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The Purpose of Black Role Models

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The Purpose of a Black Role Model
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An insight based informational, and biographical piece submitted on behalf of the
Dominican University of California Communication & Media Studies Department

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

2

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I would like to thank my mother and father for encouraging me in all that I do and my ability to freely think. My father specifically has introduced me to the importance of reading in today's society as well as the significance in knowing who you truly are and developing the "self."

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The Purpose of a Black Role Model

4

Abstract

When thinking of role models, the notion is typically speculated from the perspective of the youth; though, black role models are known to have a direct contribution on the lives of men and women in all stages of adulthood as well (18+). Researching the essence and character of role models, more specifically black role models will include, but are not limited to: 1) how they transcend into the role model they eventually become; 2) what is considered to be important in not just a leader but a black leader; and 3) the barriers black people have to fight to become role models. The positive self-image is a common trait in many role models, specifically black role

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

5

models. Black people in (relative) recent history have had to overcome a significant mental barrier, mainly due to the racist interpretation of the pigmentation in a black person's skin. An inferiority complex can develop over time, due to the role model's experience through systematic racism, bigotry, and segregation in years past, inevitably nurturing a negative self-image. This opposes what is generally looked for in a role model, and part of the reason a search for a positive self-image should be seriously considered during the quest for an adequate role model. As role aspirants we must learn to adopt specific characteristics that our black role models possess. The characteristics that must be aimed to obtain will coincide with simple success principles learned from multiple best-selling self-development books. These books ultimately focus on the recognition of the "self." After reading said books, there is no wonder why David Goggins, Oprah Winfrey, and Bob Marley, three featured black role models, are recognized as successful role models.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

6

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ...	2
Abstract ...	3 - 4
Table of Contents...	5
Introduction...	6 - 9
The self-image...	8 - 10
Psycho-Cybernetics...	10 - 14
Influential Black Role Models...	14 - 22
a. David Goggins (p.15 - 19)	
b. Oprah Winfrey (p.19 - 20)	
c. Bob Marley (p. 21 - 22)	
A Further Examination of the Self-Image...	22 - 24
Insight on Black Role Models and Conformity...	25 - 28
Black Role Models and The Expression of Resiliency...	28 - 29

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

7

The Raise of Awareness in the Black Community...	30
Conclusion...	31 - 33
Annotated Bibliography...	34 - 38

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to examine and describe the versatility, effectiveness, and overall purpose for a black role model. This process involves mainly focusing on the value of the self-image, alongside other characteristics commonly related to success principles described in various peer-reviewed articles and self-development books. Black role models are the epitome of one who acquires personal success through the use of positive self-image and stoic behavior. While focusing on role aspirants in their adulthood, this paper also looks to examine the role a positive self-image would play on children, adults (18+), and even black role models themselves. In particular; David Goggins, Oprah Winfrey, and Bob Marley's lives will be examined and discussed in hopes to extract the specific characteristics that make a black role model so effective.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

8

A role model is a vital part of society as a whole. Many Americans have role models or have had them at some point in their life. *Oxford Languages* defines a role model as “a person looked at by others as an example to be imitated”(Oxford Languages). If we want to take a methodic approach toward success, then we must have role models who’s characteristics coincide with success principles. When dissecting the lives of black role models, one may notice that there is something in common with a vast majority of them. Black role models portray a positive self-image. Black people all over the U.S. and around the world have a commonality, in oppression. Black role models must tap into a specific strength to endure all racial oppression. Racial oppression can be very destructive to anyone’s self confidence and self-image. Racial oppression can either slowly eat away at one’s self-esteem, or move further to feed it. Although the behavioral outcome is believed to be dependent on where one sits with their own self-image.

What is special about Black role models find a way to create a positive self-image for themselves, despite the toxic environment from which they may have came. As human beings, we all of the mediating tools we come across in our life time guarantee that many will manifest in negative forms because we will always have negative experiences, disappointing experiences, embarrassing experiences, etc. The true test of our character is determined through which the degree we can pull ourselves up out of those negative experiences and remain on course with the goals we look to achieve. Black role models have gone through oppression and black role models have either maintained or created a positive self-image despite events designed to tear it down. A very difficult task to do, thus why we must imitate black role models and dissect the character that turned them into a black role model in the first place. Through this process, if you find that

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

9

your black role model has a positive self-image, keep that role model and find how to incorporate their characteristics into your life.

A psychology professor at Dominican University of California, Veronica Fruiht instructs a course named Psychology of Mentoring. After attending the course, I recognized the emphasis she placed on the understanding of fundamental difference(s) between a role model and a mentor. The Cambridge Dictionary definition for role model reads “a person who someone admires and who’s behavior they try to copy;” the Cambridge Dictionary defines a mentor to be “a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school.” Professor Fruiht explains a key aspect that differs a role model from a mentor is that act of being present. As a role model, one does not personally know the role aspirant. The role model simply lives their life, and it is up to the role aspirant to find qualities in the role model and distinguish those qualities to find the one’s that are suitable to who they are and whom the wish to become. Though, as a mentor it is a far more personal connection that a mentee has with their mentor. This does not mean a role model cannot act as mentor. A role model be acting as a mentor to a close friend or family member while resining a role model to them and others at the same time. A mentor is someone who has a closer connection and gives continuous advice typically through a pre-organized plan of action in order to assist someone for a specific roles and on going challenges.

The Oxford dictionary definition of “role model” and “mentor” reveals another key difference where a role aspirant looks to “copy” their role model and a mentee looks to learn directly from their mentors personalized advice specifically for the mentee. The mentors personal

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

10

connection is the variable that creates the basic, fundamental distinction between the role model and the mentor. The difference must be evaluated when dissecting your role model.

