



AUTONOMY / CONTROL

The self-mastered man or woman sets himself or herself apart. He or she is like a tree grown in fertile ground. It grows green and doubles its yield of fruit.

~ *Book of Declarations of Virtues* ~

in *Kemet and the African Worldview*, Maulana Karenga and Jacob Carruthers, eds., 1986

Salvation is accomplished through the efforts of the individual. There is no mediator between man and his/her salvation.

~ Khemetic Wisdom ~

*Temt Tchaas: Egyptian Proverbs*, Muata Ashaya Ashby, ed., 1994

God and Nature first made us what we are, and then out of our own creative genius we make ourselves what we want to be. Follow always that great law.

~ Marcus Garvey, 1887-1940 ~

"African Fundamentalism," *Negro World*, 1925 June 6

Man in his authority is a sovereign lord ... So few of us can understand what it takes to make a man – the man who will never say die; the man who will never give up; the man who will never depend upon others to do for him what he ought to do for himself; the man who will not blame God, who will not blame Nature, will not blame Fate for his condition; but the man who will go out and make conditions to suit himself.

~ Garvey ~

It is far better to be free to govern, or misgovern yourself, than to be governed by anybody else.

~ Kwame Nkrumah, 1909-1972 ~

Fate is determined by what one does and what one doesn't do.

~ Ralph Ellison, 1914-1994 ~

In order for us to be effective political people, we must be in control of the personal.

~ Toni Cade Bambara, 1939-1995 ~

There are two things over which you have complete dominion, authority and control – your mind and your mouth.

~ Molefi Kete Asante, b. 1942 ~

To endure and prosper, one needs the understanding that we alone, and not an abstraction called “social forces,” determines moment by moment our individual destinies and our happiness.

~ Charles Johnson, b. 1948 ~

“Reading the Eightfold Path,” *Dharma, Color, and Culture*, Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín, ed., 2004

Can’t nothin’ make your life work if you ain’t the architect.

~ Terry McMillan, b. 1951 ~

Self-activity is the only activity. If you want to change your situation you have to build independent institutions – social, cultural, political institutions – in order to advance your struggles.

~ Linton Kwesi Johnson, b. 1952 ~

It isn’t until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are – not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within – that you can begin to take control.

~ Oprah Winfrey, b. 1954 ~

There is no higher authority on the planet, when it comes to deciding what’s best for you, than you. Life is a banquet, so you should eat until you’re full, and do as you please as long as you’re not hurting anybody else ... You can’t get satisfaction living your life according to someone else’s rules.

~ RuPaul, b. 1960 ~

*Lettin It All Hang Out*, 1995

If one can come to see that ethnic and racial identities are bequeathed and hence unchosen and that these identities have morally questionable features built into them (racism, ethnocentrism, and national chauvinism); if one can accept the fluidity of the self and its capacity for self-reinterpretation, then one recognizes self-ownership as a viable option.

~ Jason D. Hill, b. 1965 ~

*Becoming a Cosmopolitan: What It Means to Be a Human Being in the New Millennium*, 2000



AVOIDANCE / DENIAL / REFUSAL

Not to know is bad; not to wish to know is worse.

~ Wolof Wisdom ~

*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

You can outdistance that which is running after you, but not what is running inside you.

~ Rwandan Wisdom ~

You cannot fix what you will not face.

~ James Baldwin, 1924-1987 ~

I had a power, and the power that I had – the only power that I had – was to say no. I had no power to influence, I had no power to instruct. I only had the power to say no. And that was sufficient for me. I said, “No, I don’t want to do that. No, I cannot do that. No, I’m not available for that.”

~ Sidney Poitier, b. 1927 ~

in *Songs of Wisdom: Quotations from Famous African Americans*, Jay David, ed., 2000

A person can run for years but sooner or later he has to take a stand in the place which, for better or worse, he calls home, and do what he can to change things there.

~ Paule Marshall, b. 1929 ~

Black people and society as a whole have wanted to minimize the reality of trauma in black life. It has been easier for everyone to focus on issues of material deprivation as the reason for our continued collective subordinated status than to place the issue of trauma and recovery on our agendas.

