean, in your mind you know there is absolutely no way they can actually perform that feat, but no matter how many times they perform it and we see it, we want to know how they pulled it off.

While you are sitting there overwhelmed in amazement by the feat being performed, you aren't paying attention to the sleight of hand movements and behind the scenes activities that are allowing the feat to appear spectacular.

There is a different type of magic show that has been and continues to be a part of the African-American experience, and I call it a smoke screen.

A smoke screen, by definition, is an action intended to conceal or confuse. In the military, smoke screens are used to hide movement from an enemies' line of sight.

There are so many circumstances and ailments that plague the black community, to the point that one would argue that the black community remains under attack. Whether through rampant increases in life-threatening diseases, black-on-black crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, high unemployment, educational disparities, high incarceration rates, etc., the deck looks like it is stacked against us on paper.

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However, if you step back and take a macro-view of the situation, you become enthralled in it like that audience member viewing a magician at work. It is not until you take a micro-view of the situation, that you realize that there are many contributing factors that can be addressed by getting engaged and involved in highlighting the root causes of these ailments and seek to address them proactively.

In my experience, many black people have a history of sometimes being reactive in nature, but neglecting proactive solutions.

While we are mad and up-in-arms about what just happened to us, something else new is being concocted and perpetrated against us and we remain behind the 8-ball.

Just like drugs or reality TV, we become junkies, focused on the "Look at what happened to us" as opposed to "Let's make sure that this never happens to us!"

Someone does something to impact us, then we march and protest and look for attention. But then what?

While we are focused on the smoke screen of the "Look at what happened to us," what are we doing to prevent it or change it or modify it?

We need to stop being Smoke Screen Junkies, getting high on the history of our past and the plight of our long-suffering.

We must become the magician, not the confused audience member. .that doesn't have a clue of what's going on.

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