The Self-Image

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition for “self-image” reads, “One’s concept of oneself or of one’s role,” although the Cleveland Clinic dives a bit deeper into their definition, stating, “Self-image is the personal view, or mental picture, that we have of ourselves. Self-image is an “internal dictionary” that describes the characteristics of the self, including such things as intelligent, beautiful, ugly, talented, selfish, and kind. These characteristics form a collective representation of our assets and liabilities as we see them”(Cleveland Clinic). These definitions are accurate but do not answer the overarching questions such as: Why is positive self-image such an important characteristic to have? Why is it important to look for a role model that has a positive-image? What is the correlation between a black role model and a positive self-image?

The self-image is a product of learning. Our childhood experiences have a major influence on our self image. Experiences with others and relationships reinforce what is thought and felt about ourselves. Stan Maria Magdalena (what is she)explains how “self-worth does not manifest until middle childhood, but it is based on behaviors observed and related by adults, self-evaluation being considered fluctuating and rudimentary during this period”(Self Image, Stan). (This describes that there are a number of significant events that transpire in the childhood portion of our lives which play a crucial role in the shaping of ourselves, thus our self-image. “The projection of the future self (what I would like to be) is strictly related to social self”(Self Image,

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

11

Stan). If someone's social self is being tore down by their peers, the likelihood of one to have confidence in their future self begins to deplete, slowly but surely.

Black role models can be a saving grace in aspiring role aspirants, especially those in the black community. Children in the black community can easily grow up with a negative self-image as it is common for the black community become marginalized from society due to lack of wealth, crime, drugs, and discriminating acts by police and/or dominant group. The sociological definition for "dominant group" a social group that controls the value system and rewards in a particular society" (the inclusion)

The black community experiences racism, discrimination, poverty, segregation, etc. Some of these communities in America experience this on a regular basis. Also stated in Stan Maria Magdalena's article, (name of article) "The development of self-concept acquires more stability towards the end of childhood... The factors with great impact in developing the self-image in childhood look like: their own prior behaviors and performance; the behaviors of other individuals toward them and the expectations that others hold for their future performance. Experiences have a steady impact on the life of the developing adolescent, whether or not he/she is experiencing demoralizing treatment first hand or seeing it done to others. The Socio-cultural theory, based upon cognitive development and created by Lev Vygotsky, states there are "mediating tools" in our life that determine how we view and react to the outside world(Communication Theory). The IGI Global dictionary defines mediating tools as "tools that shape the way humans interact with reality." These mediating tools vary from culture to culture; if left unkept, mediating tools in the black community can act as an unstable foundation for their life. This is why black role models are so important and unique. Black role models have a history of being able to

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

12

overcome a pre-destined negative self-image, so studying their characteristics that brought them over the hump, is something a role-aspirant should do if they look to do so themselves.

Psycho-Cybernetics

Earl Nightingale, a sensational radio speaker and author who wrote about human development, describes a successful person as one who “knows where they are and where they are going, and are progressively moving in that direction.” He calls it “The progressive realization of a worthy ideal.” In order to be fully aware of our progression, we must be aware of our actions, and we must be aware of our stream of thoughts. We must look to be aware of all the thoughts occupying our mind. Maxwell Maltz’s ideology in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics* explains that when you start to think different thoughts your actions will then begin to change. Our thoughts, actions, and emotions all go hand in hand with one another. Our thoughts create our emotions and our emotions strongly determine the course of action we take. According to Maltz, we have the ability to decipher between good thoughts and bad thoughts as long as we remain aware that we are thinking. Maxwell Maltz was a plastic surgeon who studied how one’s behavior and view of themselves would change after performing plastic surgery on a number of his patients. He recognized that after the patient’s thought pattern began to change, so did their outlook on life and the success that followed. Developing an understanding of how our thoughts work creates a respite from suffering. Learning to take full control of our thoughts can give us a leg up on circumstance. We may have the unique opportunity to presently engage with ourselves. One’s positive

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

13

self-image creates a platform for anyone to build success on for themselves and realize success is not something outside of us, but extracted from our inner being.

People develop the way they see the world based on their surroundings and life experiences as “humans are considered to be social and reflexive in nature and this causes human thought and behavior to be altered by the complexities of that social world”(Communication Theory). Connecting the way black people react when bombarded with slurs and seeds of false inadequacies by a dominant group. It is a natural human reaction to believe what is “socially acceptable,” to also be considered true, or recognized as fact. For instance, black groups and individuals who are repeatedly reminded that they hold less value than another with a lighter skin tone, will begin to subconsciously believe and identify themselves with the false-inadequacy. Black people have been trained to think and believe as though they are an inferior race. Black people begin to nurture a negative self-image as soon as they believe what a dominant group's perception of them is. Once it becomes a belief, they will begin to act in such a way that portrays their inferiority. Black role models are here to indirectly guide role-aspirants in developing a positive self-image by displaying their characteristics for the role-aspirant to imitate. The role-aspirant can use the positive self-image as an asset in their quest for a successful experience in any walk of life.