~ bell hooks, b. 1952 ~

*Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, 2003

We prefer sometimes to cover our heads with our hands and pretend that things do not happen. Until we acknowledge things to be the way they are, we cannot own them, and we cannot control them.

~ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, b. 1977 ~

in Ike Anya, “In the Footsteps of Achebe: Enter Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigeria’s Newest Literary Voice,” 2003 October 10



Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum-swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates.

~ Hermes Trismegistus ~

in *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy*, 1908

One who is serious all day will never have a good time, while one who is frivolous all day will never establish a household.

~ Ptahotep, c. 2350 BCE ~

*Maxims of Ptahhotep*

The equilibrium you admire in me is an unstable one, difficult to maintain. My inner life was split early between the call of the Ancestors and the call of Europe, between the exigencies of black-African culture and those of modern life.

~ Léopold Senghor, 1906-2001 ~

Hearts tend to be large, squishy undiscerning sorts of things, the home of powerful feelings and emotions, but a thinking heart is one that deploys its passions carefully. It strikes me as a good formula for life, loving minds and thinking hearts, and I commend that notion of the self to you as you make your way.

~ Peter J. Gomes, b. 1942 ~

Sermon, Lafayette College 172nd Baccalaureate Service

A balanced life doesn't just happen. It is a state of grace we create by staying connected with our thoughts and feelings and consciously measuring what we do. Just as feeling fit and flexible demands physical exercise, just as expanding your mind requires intellectual effort, so bringing your life into balance and maintaining your spiritual equilibrium require focused awareness and daily retreat from the stresses of the world.

~ Susan L. Taylor, b. 1946 ~

*Lessons in Living*, 1995

I recognize more than ever that I am what I call an "in-between" person: Someone who walks and travels constantly between cultures, geographical regions, types of blacknesses, and political/historical realities.

~ Thomas Glave, b. 1964 ~

Interview by Alexis Deveaux, ArtVoice.com



BEGINNING / ENDEAVOUR

The beginning is the most important part of the work.

~ Igbo Wisdom ~

*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

The hard part is the first grinding; when that is done the rest is easy.

~ Hausa Wisdom ~

Ibid.

Start where you are with what you have, knowing that what you have is plenty enough.

~ Booker T. Washington, 1856-1915 ~

We have only started; we are just on our way; we have just made the first lap in the great race for existence, and for a place in the political and economic sun of men.

~ Marcus Garvey, 1887-1940 ~

*Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Vol. II*, Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., 1925

The end is in the beginning and lies far ahead.

~ Ralph Ellison, 1914-1994 ~

*Invisible Man*, 1952

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968 ~

You start with what you can. You start here and now, from your local position. Because your feet are on the ground. You have to start from yourself, from your ground, not to be in the air. That's why struggle starts locally, and it expands, and it connects globally. You have to start locally from your soil, from your village, from your country, from your state. To liberate yourself.

~ Nawal el Saadawi, b. 1931 ~

Interview by Stephanie McMillan, 1999

It ain't nothing to find no starting place in the world. You just start from where you find yourself.

~ August Wilson, 1945-2005 ~



## BEING / ESSENCE / SOUL

As the moon retaineth her nature, though darkness spread itself before her face as a curtain, so the Soul remaineth perfect even in the bosom of a fool.  
 ~ Akhenaton, c. 1385-c. 1355 BCE ~

When the soul, in its gaze into heaven, has recognised its Author, it rises higher than the sun, and far transcends all this earthly power, and begins to be that which it believes itself to be.  
 ~ Cyprian, 200-258 ~  
*Epistle to Donatus*

As our body is a part of the universe, so also our soul is a part of the Soul of the universe ... Souls are responsive to one another because they all come from the same soul.  
 ~ Plotinus, 205-270 ~  
*Enneads, 250*

In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.  
 ~ Frantz Fanon, 1925-1961 ~  
*Black Skin, White Masks*, Charles Lam Markmann, 1967

Place cannot be circumvented and/or escaped, being is also inescapable. You cannot close being off. Today, we are relational beings, not rooted beings.  
 ~ Édouard Glissant, b. 1928 ~  
 Interview by Michael Dash, *Renaissance Noire*, Hillina Seife, tr., 2006 March 22

