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We Carry the Scars: Have You Ever Felt Guilty for Leaving the Hood?

JULY 26, 2012 BY BRITNI DANIELLE



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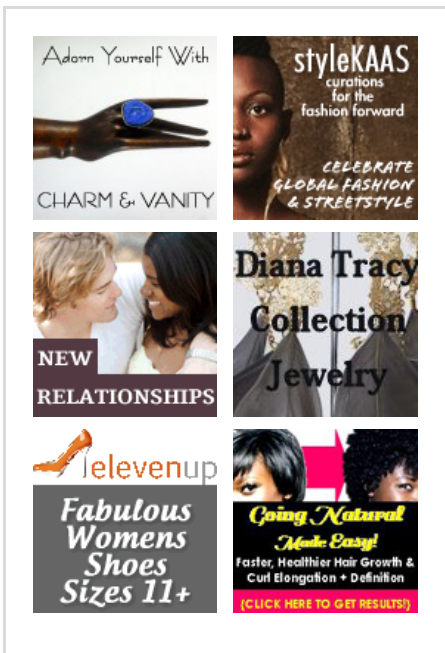
10 Things Every Non-Black Person Should Know (By Now) About Black Women

For those of us who grew up in not-so-nice neighborhoods across urban America, we walked a tight rope. While we tried to sidestep the traps that commonly brought down our peers, we often dreamed of getting out and living a life that wasn't plagued by crime and limited options.

However, for those of us who managed to rise above the traps and distractions to go to school or build a life that afforded us some semblance of success, we often left, only returning to visit our peers and family members who were left behind.

But make no mistake, we carry the scars. And our "hood pass" gleams like a badge of honor, showing that we were tough enough and smart enough to make it, but still very real.

I hadn't given much thought to the scars and guilt many of us who grew up in urban areas



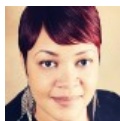
carry in a while until I saw a clip of Lupe Fiasco breaking down on MTV. During the clip, Sway replays an interview he did with Lupe six years ago, in which he introduced viewers to the rapper's neighborhood and many of his friends.

After they traveled back down memory lane, Lupe was visibly emotional and cried about the "ghosts" he saw onscreen, those people who are now dead, killed before their lives really had the chance to begin.

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During the interview Lupe explained that while he's from the 'hood, he hates what it stands for—violence, inequality, a lack of options. Like many of us who grew up in troubled neighborhoods, we recognize the lessons we learned there, but knew the world was so much more than our blocks. So we left.

I've often felt bad for leaving. As someone who cares about black folks, both locally and globally, I've had dreams of moving back and helping to revive the 'hood, perhaps open a bookstore or a community center. But then reality sets in. I'm only one woman with a young, black son I need to protect, and moving to any area where my son's life is treated as expendable just doesn't seem like a prudent thing to do.

So what's left for those of us who have moved on up like the Jeffersons?

Do we simply look back on our early years as hard-earned memories, or do we try to give back in meaningful ways despite not living in day-to-day conditions of the 'hood?

I'm willing to wager it will take more than a few of us who have made it not only to give back, but also to move back, raising the boats of those around us.

So, who wants to go first?

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E.M.S.

July 27, 2012 at 5:45 pm

I would never feel "bad" for leaving. There's no shame in making something of yourself so that you can move up in the world. It's one thing to miss your old friends and miss your family, but be guilty because you live better? No. You earned that living through hard work and determination.

Both of my parents grew up in Richmond, CA, it's one of the HARDEST cities in the nation. Many of their friends were killed in senseless acts of violence. One day, they both decided enough was enough, they wanted better. They went to college, they graduated from UC Berkeley, my father obtained his Master's at Stanford. Both of them are self made people who are now doing exceptionally well in their chosen fields, but they always keep in touch with their family/friends from the hood, they visit, go to functions, and help those in need when we can. Why on earth should they feel guilty?