Black role models play a pivotal role in society and everyday life. Children around the world worship their role models, and tend to mimic the characteristics of the role model. For example, growing up Kobe Bryant's role model was Michael Jordan. Kobe Bryant was a very influential NBA Hall of Famer and Author; Michael Jordan is widely known as the best player to ever play in the NBA. At a young age Bryant would mirror Jordan similar to the way a child who

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

14

loves superheroes goes in the backyard with a cape on and prepares to fly. As you age you become more aware of how life works and deeper aspects of the people, environments, and society around us. Kobe Bryant as he grew older started to recognize the importance behind the skills he was mirroring. In connection to this, adults and young adults can take a deeper look into what makes a role model who he/she is and the characteristics of the role model that led them to their success. As an adult role aspirant, one should choose to value the character of their preferred role model, or perhaps to focus on their daily habits, and study the individual thoroughly. The process of choosing a role model as an adult becomes far more detail oriented, than it is as a child. As an adult, a black role model is encouraged because a role aspirant can learn how to develop or maintain a positive self-image. A positive self-image is a key aspect in the development of a successful life. The positive self-image is displayed through the character of various black role models.

According to Najin Lee, %'96 students at Harvard University, a role model is “one who provides an example for the group which he/she/they represent. As individuals, role models are people who have actualized the values held dear by their groups. They have “made it” according to the standards of their people.” Every role model plays a position in society, some good and some bad. There is not a specific aspect of a person that makes one role model better than another. black role model. For years black people have overcome racism, a poison, potent enough to kill anyone’s self-esteem. Black people who overcome obstacles that deplete their self-esteem

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

15

is a step closer to realizing the power a positive self-image carries. The moment this notion is understood and realized is the moment they begin their journey to be represented as a “black role models” to any role-aspirant. Black role models are special because they provide an examples of positive self-image that is displayed through their character and being.

As children, we grow up with a role model, maybe even several. But also as children, we generally do not yet understand the significance of a fitting role model and the impact they could have on our livelihood. Children often view a role model as simply someone who wish to be. Though, adults possess the awareness and life experience to recognize the true significance of a role model. Adults can dissect the nuances of a role model for a wider, realistic perspective of what life was like for the role model. Road blocks, mentalities, practices, philosophies, beliefs etc. could all be taken note of when dissecting a role model. As adult role-aspirants we must find the aspects of our black role model that will correlate to goals in our life and what we want to become. Past experiences of black role models and the routes, attitudes, ideologies, actions, etc. will unveil the secrets to remaining stoic through life’s everyday ups and downs. To be stoic, you must have a positive sense of what will come after the endured pain. A characteristic of a positive self-image.

Influential Black Role Models

There are a number of role models in the world today, and every single one different from the next. Black role models are more relevant now than ever. In fact, Daily Mail created a list of the “Top 100 black role models” in the United Kingdom. Black excellence is beginning to

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

16

be widely recognized internationally. The world has been lucky enough to have black role models such as; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a civil rights activist known for his ability to lead and inspire millions on the movement of peace and equality for all; and Jackie Robinson, who persisted to become the first black man on a major league baseball team despite the hatred by the majority of those who surrounded him. Somewhere in between these lines is David Goggins, Oprah Winfrey, and Bob Marley. Three role models who can teach plenty all possess a positive self-image.

David Goggins, a Navy Seal known for his unique ability to maintain mental and physical strength and stability through outlandish obstacles; Oprah Winfrey, a well-known Philanthropist who's unique presence led to strong connections with men and woman of many ethnicities across the world; and Bob Marley, a Reggae artist who used the combination of; his talents, platform; and unique intellect to preach love, happiness, and all around peace during an age of extreme violence. Many character traits remain similar between the three role models, though the most powerful is each of their stoic personality and positive self-image. Black role models have the ability to portray to their role-aspirants through example what a stoic personality and positive self-image will do for one's personal growth and success. A black role model's upbringing, experiences, actions, etc. all play a part in the creation of their self-image, and the way they respond to it is what created their positive self-image.

a. Role Model: David Goggins

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

17

Maltz states, “ The ‘self-image’ is the key to human personality and human behavior. Change the self-image and you change the personality and the behavior”(*Psycho-Cybernetics, Maltz*). An adult who fosters a negative sense of self should look for a black role model to observe closely. A positive self-image for a black role model is built from personal experience.

Perseverance is a characteristic David Goggins acquired throughout his life. David Goggins’ mental, emotional, and physical prowess is a staple to Navy Seals and various other military forces of military in the United States. In my opinion, David’s life contains a lesson we can all learn from, specifically role aspirants who want to use a positive self-image to aid their path toward success. David Goggins is a black role model who’s life portrays the purpose of a black role model. David often publicly describes his past as was very overweight exterminator, and his past insecurities. Growing up Goggins was suffered from physical and emotional abuse, dominantly caused by his father, directed upon his family, or from racist white people he was around, in school, for example. Growing up witnessed death in person, as well as later in life during his time as a Navy Seal. Goggins experienced a lot of racism during his formative years living between in Buffalo, New York and Brazil Indiana.

Veteran’s Magazine describes David Goggins as “a hard guy... a survivor of abuse and bigotry who has overcome asthma, a learning disability, a stutter, obesity, and crushingly low self-esteem.” David contains the stoic attitude that is common in many black role models.

David Goggins book named *Cant Hurt Me: Master Your Mind and Defy The Odds* explains in explicit detail of what David has encountered and learned as a result from mental and physically strength and stability. Eventually, David became tired of living a life fueled by fear, insecurity, negativity and sorrow, David made a decision that something in him had to change.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

18

This meant moving on from; being the goofy kid in school, gaining excessive weight from drinking shakes after his final shift every night as an exterminator, and making excuses on why he remains an unsuccessful, or what Goggins calls it, “A piece of shit.”