What is a soul? It's like electricity – we don't really know what it is, but it's a force that can light a room.  
 ~ Ray Charles, 1930-2004 ~

Remember, Jesus or Lord Buddha didn't share their visions to teach you who *they* were. They shared their vision to help teach you who *you* are. To help you understand the power that God has already blessed you with.  
 ~ Russell Simmons, b. 1957 ~  
*Do You!: 12 Laws to Access the Power in You to Achieve Happiness and Success*, 2007



**BELIEF / RELIGION**

The true believer begins with himself.

~ Berber Wisdom ~

One man's religion neither harms nor helps another man ... It is certainly no part of religion to compel religion.

~ Tertullian, c. 160-240 ~

*Ad Scapulam*, 2.2

You believe easily what you want to believe.

~ Haitian Wisdom ~

*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

There is no prospect that man will ever be without religion, but there is every prospect that he will soon be beyond our present religious beliefs.

~ William Pickens, 1881-1954 ~

*Preachers Defend Hell*, 1923

Since religion is dead, religion is everywhere. Religion was once an affair of the church; it is now in the streets, in each man's heart. Once there were priests; now every man's a priest.

~ Richard Wright, 1908-1960 ~

*The Outsider*, 1953

There is no heaven or hell in the sense that they are places one goes after death. The heaven or hell to which one goes is right there in the span of years that we spend in this body on earth.

~ Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., 1908-1972 ~

If the concept of God has any validity or use, it can only be to make us larger, freer and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of Him.

~ James Baldwin, 1924-1987 ~

*The Fire Next Time*, 1962

Religion is not necessarily a good thing. It depends; religion can lead to great good, but it can equally lead to unspeakable evil and suffering.

~ Desmond Tutu, b. 1931 ~

"The Secular State and Religions," *The Wisdom of Desmond Tutu*, Michael Battle, ed., 1998

If we can put the names of our faiths aside for the moment and look at principles, we will find a common thread running through all the great religious expressions.

~ Louis Farrakhan, b. 1934 ~

How to die, we got that. But we were missing how to live. I do not recall any message of joy or love or happiness generated out of this experience. It was a confining, restricting mandate. I did not feel free to do anything other than what was presented to me as the way one must proceed; that whatever you do in this life has to be in preparation for that other life. So on balance, my church relationship was, without doubt, a very imprisoning kind of experience.

~ Barbara Jordan, 1936-1996 ~

in Barbara Jordan & Shelby Hearon, *Barbara Jordan: A Self Portrait*, 1979

Politics and church are the same thing. They keep people in ignorance.

~ Bob Marley, 1946-1981 ~

Many people – often people who consider themselves to be quite “religious” – believe that they have a monopoly on truth. Such a belief, however, can clearly be seen to limit one’s flexibility and ability to learn. It greatly hampers even the possibility for one to listen deeply to what is being said. Without such listening capability, no genuine dialogue can be had or progress made.

~ Jan Willis, b. 1948~

Most man-made religion is built on fear ... the fear of judgment. The fear of retribution. Our fears come in all shapes and sizes ... the fear of other religions, or other ways of thinking, and this one’s at the root of all our problems.

~ Whoopi Goldberg, b. 1955 ~

Democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values. It requires that their proposals be subject to argument, and amenable to reason ... accessible to people of all faiths, including those with no faith at all ... At some fundamental level, religion does not allow for compromise. It’s the art of the impossible. If God has spoken, then followers are expected to live up to God’s edicts, regardless of the consequences. To base one’s life on such uncompromising commitments may be sublime; to base our policymaking on such commitments would be a dangerous thing.

~ Barack Obama, b. 1961 ~

Speech, 2006 June 28, in *Washington Post*, 2006 July 2



BREAKTHROUGH / EPIPHANY / TURNING POINT

I had no idea history was being made. I was just tired of giving in.

~ Rosa Parks, 1913-2005 ~

There is a spirit and a need and a man at the beginning of every great human advance. Each of these must be right for the particular moment of history, or nothing happens.

