The False Narrative

Edward Earl Bell
The False Narrative
Dr. Ed Bell
edbell1906@yahoo.com

The media paint a gloomy picture of black males; the visual depiction of black males casts a negative portrayal of them—from sitcoms, to hip-hop music, to print media, and to drug and violence-related movies. Particularly in movies, the black man is the scoundrel; the first one killed; signaling a quick ending to his life—and yet the movie continues without his presence. We tend to expect the demise of the black man in movies; this expectation is suggestive of what we see in life; art is life!

The notion of black-on-black crime is widespread. We tend to think that black-on-black crime is reality—not realizing that “86% of whites perpetrate crimes against other whites and 94% of blacks against blacks.” Williams stated, in the April 10, 2012 edition of the Root, the following: “The truth? ‘As the largest racial group, whites commit the majority of crimes in America. In particular, whites are responsible for the vast majority of violent crimes. With respect to aggravated assault, whites led blacks 2-1 in arrests; in forcible-rape cases, whites led all racial and ethnic groups by more than 2-1. And in larceny theft, whites led blacks, again, more than 2-1’”. Yet, there is no depiction of white-on-white crime in the media. However, black males are depicted as America’s criminals, and we in the black community allow that narrative to persist. The perception of the black man’s criminality has become mainstream’s reality.

This is no justification for the killing of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent not guilty verdict. It is clear to me that racial profiling played a part in Trayvon being suspected of wrongdoing. As we watch TV, we often see black men starring as drug dealers; we see them incarcerated; we see them portrayed most times in a negative manner. Yet, we wonder and become upset when the stereotypes become other’s realities. Stereotypes and perceptions can kill!

We must change the perceptions of black Americans. Black-on-black crime is not a reality for all; if we accept this proposition, then we are excluding those law-abiding black men. The black-on-black crime phrasing tears down and weakens the positive narrative of contributing black men—who are ultimately painted with the same brush of criminality.

The media’s portrayal of black men is killing our black boys; we have allowed it. People tend to believe what they see. Changing the black-on-black crime narrative and emerging with clear and responsive depictions of black men is necessary; we are successful; we “ain’t” all in jail or criminal-minded. We have allowed the media to showcase black men as cheats, crooks, illiterate, killers, drug dealers, and scary. We have bought into that false narrative and mainstream Americans have too.