In Chapter 2 of David Goggins book *Can't Hurt Me*, David states, “You are in danger of living a life so comfortable and soft, that you will die without ever realizing your true potential”(Can't Hurt Me, Goggins). David decided he wanted to change the course of his life, So he set out to become a Navy seal. This journey to join the Navy was no cake walk for David though. David went through “Absolute Hell!” to make it where he is today. David had mental disabilities that made it hard fro him to learn. He also had a stutter that he was very insecure about. David had a goal to change himself and he did. Instead of acting insecure about his mental disabilities, he decided to go at them head on.

David had to pass a test called the “ASVAB.” The ASVAB test stands for Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. Just to give an idea of how difficult this test was for David, he failed twice after studying both times extremely hard. But David persevered and did not quit. David had a positive image of himself passing that test and all costs. This displays the development of his self-image, and is an underlying reason why he was able to maintain motivation through failure. David convinced himself that it just meant that he must work even harder to pass the test next time. So every single day leading up to Goggins' 3rd and final attempt, David would use a stationary bicycle in the living room to stay in shape for the military meanwhile studying for hours at a time to pass the ASVAB test. This was an outward expression of David Goggins living his life with purpose. David's positive self-image helped him realize his goal to pass the ASVAB test by providing an extra mental push, creating space in his brain to to a failure into a

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

19

success. If David failed the second test and viewing himself after as a failure, he likely would not have even attempted to study for a third attempt and quit. With odds almost completely stacked against him, he persevered and found comfort in that. These subtle moments of perseverance drove David and gave his life meaning. Now these are moments David seeks. It seems that David Goggins could persevere through anything after the stories he tells in his book *Can't Hurt Me*. "Living with purpose changed everything for me" David claims.

Some accolades depicting Goggins' mental toughness include:

- Badwater Ultimate Marathon: This marathon is one of the hardest organized races know to man and David placed 3rd in twenty-five hours, forty-nine minutes, and forty seconds in 2007.

- Guinness Book of World Records: David, just five months after failing to break the Guinness Book of World Records, for seventeen hours David did four-thousand and thirty pull-ups and ended victorious in 2013.

- Infinitus 88k: Anther one of the hardest racing courses in the world, David comes in first place, beating the second place finisher by twenty whole minutes in 2016.

After time and time again of David Goggins being put through mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual trial, but it is his persevering mind that aid him in withstanding any upcoming barriers. David believes "it is possible to transcend anything that does not kill you." With all of these accomplishments, losses, and tragic events that are ever so aggressively shape David's life, the dedication and practice of "relentless self discipline" is where David found his purpose. *Can't Hurt Me*, explains how his childhood created him to be a depressed young adult lacking future aspirations for himself. David had to pull himself up from his bootstraps to become the

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

20

successful man he saw himself as. Amidst the years David saw himself as a failure, the years he spent trying to cover up who he truly was, he learned one very important thing. To “consider the F*****g source.” Go deep inside David says this is what it took for him to become comfortable in his own skin. Goggins had to take a look in the mirror and not be afraid to face the demons that were before him. David was able to accept himself for who he was and had the passion to become someone better. At this moment he changed the course of his life forever. As an adult role-aspirant, one can choose many different characteristics to focus on within a role model. For David Goggins, a role aspirant may point out David’s resiliency, another his dedication, and a third may recognize passion. What remains camouflaged is David’s Positive Self-Image.

A Positive Self-image, is often referred to as “Positive Self-Concept.” According to Dr. Rosenberg, a former University of Maryland Sociology Professor, receiving his PH.d from Columbia University, says the self-image or self concept is a “Totality of the individuals thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object” (soci.umd). If a positive self-image is a common trait a black role model has, researching what it took for the role model to achieve that state self-concept is significant. David Goggins With the use of his positive self-concept, became a black role model to people of all ages, and it is of the positive self-image that changed the way he saw the world and saw himself.

b. Role Model: Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey, much like David Goggins had a troubled upbringing and found her way out of a rough situation. Oprah was bullied at an early age. She was raped by her babysitter and her older cousin, Oprah was only 9 years old at the time. Oprah was also sexually abused by her

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

21

mother's boyfriend, her uncle, as well as a family friend(STMU). At a very early age life became very difficult for Oprah. Oprah was forced to hold secrets against her will, resulting in the pain from her abuse left to fester inside of her. These burdens would follow her for years. Oprah, just a bit later at 14 years old Oprah became pregnant, but the child died only two weeks after birth. Yet another life-altering tragedy Oprah experienced at such a young age. No matter the road block, Oprah persevered and never gave up on herself. Some time passes and Oprah was offered a job to be the first black female newscaster in Nashville, Tennessee. A job she eventually took as it a step toward her passion. Though the decision wasn't easy, as it meant she would not be able to finish college at Tennessee State. In a very controlling home she knew her father would wanted her to finish college. Despite what her dad believed, Oprah went on to follow her passions. No matter the crazy obstacles that have been thrown in Oprah's way, she takes it as a time for growth. According to (STMU) is her enjoyment in helping others through speaking through audiences and doing interviews. Oprah is now a widely-known philanthropist who uses her own traumatic experiences to assist and be a connection in lives of others on a very large platform.

Maltz believes that having a "Low self-esteem is like driving through life with a hand brake on"(psycho-cybernetics). Oprah, instead of having a negative outlook on who she is, and the events that helped create who she is, she learns to dismiss the negative idea she had of herself. She began to recognize these experiences as events that made her stronger, and an opportunity to help others in similar predicaments. Oprah stated, "Turn your wounds into wisdom." This proves point to her number one quality that role-aspirants should acquire from her is her sense of resiliency. Resiliency is the fight in you that is strengthened by opportunity or reward that lies ahead bearing of positives results. No matter the vicious obstacles Oprah has faced, she

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

22

remains content in the fact that wounds will heal, and we can find lessons within the healing process.