~ Coretta Scott King, 1927-2006 ~

*My Life with Martin Luther King Jr.*, Ch. 6, 1969

Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968 ~

What seem to have been the turning points in my own life were all turning points I recognized after the event. They were not intentional but they were all connected with recognitions from outside of myself.

~ Stuart Hall, b. 1932 ~

Seminar, Program in the Comparative Study of Social Transformations (CSST), 1999 April 15

The laughter bubbled up, irrepressible. I saw the path to happiness and liberation at a glance. It was inside myself.

~ Alice Walker, b. 1944 ~

"This Was Not an Area of Large Plantations," in *Dharma, Color, and Culture*, Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín, ed., 2004

All human beings have the ability to change, but they all have their own right moment; you have to be patient towards that historical individual process. It is important.

~ Haile Gerima, b. 1946 ~

Interview, "Haile Gerima, Lion of Gondar," [RastafariToday.com](http://RastafariToday.com)

All of us carry within ourselves something that is waiting for the right moment when it can burst out and repair the particular separation that we are experiencing. My own experience tells me a lot about exile and nostalgia.

~ Malidoma Somé, b. 1956 ~

*The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, 1999



It is the heart which causes every completed concept to come forth, and it is the tongue which announces what the heart thinks. Thus all the gods were formed ... Indeed, all the divine order came into being through what the heart thought and the tongue commanded.

~ *Shabaka Text (Memphite Theology)*, c. 2700 BCE ~  
in *Kemet and the African Worldview*, Maulana Karenga and Jacob Carruthers, eds., 1986

Every cause has its effect; every effect has its cause; everything happens according to law; chance is but a name for law not recognized; there are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the law.

~ Hermes Trismegistus ~  
in *The Kybalion: A Study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 1908

Everything we do is sowing, and all of our experiences are harvests.

~ Khemetic Wisdom ~  
*Temt Tchaas: Egyptian Proverbs*, Muata Ashaya Ashby, ed., 1994

If we live good lives, the times are also good. As we are, such are the times.

~ Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 ~

Continue in right thinking, you will of course act well.

~ Ignatius Sancho, 1729-1780 ~  
Letter I to Mr JWE, 1768 February 14 in *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, Vol. I, 1782

Destiny lies not in the stars, but in our hearts.

~ William Wells Brown, 1815-1884 ~

If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.

~ Moms Mabley, 1894-1975 ~

It is not your environment, it is you – the quality of your minds, the integrity of your souls and the determination of your will – that will decide your future and shape your lives.

~ Benjamin Mays, 1895-1984 ~

## 54 CAUSE

Who plants a seed begets a bud,  
Extract of that same root.

~ Countée Cullen, 1903-1946 ~  
"Fruit of the Flower"

Man's chief delusion is his conviction that there are *causes other than his own state of consciousness*. All that befalls man – all that is done by him – all that comes to him – happens as a result of his state of consciousness. A man's consciousness is all that he thinks and desires and loves, all that he believes is true and consents to. That is why a change of consciousness is necessary before you can change your outer world.

~ Neville, 1905-1972 ~  
*The Power of Awareness*, 1952

He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never be able to change reality, and will never, therefore, make any progress.

~ Anwar Sadat, 1918-1981 ~  
in *Brother's Keeper: Words of Inspiration for African-American Men*, Roderick Terry, ed., 1996

I am the thinker that creates the thoughts that create the things.

~ Johnnie Coleman, b. 1921 ~

It works if you work it.

~ Johnnetta Cole, b. 1936 ~

The world we live in is first and foremost shaped by the mind.

~ Charles Johnson, b. 1948 ~

Negative thoughts and images undermine self-esteem more than any other factors. Our thoughts have the power to make us or to break us. How we feel about ourselves is more important than how others portray us. What really matters is our own interpretation of who we are.

~ Roderick Terry, b. 1964 ~  
*Brother's Keeper: Words of Inspiration for African-American Men*, 1996

If you believe it is possible, you can make it happen. If you decide to become negative and believe that things will never be right, you will also have those results. So be very careful what thoughts you put in your mind. For good or bad, they will boomerang right back to you.

