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What shall I tell my black boy?

Edward Earl Bell
What shall I tell my black boy who lives in a skin of blackness?

What shall I say?

I shall tell him that in 1619 or perhaps before, that the black man was enslaved, used, killed, and abused. I shall tell him that his manhood was once legally denied; less than human was his reality.

Don’t be afraid to tell him the truth.

What shall I tell him?

Tell him that his people fought and bleed; cried and died; hung and despised. Tell him more; tell him life was hard; killings weren’t few.

What shall I tell my black boy who lives in a skin of blackness?

Tell him of the difficulties of freedom; the marches and of the hoses—tell him of the white hoods; tell him of the lynchings. Tell him the truth.

Tell him of the movements; the cries for justice—and the songs of freedom; tell him of deaths, from little girls to little boys; men and women.

Tell him of the struggles; tell him of the pain; tell him of the hatred; tell him of lies and the few gains.

Tell him of separate but equal.

What shall I tell this black boy? Tell him of courageous black men like Thurgood Marshall, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey; tell him of Nelson Mandela; tell him of Adam Clayton Powell; tell him of Rev. Dr. William Barber; tell him of Rev. Al Sharpton; tell him these things. Tell him of their greatness—of their courage.

Tell the black boy of Paul Lawrence Dunbar: *a crust of bread and a corner to sleep in; a minute to smile and an hour to weep in; a pint of joy to a peck of trouble—and never of laugh but the moans come double—and that is life.*

What shall I tell my black boy who lives in a skin of blackness? Tell him that his skin is fine; his skin is his pride—his skin is royalty; his skin is his life—his blackness is no mistake; his skin is deliberate.

Tell him he descends from kings; he discovered and created; he designed and solved; tell the black boy he has pride—full of dignity—life and of hope—and dreams never to be deferred.

Tell him that foes may come; danger may lurk; hate may abound; tell him of Nat Turner; tell him of Dr. King; tell him of Frederick Douglass; tell him.

Tell him in spite of odds, in spite of loses, in spite of dislikes; he must persist; eyes fixed, more determined; focused and deliberate; knocked down; derailed—but back on track; lied on—but keep telling him the truth.
Tell the black boy; he can achieve; tell him regardless of what is said or what is done; he can deliver; being determined is the weapon for his success.

What shall I tell the black boy who lives in a skin of blackness? What shall I say? Remind him of Barack Obama; tell him these words: “Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us, Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us; Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, Let us march on till victory is won.”

Tell my black son, “we have come over a way that with tears has been watered; We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered.”

I must tell him so much more. I must tell him the truth.

The truth lies with the disdain of the black skin.

Tell him that hatred ain’t universal; all don’t hate or discriminate; tell him that colorblindness is not real; his skin is black; he is seen as a black man and then a man.

Tell him the truth; his blackness is his gift and his strength; he is loved and cared for; he can do and has done; he is bright; he is important and he is intelligent; he is a black man mighty and strong—worthy of living and of loving.

What shall I tell my black boy who lives in a skin of blackness?

What shall I say? I shall tell him the truth.

Dr. Edward E. Bell
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