Oprah gave a commencement speech for Spelman College in Mississippi where she received the National Community Service Award. In this speech Oprah puts emphasis on the importance of not comparing yourself to other people. She says “Your life journey is to become more of who you are.” Focus on your own path, and know everyone has their own obstacles they must overcome. What Oprah’s experience teaches us is that comparing ourselves to other people immediately back peddles us from being the best version of ourselves we could be. If anything could be learned from her life, reflect on Oprah’s character, her perseverance, and her expression of believing in herself. Like Oprah we should train ourselves to take anything and everything as a lesson to be learned, and to view ourselves in such a way that we area success in the end.

c. Role Model: Bob Marley

Bob Marley, a Jamaican musician, born in 1945. A time period of extreme violence and deep civil and political unrest. Life in Jamaica is similar to how life is in the United States has been in 2020. In Bob Marley’s song “War” he says “Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior...until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation, until the color of mans skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes.” In

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

23

America now, Black Lives Matter created campaigns and protests to support black America from racism and police brutality, to promote peace and equal rights. Black Lives Matter and Bob Marley's philosophy partially based from Rastafarian religious teachings in Jamaica. Marley preached love and revolution in a time where society needed to change. Marley persisted, and through his music he doubled as an Idol and a target. Marley was looked up upon by millions in Jamaica and around the world. As explained in (Biographies, Marley) Marley was seen as a firm supporter of the peoples party. While Marley spent his time making music to bring light to the oppression in Jamaica and preach love, those who who felt threatened by the power his music had on the people of Jamaica, an attempt at assassination ran Marley right off stage at a concert. No matter the homicidal acts directed toward him, Marley remained consistent in his actions. Bob Marley believed in his philosophy. Marley was there to mediate love and hate. A few famous songs by Bob Marley are Buffalo Soldier, Redemption Song, No Woman No cry, and what he is most known for, Three Little Birds. Marley's impact as a role model grew as his popularity grew. Bob began to be known as "the sample of freedom" Marley stood for freedom. Not only freedom from government oppression, but freedom from yourself as well. When you are able to express love, you are expressing yourself in a positive light.

To stand for an unpopular opinion does not only take dedication, but it takes immense amounts of confidence. Dedication and confidence are two character traits alongside a positive self-image that could be adopted from Marley. Black role models with a positive self-image portray their confidence in about everything they do. Bob's happened to be within the confines of self expression. The confidence is felt behind the words that he sings. Marley is very passionate about the message he conveys to his audience. Through his message, Marley's musical success

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

24

grew. Marley's confidence is an expression of his positive self-image. The positive view of himself kickstarts him and the likelihood of his message creating a difference in the world. Success is a process of leaning successful habit and characteristics. Resiliency, confidence, a positive self-image, and the courage to follow a passion are all character traits or characteristics which seem to be clearly expressed through Bob Marley, his music, and his message.

A Further Examination of The Self-Image

A true role model possesses many characteristics, though the most valuable quality a role aspirant must look to imitate is the role model's positive self-image. A positive self-image assures various other successful traits, such as: the knowledge of the self, self-confidence, positive self-esteem, resiliency, etc. A positive self-image breeds also possibility. If someone believes they could successfully accomplish a task, it then has the capacity to be done. In order to complete a goal or task, you must be able to visualize it in your mind in the first place. There is a quote by Henry Ford which states, "whether you think you can or you can't, you are right." This means that your self-image is a catalyst. Your mind will remind you if your can or cannot do something, but your self-image will confirm your thoughts to be true or untrue. A negative image of oneself is often expressed as "I can't." This is because the image you have of yourself determines where you see your abilities fit. A positive self-image in the same situation, Success would have been visualized providing the opportunity for it to be realized. Lacking the positive self-image reduces the odds at success.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

25

The significance of a positive self-image is conveyed through *Think and Grow Rich* where Napoleon Hill states, “Helen Keller became deaf, dumb, and blind shortly after birth. Despite her greatest misfortune, she has written her name indelibly in the pages of the history of the great. Her entire life has served as evidence that no one is ever defeated until defeat has been accepted as reality.” (Think and grow rich) Hellen Keller, though not a black role model, is a prime example of a positive self-image. Hellen Keller being “deaf, dumb, and blind” has very strong reasons why there was not much for her to accomplishment in life and with a negative self-image, that idea would have remained true.

Anne Sullivan, Hellen Kellers teacher for about fifty years assisted Hellen, she was also blind, yet filled Hellen with positivity and faith in her own existence capabilities. Reversely, Hellen gave Anne’s life purpose. After years of learning Hellen began to learn how to communicate. Hellen’s positive self image created a capacity to fill and it was filled with years of faithful learning. Despite any difficulties along the way Hellen and Anne remained persistent. Napoleon also states in *Think and Grow Rich*, “There are no limitations to the mind except those that we acknowledge”(think and grow rich).