~ Beatryce Nivens ~  
*Success Strategies for African-Americans: A Guide to Creating Personal and Professional Achievement*, 1998



CELEBRATION

Celebrate, then, the days of rejoicing and do not tire of them. For lo, none may take their goods with them and none who depart ever come back again.

~ *Book of Songs* ~

in *Kemet and the African Worldview*, Maulana Karenga and Jacob Carruthers, eds., 1986

Let's get together and celebrate something great. It is an opportunity to continue learning about ourselves. Growing up, there was none of this. Now we are so certain about what we have that we can have conferences and celebrate it.

~ Kamau Brathwaite, b. 1930 ~

in *Jamaica Daily Gleaner*, 2002 January 6

Identifying fully with the subjects of my study and the substance of their hope, I have freely allowed myself to celebrate. For I could not possibly remain silent and unmoved in the presence of the mysterious, transformative dance of the life that has produced the men and women, the ideas and institutions, the visions, betrayals, and heroic dreams renewed in blood that are at once the anguish and the glory of the river of our struggle.

~ Vincent Harding, b. 1931 ~

*There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*, 1981

I find the idea of Carnival, its indigenous character, its embracing fellowship, its sense of celebration of art, of life, of creativity, worthy to be given the kind of appreciation reserved for religion.

~ Earl Lovelace, b. 1935 ~

*Salt*, 1997

let us celebrate  
ourselves, all that is kind  
and carnival, living  
without goodbyes  
without the acquiescences of grief  
of ending

That small victory, only.

~ Dennis Scott, 1939-1991 ~

"Strategies," *Strategies*, 1989

## 56 CELEBRATION

Everything was so ordinary and itself, as if ordinariness might not sometimes be worth celebrating, as if ordinariness could never be longed for, as if ordinariness could never be missed, as if ordinariness was all there was and anything else was an interruption.

~ Jamaica Kincaid, b. 1949 ~  
Mr. Potter, 2002

It is not only the happy moments ... that should be talked about, but every moment. All the moments that make up a human being have to be written about, talked about, painted, danced, in order to really talk about life.

~ Rita Dove, b. 1952 ~  
"The Possibility Poet," Academy of Achievement Interview, 1994 June 18

The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.

~ Oprah Winfrey, b. 1954 ~  
in *Black Woman's Gumbo Ya-Ya*, Terri L. Jewell, ed., 1993

Each day of our lives is meant to be a celebration of love and growth, filled with adventure and new discoveries. However, it is mind-boggling how many of us are willing to leave our lives hanging in the balance while we wait for a special occasion or event to occur.

~ Roderick Terry, b. 1964 ~  
"Hope Chest"

For most of us, what is worth celebrating is the fact that we are here, that we against all the odds exist ... We are part of an endless circle, the daughters of Anacaona.<sup>1</sup> We have stumbled, but have not fallen. We are ill-favored, but we still endure. Every once in a while, we must scream this as far as the wind can carry our voices.

~ Edwidge Danticat, b. 1969 ~  
"We Are Ugly But We Are Here," *The Caribbean Writer*, Volume 10, 1996

It is the deep inner need to feel content that sets us out looking for spiritual direction. We have to celebrate that, both as human beings and as black people. We need to know and accept from the start that it is the simple human desire to be happy that makes a spiritual path not only fulfilling, but worth pursuing in the first place.

~ Angel Kyodo Williams ~  
*Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace*, 2000

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<sup>1</sup> Hispaniola Taino queen



Life is like an anthill, built from within out.

~ Ewe Wisdom ~

in N. K. Dzobo, "The Image of Man in Africa," *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, Kwasi Wiredu & Kwame Gyekye, eds.

We must accustom our minds to these new world structures, in which the relationship between the center and the periphery will be completely different. Everything will be central and everything will be peripheral.

~ Édouard Glissant, b. 1928 ~

Interview by Tirthankar Chanda, *Label France*, 2000 January, No. 38

At the end of the day, I haven't really tried to find my roots because I carry them with me everywhere. The homeland is with me wherever I am.

