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Professor Turner

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Where's Our Leader?

There was a time when Black leadership meant moral clarity, sacrifice, and vision for the entire people, not just for personal gain or some weird viral content. Today, however, leadership has shifted from the podium to the platform, from the pulpit to the podcast. Our children are being discipled not by pastors or community elders, but by entertainers and social media personalities who thrive on confusion, controversy, and clout. Where are our leaders!? They are silenced, canceled, incarcerated, or worse, replaced by noise.

In today's Black America, influence outweighs integrity. Our so-called leaders are now celebrities from LeBron James, Oprah Winfrey, even Tyler Perry; all figures whose success is admirable, but whose positions often lack spiritual and moral foundation, no matter how good the media portrays them. Lebron James curses like a sailor on the floor at NBA games and he's supposed to be a leader to the youth around the world! They give us representation, yes, but representation without transformation is just a costume.

More dangerously, hood famous figures like Charleston White and 607 Unc are stepping into leadership vacuums with twisted and blasphemous tongues. They weaponize misinformation and cloak it in street wisdom. 607 Unc's comment, "If Jesus died for your sins and rose, then your sins are no longer paid for," is not just a hard theological error, it's damn near spiritual warfare! It angers me that my little cousins say this and laugh about it; yet, deep down, seeking

answers and coming to realizations that these figures are full of lies. These ideas are not liberating young minds at all. The elders' faith, the one that survived slavery, Jim Crow, drug infestation, and mass incarceration, is being mocked in exchange for a hustle that leads right back to the streets our ancestors fought to escape.

It's not just influencers corrupting the soul of leadership, it's the justice system, too. Black men who once held global influence are being paraded through courtrooms and prison cells. Bill Cosby, R. Kelly, P. Diddy. Chris Brown. We kick these men when they are down. While some are guilty and others are questionable, what's more dangerous is the void they leave behind. When our most visible men fall, there's no one righteous enough, there's no one brave enough, to take their place. And in that absence, the culture begins to rot.

Our music shifts from *soul* and *uplift* to *drill* and *despair*. Our heroes are now "survivors" of their own fame, not builders of the people, not united by a common goal. Their message? "Get money. Get power. Get girls. But don't worry about the soul, we only live once."

Even the Black Church, once the sanctuary of strength, is falling into contradiction. I recently heard a pastor, Phillip Anthony Mitchell, say we should pray to the devil for unrepented souls. That's not just unbiblical, it's demonic! The Word is clear: *Resist the devil and he will flee from you* (James 4:7). Yet now, some churches are more aligned with TikTok theology than the timeless truth of Scripture.

Furthermore, the government may legalize what it wants, but the Church cannot conform to culture at the cost of conviction. Black male pastors marrying other men inside the church building is being celebrated as progressive, but for many of us, it feels like spiritual compromise.

It's not hate, it's heartbreak. We're not judging; rather, we're grieving. Because the Church used to set the tone for the neighborhood. Now, it barely holds the key to its own front door.

Where are our leaders? I don't mean to sound old. But they killed them. Malcolm X, shot for speaking against hypocrisy and corruption. Martin Luther King Jr., gunned down after shifting from integration to economic justice. Marcus Garvey, exiled for building global unity among Africans. Fred Hampton, assassinated before he turned 22. Dr. Sebi, mysteriously dead after challenging Big Pharma.

No, these men were not perfect, but they stood for something eternal, something that outlived them. They preached discipline, dignity, and direction. They taught that liberation came with order. That freedom came with truth. And that love without correction isn't love at all, it's abandonment.

I remember the story of Marcus Garvey as a boy. His father told him to dig a hole and left him there all night. Young Garvey cried out, thinking someone would come. No one did. The lesson was seared into his spirit: "No one is coming to save you. You must rise on your own." That is the call to our generation now. No one is coming to save us; not a celebrity, not a pastor with a podcast, not the next viral voice. We must rise. We must write. We must teach. We must pray and build. We must raise up a new generation of leaders, not entertainers, not influencers, but servants with vision.

We don't need perfect men. We need principled ones.

We don't need louder voices. We need truthful ones.

And we don't need more representation. We need real leadership.

Reader Review:

Hey Randall!

I think this essay is really clear, but there are definitely some points I believe could be more effective if expanded on, some of which I noted in my comments! If you decide to approach revision, I would love to see more on your opinions about what positive Black leadership looks like and what the societal push and pull between positive and negative influence can manifest as.

You have some absolutely fantastic sentences throughout this essay that were truly captivating! I really would love to read more about this topic because it's never something I've had to think about, and not something that I had realized was an issue. I wonder if there's any room in your discussion for this specific phenomenon; that other cultures and genders may not register the importance of this topic and why it is important for everyone to know.

I also would recommend adding more discussion about your perception of what *does* make a strong and influential leader and how everyday people can work towards traits that reflect positive leadership. I think expanding on this point would add a stronger foundation on which to build the societal critiques. This may also leave room to open the discussion to other audiences.

For the section about religious leadership, I suppose I'm curious about how sexuality factors into strong leadership; sexuality has never been an indicator of a strong/weak leader as far as I know, so I'm interested in how this ties in to your main goal for this exploration piece! Of course, there isn't a unilateral opinion about sexuality in religious groups currently, but this is certainly not something, to my understanding, that specifically impacts men and boys and their

strength as leaders. Personally, I believe someone can be a fantastic leader regardless of their sexuality, but if there's research to prove otherwise, I'd be interested to learn. My advice for this portion is to stick to other areas of the Church's corruption that may be more of an indicator of how leadership needs to improve.

As far as the structure of your essay goes, I believe things flow really well as you have them, but if you want to shake up the format a bit, you could use the Marcus Garvey story as a bookend for this piece by introducing it in the beginning and concluding with your takeaways from that story. I also believe this would help you introduce your specific focus earlier on (leadership as it pertains to black men/boys). You start by talking about Black leadership generally, providing examples of both men and women and discussing black youth as a whole. But, this piece is certainly focused on how this issue impacts men, and I think establishing that focus just a little sooner would provide clarity to readers.