A black role model’s life has a key similarity to the life of Hellen Keller. That similarity is the ability to persevere through mental anguish and difficulties. Something David, Oprah, and Bob all have battled through. Battling beyond difficult times is what can empower one’s positive self-image. The opportunity to sees oneself overcome an obstacle gives you faith that you can expresses you capabilities. Black role models understand what it is like for their self-esteem to be torn down by tribulation, but they also know what it is like to be successful. This means we have

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

26

a way of discovering what are character traits our role models display in common. As black people view their tribulations as a point of learning instead of suffering or discouragement like Oprah said, they have the ability to become like their respective Black Role Model. Research on black role models suggests that “the concept of role models and mentors has become a ubiquitous concept used to address African American males’ most pressing needs. We contend that a prominent space of which ideas are promoted is through the circulation of discourse that helps to normalize how problems are rendered and the manner in which they are addressed”(Troubling The Waters, Johnson). In regards to the black role model and a positive self-image, this quote from the peer reviewed article, *Troubling the Waters: A Critical Essay on Black Male Role Models and Mentors* explains why we must have “discourse.” I believe this form of discourse must take place in order to learn the characteristics and history of our black role models. This discourse will be the aid of a role-aspirant’s self-image discovery and positive self-image development. A discourse that encompasses the adoptable traits from black role models that could lead to a role-aspirants success.

Insight on Black Role Models & Conformity

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

27

There are countless examples of successful character traits black role models provide for their role-aspirants. David Goggins, Oprah Winfrey, and Bob Marley display these successful traits of a black role model. Within essence of a role model, there is something about their life experience, personalities, and accomplishments that set role models apart from the rest of society. Role-aspirants often advert their attention to the physical attributes and manifestations of a role model, but the physical manifestation is just a reflection of the role model's inner being, thoughts, and character. It is out of ignorance that we don't find what idiosyncrasies ignite the role model's physical action that turned the role model into who they have become. Often role models display individuality, and that individuality is the basis of where their attraction and captivation truly lies.

Conformity is present in just about every social group. As a social influence conformity defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary is "1) action in accordance with some specified standard or authority... in correspondence in form, manner, or character." When that standard is followed by a majority society, as status quo is developed. As humans, we fall victim to conformity when we are unaware of our daily habits and follow the footsteps of our predecessors and those who surround us. If we are unaware of the character of those we surround ourselves with, then we will find ourselves with similar life experiences as those around us, as our thought and belief patterns will conform to be part of the same wavelength. If we surround ourselves with people of poor habits, and character traits; if remain unaware of the power in conformity and remain in an unconscious way of thinking, our lives will soon reflect it. As humans we seem often build similar characteristics to who we are around. I believe this happens because what dominates our mind, we begin to manifest in the physical realm.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

28

A Chinese Philosopher named Lao Tzu stated, “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny” (Where was this written). The feeling that you must beware these aspects of life should not be equated with a fear based mentality. Simply because if we can choose to hang out in a crowd of forward thinkers, and people with good habits, we can soon bear similar fruit because that is where our mind is based. Choose to fight against unconsciously conforming to society and make decisions for yourself. Black role models preach to follow one’s own path. An unhealthy environment capsules your mind with authority, thus creating your destiny. Like Oprah, we must recognize the way our surroundings create us to be, and use it to empower ourselves to express the uniqueness within us all; while like Goggins and Marley, find what it is about ourself that give our life meaning. A beginning step to success and personal freedom is expressed through the character of black role models.

My personal experience with conformity exemplifies the power held against us. In the summer of 2020, with massive conspiracy involving political agenda taking over the walls of political America under Donald Trump; I learned how surroundings can have such a large impact on our thought process and belief systems. I have very close friends and family who range from both far left and far right on the political spectrum. I lived with a friends who are heavy republican and After living with them, the ideology on how the United States should be governed I unconsciously began to adopt similar beliefs. I lived stayed with another close friend who’s family is fairly liberal and there were sides to their argument that I soon began to adopt as well. It was not until spending time alone and assessing what my brain was being fed, that I was able to make

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

29

my own decisions on the way I felt. I noticed I began to conform to both ways of thinking, then when alone I start to my own view began to take over my mind. Marley, Goggins, and Winfrey are prime examples on the understanding the power of conformity. Conformity has the power to control you and suppress your abilities to make decisions based on your own beliefs, it is literally mind altering. For instance, as stated earlier, Marley is from Jamaica, a nation stuck in political turmoil and civil anarchy. Marley preached a lot about his idea of the correct political stance using his religion as a base of his ideology, identifying himself as a Rastafarian until later in his life, just prior to his death choosing to convert to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who's ideas resembled Christianity.

Born and raised in Kingston, Marley endured capitol hardship and oppression. The main stances Bob Marley took was to fight against oppression and for the legalization of marijuana. Masses considered this to be foolish and many did not agree with his stance. But for those who did, Marley was a beautiful figure for these people. Life is filled with a spectrum of beliefs, a large part of our human identity. Marley advocated for our right as humans to choose what we believe in and the right carry that out. Rastafarians believed political and racial oppression was caused and carried about by the white man of the western world. Unpopularity of his belief did not detour Marley from preaching them. Marley prized his own beliefs on life and made that known mainly through his music. Many were not fond of his ideas and proof of this is the attempted assassination of him and The Wailers. Bob Marley is a great role model for the power of the self-image and how conformity will slow your ability to bring about change within yourself, others, and even a nation. Reversely, being independent with thought takes a positive self-image. To this day, extreme political activism is frowned upon by many but with the use of a positive

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

30

self-image and the ability to remain aware of the dangers in conforming to society. He was able to create hit songs expressing himself to the people who listened. Through his music, today Marley continue to impact the world.