~ Maryse Condé, b. 1937 ~

"One Day, People Are Going to Manage Simply to Say : I Am What I am," Interview by Catherine Dana, *Africultures*, 2002 October 21

Exchange based on equality. I like the idea of a dance of centers that are equidistant from the human center. They are in a circle. They all contribute to and also draw from the center. Like spokes in a bicycle wheel. But there is a difference. Human spokes must also borrow from one another.

~ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, b. 1938 ~

Interview by Michael Alexander Pozo, *St. John's University*, 2004 August 16

The task could not be simpler, because there is nowhere to go, nothing to do. To retreat, you need only be. How? By giving yourself to yourself before you give yourself away.

~ Susan L. Taylor, b. 1946 ~

*Lessons in Living*, 1995

I learned early on that there's a place inside oneself that no one else can violate, that no one else can enter, and that we have a right to protect that place.

~ Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, b. 1947 ~

*Kareem*, 1990

You have to be able to center yourself, to let all of your emotions go ... Don't ever forget that you play with your soul as well as your body.

~ Abdul-Jabbar ~



Change is Lord of the Universe ... Nothing rests, everything moves; everything vibrates.

~ Khemetic Wisdom ~

*Temt Tchaas: Egyptian Proverbs*, Muata Ashaya Ashby, ed., 1994

Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced ... Most of us are about as eager to change as we were to be born, and go through our changes in a similar state of shock.

~ James Baldwin, 1924-1987 ~

Some women wait for something to change and nothing does change so they change themselves.

~ Audre Lorde, 1934-1992 ~

The world in which we are born is not the world in which we will die. Change is the only constant thing in life.

~ Famous Amos, b. 1937 ~

*Watermelon Magic*, 1996

Change is inherent in nature and human society – change actually is magic.

~ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, b. 1938 ~

Interview in *Socialist Worker*, 2006 November 4, No. 2025

Each person is constantly evolving, changing as he looks to the light he receives that helps him advance.

~ Djibril Diop Mambety, 1945-1998 ~

in N. Frank Ukadike, "The Hyena's Last Laugh: A Conversation with Djibril Diop Mambety," *Transition* 78, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1999

In one minute. Everything changes. The beauty is that change is a constant and, in one minute, everything can also get better ... and that magnifies the power of individuals who challenge and change the course of events. Individuals in the right place at the right time.

~ Haile Gerima, b. 1946 ~

in Kalamu ya Salaam, "Haile Gerima in Ghana," Notes from PanaFest 1994

All that you touch  
 You Change  
 All that you Change  
 Changes you  
 The only lasting truth  
 Is Change.  
 ~ Octavia Butler, 1947-2006 ~  
*Parable of the Sower*, 1993

It is only normal that you will change, you grow up and carry on until you die. Until the day you die, you are growing up and changing.  
 ~ Salif Keita, b. 1949 ~  
 Interview by Opiyo Oloya, *AfroDisc*, 1996 April 23

From where you are, from who you are in your everyday life, that's where you make change.  
 ~ Toshi Reagon, b. 1964 ~

We gotta make a change. It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes. Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live and let's change the way we treat each other. You see the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive.  
 ~ Tupac Shakur, 1971-1996 ~  
 "Shorty Wanna Be a Thug"

Change is constant, and it is in the present that change is initiated, yet it is in the present that change comes to manifestation. What will be seen in the "future" is only the manifestation of what is created in the present. A sort of recognition of the finished creation.  
 ~ Oliver Mbamara ~  
 "What Is Your Attitude of The Present?" *Why Are We Here?*, 2002

Change happens whether we want it to or not. We have always been changing and are always different in some ways than we were before ... The resistance to change comes from a fear deep inside of us that says *Maybe if I change, I won't recognize myself ...* Making changes in the way you see and handle life is not about giving up who you are.  
 ~ Angel Kyodo Williams ~  
*Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace*, 2000

When we become aware of ourselves, we find the potential for radical transformation. If you want to change, that's where you have to start from. If you really wake up, if you really notice, it's inevitable that change will take place.  
 ~ Ibid.



CHAOS / UNCERTAINTY

I have a great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift.