I say remember to stay humble, and to keep your friends and family with you wherever you go, but do NOT feel bad for making it. Especially when there are so many who become bitter once you do. Misery just loves company.

👍👎 0

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Rochelle

July 28, 2012 at 4:18 am

The problem with black people is that they don't give back. You move and then forget about everyone. Not cool. 95% of the post on here said you will "find a way" to give back. that is all fine and well but those words fall on deaf ears because lord knows you aren't doing nothing but getting up and going to work. Lord only hopes you hood people don't move to any suburb near me. You know what they say "you can take a nicca out the hood but you can't take....." well



you know the rest. I don't need hood arse people thinking they on the come up living near me because they bring their baby mama's and cousin Pookie who just got out the penn. No thanks. Yes and when I say hood I mean black people. But really, black people do need to give back and stop saying "well I want to give back but...." You don't have to live in a crime ridden butthole to give back and most of you know that, you are just making excuses for not caring about anyone but your family and relatives. I wouldnt expect much more from most of you.

👍👎 0

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Mademoiselle

July 28, 2012 at 3:23 pm

On the one hand you say people who leave don't give back enough, presumably to help the hood. On the other you don't want anyone who makes it out the hood to come near you. So you're saying what? Anyone unfortunate enough to come from the hood deserves nothing more than to stay in the hood and be derided for not doing enough for other people? I find it hard to believe from your post that you care anything about giving back, yet you have "expectations" of others? Get over yourself.

I don't feel sorry or guilty for leaving the hood. That was my goal all along. I'm also not ashamed of where I come from or what/how much I choose to give back. I do what's in my means without breaking my back. In a world where loyalty is a novelty, the onus of making it out lies more on the individual. Help should be supplemental, not primary to success.

👍👎 +1

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Brian

August 15, 2012 at 11:12 am

This may sound heretical, but here goes. (Please read my WHOLE post and not just a part.)

I don't believe in giving back.

I DO believe, in JUST GIVING, and that is within the capacity of EVERYONE living in the hood -rich or poor.

Don't have money? You can give a kind word. You can give encouragement. You can give by saying a prayer for someone.

A big issue, that is part of the ghetto hood (NOT BLACK) culture is that there are too many takers and siphoners. People that just take, totally drain givers. People that leave the hood are now brow-beaten with terms like, "Don't forget where you came from." and "Give back." (That term 'Give back' is so insidious. It makes it seem like the hood initially gave that person something to be successful! Like it's takin

credit for you doing well!!)

This needs to be talked about FAR more than it is right now. Thank you for making a forum to expose the devil (who is behind all of this confusion, envy, strife, hatin, and every negative thing that keeps us from growing, loving, and living with purpose.

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TheDot

January 12, 2013 at 9:37 pm

I personally believe that we need more people who are willing to make the sacrifice and take the time out of their daily lives to at least plan something for the "hood". I'm not saying devote your life to it, unless that's what your feel your purpose is then by all means go right ahead but I believe that we should at least organize events like cook outs to give a sense of unity and family or at least community so that people will get to know each other better, keep in mind the hood treats the hood like a hood, so the people who fear for their lives living there don't really interact with the people outside trying to survive in those conditions. If people mingled, socialized, gained knowledge and saw what was beyond the hills they'd open their eyes to the possibilities. It's like telling a kid to bake a cake and they don't see they ingredients, once they figure out where to get them how to prepare them and when to use them they get the hang of it, I'm not trying to put anybody down I'm using that as a plain explanation/example. There are a lot of smart, capable and willing people in bad financial and social circumstances that just need more opportunity, and their given school or work which in the end really just costs them more because first they have to cover costs, and then try to earn extra on top of that to save or school debts eventually keep them pinned. We would need more entrepreneurs and thinkers who are able to guide the youth and show them that violence only begets more violence and that illegal earned money will only last so long or will lead to something worse. If we just provided that information there's not much else to be said, the ones who see through the veil will grab the opportunity and work for it the others will continue to do what they will and learn some hard and valuable lessons.

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