Black Role Models and The Expression of Resiliency

David Goggins lived through multiple forms of abuse. David explains how his self-esteem basically plundered as his childhood years progressed. Just alone by being a black man in America, our right to feel worthy of success and accepted is reveled as very slim. If you are an individual who has suffered any form of abuse, that feeling not being worthy compounds itself. At this point is where you must make a decision on where the rest of your life is going to go. A black role model would be perfect someone in such a circumstance. This is something David experienced at a rate that is. Oprah much like David survived extreme amounts of physical and mental abuse but within themselves, they found resolve to “rise above,” and conquer something that that once held power over them. Every human being on this planet will have barriers in their life that they need to cross, but the true question falls within the resiliency one has in order to overcome any obstacle ahead of them.

Resiliency is another key character trait of a black role model. Role-aspirants must search for specific moments that took place in the black role models life that portrays a great sense of resiliency. Black role models show resiliency everyday just from the experience of being African American and dealing with many forms of demoralizing racism growing up. Resiliency has become the base of who a black role model is.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

31

Research has shown the benefits of a resiliency... According to *Resilience in Development*, a chapter in Oxford Handbook for Positive Psychology, written primarily by Ann S. Masten, defines resilience in regards to human development as “a positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity.” Resiliency is an important character trait, and can be adopted from black role models. Ann reveals that “In studies of individual development, resilience describes a class of phenomena where individuals show positive adaptation and development despite exposure to experiences or conditioned associated with negative outcomes.” (Where from?) Everyone grows in life through experience and failure. When you fail you grow. Failure is only a stepping stone to success. Inviting the failure and understanding that in order to grow you must persevere through adversity and failure. This is resiliency. Resiliency within a black role model looks like strength through actions of perseverance. The excessive amounts of judgement, marginalization, and ridicule aimed at colored individuals with pigmented skin is out of the victims control, yet the black role model’s ability to disregard the negative energy, and remain hopeful for a positive result reveals the resiliency within. Typically when thinking of role models, it is commonly believed that you must have a role model for the specific field you are in. When it comes to resiliency, it is found when speaking with people about their struggles or shortcomings, the manifestation of these experiences tend to be similar despite the variety of journey.

The Raise of Awareness in The Black Community

In present day United States of America, I feel that we have been going through difficult times with Covid-19 pandemic and George Floyd’s death. Floyd’s death seemed to ignite the

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

32

Black Lives Matter movement. I believe the state of self-image we see in “black” America is slowly on the rise. As black people are finding out more about their heritage’s history and why they should be proudly accepted as valued black citizens of the United States, black people have come together to raise awareness to the unfair treatment within the black communities. When black people become confident in their voice like Marley; and see themselves in a brighter light; courage, and resiliency become apparent, and the value of the black community increases.

Using the lives of 3 very qualified individuals; our black role models David Goggins, Oprah Winfrey, and Bob Marley become demonstrations of a positive self-image and the good that can come from it. The role model’s resiliency, and conscious lack in conformity are traits anyone could extract from black role models. Having a positive self-image is not an easy task, but an adequate black role model carries a secret that can change the way all role models are viewed. Black role models are changing the route we take when dissecting a role models along with the details focuses on. When struggling with a positive self-image, look to a black role model for guidance.

Conclusion

Bob Marley, David Goggins, and Oprah Winfrey are black role models and they should be recognized as such. Although role models like Oprah and even David Goggins to an extent

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

33

can be seen as a mentor, because they likely will not have a close emotional or physical connection it makes it hard to classify them as such. David Goggins does face-to-face, via in person and zoom and answers personalized questions and let's random people, role-aspirants tell them what they have gone through, or progress they have made. During these short meetings David finds his most prominent moments in being considered a mentor. When people are able to have an opportunity to meet and have personalized advice from their role model, a deeper connection is made in the eyes of the role aspirant. If that connection is the barrier that divides a role model from a mentor then maybe we can create a term that refers to one who is or has the ability to provide both. Oprah Winfrey is another role model that fits that description, where she has talk shows with live audiences and guests. On this show people will come and talk to her and she will provide her personalized advice to followers and role-aspirants to benefit their lives and help cope with past traumatic experiences. As a black role model, Oprah is up there with the best of them. Oprah is a black role model who leads by example. A role model who believes that one should take their wounds and turn them into wisdom, and she has done just that. All of the abuse Oprah encountered growing up, she remained resilient, and turned the tragedies of her life into a career of philanthropy. Providing valuable life advice takes a positive view of oneself and a positive self-image to see yourself and knowledgeable enough to pass useful information on.

To conclude, role models can benefit anyone, from all cultural backgrounds of all different genders and ages. Though as an adult, choosing a black role model, dissecting the essence of their self-image and imitating success worthy character traits, along-with discovering the self-image within you. Black role models hold a unique aspect about them. Black role models

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

34

must generally experience the evolution toward the possession of a positive self-image by exercising the character traits coinciding with success principles. In 2020 United States you will see many adults who's lives were directly impacted during the civil rights movements. A persons growth is partially determined by the socio-cultural theory, a theory describing the effect one's cultural surroundings play a part in their livelihood. The socio-cultural theory could explain how people can find themselves involved with inferior and dominant groups. The negative self-image and socio-cultural theory of a black role model could be a result of many forms of discrimination, racism, poverty etc. Anybody with a negative self-image has the potential to change the view they have of themselves and the world by adopting a positive self-image. Though not an easy task, with the guidance of a well-qualified black role model; character traits, successful habits, and behavior, an adult role-aspirant's view of themselves can be developed in hopes to better their life.

David Goggins; an African American war veteran and Navy Seal, Oprah Winfrey; an African American philanthropist and a savior to many, Bob Marley; an African American political activist born in Jamaica, who shared his insight with the world through his music; all are prime examples of what a positive self-image can do for your opportunities of success. David, Oprah, and Bob teach us that through a positive self-image we can create more opportunities for ourselves, simply because we are opening our mind to search for and imagine ourselves in the successful end of any situation. Maxwell Maltz explained in *Psycho-Cybernetics* that the better your self-image is, the more you will visualize yourself being on the positive end of scenario(Psycho-cybernetics). The more that you see yourself as a successful pawn in any scenario, the harder,

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

35

and further your brain will work to find ways to succeed in the environment and the purpose of a black role model is found there-in.

Annotated Bibliography

Maltz, Maxwell, and Melvin Powers. *Psycho-Cybernetics: a New Way to Get More Living out of Life*. Wilshire Book Co., 2010.

Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon and (co)author of this book, goes into detail explaining how the use of a positive self image can help to create harmony in our lives. He explains how we must know the psychology of our “self.” He compares the human brain to how a computer operates and their similarities. Understanding these similarities can teach us how to train ourselves to be successful.

Hill, Noah. (1987) *Think and Grow Rich*. Dutton.

Think & Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill brings the idea of “the self” into action, and the importance in understanding the difference between the conscious and subconscious mind to help create personal wealth. Napoleon Hill in chapter six names his eleven major leadership attributes and explains the need for said attributes.

Goggins, D. (2018) *Can't Hurt Me: Master your Mind and Defy the Odds*.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

37

David Goggins is a retired Navy Seal and is known for his ability to persevere through any task that was laid out in front of him, no matter how extreme. David explains the importance of having a hardened mind and how our mind can be either a detriment to our goals or the complete opposite. David also explains how in everything you do, mental stability and perseverance is of the most important.

Morgenroth, T., Ryan, M.K., & Peters, K. (2015). The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling: How Role Models Influence Role Aspirants' Goals. *Review of General Psychology, 19*, 465 - 483.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Motivational-Theory-of-Role-Modeling%3A-How-Role-Morgenroth-Ryan/be314ceee46e474b253d3101612a2ad7db57b752#paper-header>

This article explains what it is to be considered a role model. The role model is expressed as “a representation of the possible.” It is believed that the role model is a reflection of another desirable goal. This article takes a look at a role model from the vantage point of the role aspirant, and what it is in the role aspirant that creates the role model.

LeMier, Kaytlin. “Relationship between Athletes and Role Models.” *Cornerstone*, cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/jur/vol8/iss1/7/. "[Relationship between Athletes and Role Models](#)" by Kaytlin LeMier

This article goes into depth about what a role model is needed for. Kaitlyn explains how role models are needed for, in athletes specifically, “the moral development of character.” This article

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

38

develops a theory in the relationship between the youth and having a role model, more specifically, a role model who is an athlete.

Thekla Morgenroth, Michelle K. Ryan. "The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling: How Role Models Influence Role Aspirants' Goals - Thekla Morgenroth, Michelle K. Ryan, Kim Peters, 2015." *SAGE Journals*, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1037/gpr0000059. [The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling: How Role Models Influence Role Aspirants' Goals - Thekla Morgenroth, Michelle K. Ryan, Kim Peters, 2015](https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000059)

"The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling" expresses how role models are used as behavioral models. According to Kemper a role model is somebody who is looked at for example, for someone who doesn't possess the specific skill they are looking for.

Ankeny, Jason. "Bob Marley: Biography & History." *AllMusic*, www.allmusic.com/artist/bob-marley-mn0000071514/biography. [Bob Marley | Biography & History](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/bob-marley-mn0000071514/biography)

This website gives a quick glimpse into the history, philosophy, and musical background of Bob Marley. An overview of his life as well as his music is explained to be built from a base of faith, revolution, and devotion. Here you will find all of his songs and discography and you can see what he wrote was a reflection of his philosophy of life.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

39

Towler, Christopher C., et al. "Why Black Athletes' Political Activism Matters." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 5 Oct. 2020, www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/10/04/why-black-athletes-political-activism-matters-425473?utm_source=pocket-newtab. Why Black Athletes' Political Activism Matters - POLITICO

The first thing that this article does is use a very popular black athlete and Role Model in LeBron James to grab the attention of the reader. Regarding the death of Breonna Taylor, LeBron James decided to speak up about it. Many people looking up to James, especially younger athletes, were influenced by a Role Model on what they were going to do moving forward. The writers of this article believe that there could be a correspondence between young black US voters and their respective role models.

Oprah Winfrey (1954--). (2012). In L. Bracks, *African American almanac : 400 years of triumph, courage and excellence* . Visible Ink Press. Credo Reference: https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipaaalm/oprah_winfrey_1954/0

This article provides a biography of Oprah Winfrey's life and her Journey to become who she is today. Oprah was sexually assaulted at an early age and that has been a huge inspiration into what she has become today, those unfortunate events that happened to Oprah carved her way to being a talk show host and being looked up to by the majority of the woman's population, especially the African American female population.

The Purpose of a Black Role Model

40

Ray, C. (2007). Marley, Bob (1945--1981). In G. L. Anderson, *Encyclopedia of activism and social justice*. Sage Publications. Credo Reference: https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageact/marley_bob_1945_1981/0

Another Brief history of Bob Marley's life. This biography details the background of Bob Marley. Bob Marley came from an impoverished background and from this background is where Bob Marley learned how to be himself and preach the word of Love, despite the injustice and inequality represented by the masses. This biography explains how the message spread through his music is still just and relevant in today's world.