~ Septima Clark, 1898-1987 ~

People have a lot more  
of the UNKNOW N  
than the known in their minds.

The UNKNOW N is great,  
it's like the darkness  
Nobody made that  
it just happens.

~ Sun Ra, 1914-1993 ~

When I say that our world is a chaos-world, I am not saying that it is an apocalyptic world, but rather a world that one can no longer predict or plan in advance. The “entanglements” at work have made the world complex. We now have to get used to the idea that we can live in the world without having the ambition to predict it or dictate to it.

~ Édouard Glissant, b. 1928 ~

Interview by Tirthankar Chanda, Label France, 2000 January, No. 38

We are told, and it is true, that everywhere things are disordered, disoriented, decrepit, have gone completely mad, blood, the wind. We see and experience this. But this is the whole world talking to you, in so many muzzled voices.

~ Glissant ~

*Traité du Tout-monde – Poétique IV*, 1997

When you struggle to reach for something you don't know, that's where the most interesting stuff is.

~ Herbie Hancock, b. 1940 ~

The best thing and the worst thing about life is that you don't know what is going to happen. The best thing and the worst.

~ John Edgar Wideman, b. 1941 ~

Interview by Laura Miller, *Salon*



## CHARACTER

A man and his character – even rain cannot wash it off him.

~ Hausa Wisdom ~

Rain doesn't kill the strength of hot pepper.

~ Haitian Wisdom ~

*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

Driving away by means of character is better than driving away with a stick.

~ Hausa Wisdom ~

Ibid.

Character is a god; according to the way you behave it supports you.

~ Yoruba Wisdom ~

Ibid.

Character, not circumstances, makes the man.

~ Booker T. Washington, 1856-1915 ~

When a man says to his character, “Stay here and wait for me,” scarcely has he turned his back than his character is close on his heels.

~ Birago Diop, 1906-1989 ~

*Tales of Amadou Koumba*, 1966

The only thing that endures is character. Fame and wealth – all that is illusion. All that endures is character.

~ O. J. Simpson, b. 1947 ~

in *The Guardian*, 1995 October 30

Character, then, isn't what we think it is or, rather, what we want it to be. It isn't a stable, easily identifiable set of closely related traits, and it only seems that way because of a glitch in the way our brains are organized. Character is more like a bundle of habits and tendencies and interests, loosely bound together and dependent, at certain times, on circumstance and context.

~ Malcolm Gladwell, b. 1963 ~

*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, 2000



CHOICE / VOLITION

The power of choosing good and evil is within the reach of all.  
~ Origen, c. 185-255 ~

To choose to go does not prevent one from returning.  
~ Kikuyu Wisdom ~  
*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

Every intersection in the road of life is an opportunity to make a decision.  
~ Duke Ellington, 1899-1974 ~

To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.  
~ Kofi Annan, b. 1938 ~

You only have so much time in your life, and you only have so much energy. So you have to select very carefully how you're going to spend that time and how you're going to spend that energy. If you waste it spinning your wheels on things that are not going to change, then it deprives you of an opportunity of utilizing it on things that are going to change.  
~ Benjamin Carson, b. 1951 ~  
"Gifted Hands That Heal," Academy of Achievement Interview, 2002 June 7

What we choose, or fail to choose, and when we relegate our power of choice to others, we have, with or without conscious intent, *chosen* to do so.  
~ Kathleen E. Morris, b. 1962 ~  
"Without Exception or Limitation," in *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity*, G. Winston James & Lisa C. Moore, eds., 2006

I am not interested whether somebody was good or bad, evil or not evil – I am interested in the choices they made, and what they could have done differently.  
~ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, b. 1977 ~  
in Henry Akubuiro, "My Love Life," *Nigeria Daily Sun*, 2007 January 14

We are all the same. The difference lies only in our choices. The ones we have made and the ones we make.  
~ Oliver Mbamara ~



## COLLABORATION / SYNERGY

When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.

~ Ethiopian Wisdom ~

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.

~ Bondei Wisdom ~

If everyone helps to hold up the sky, then one person does not get tired.

~ Tshi Wisdom ~

*Wit & Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa & The Caribbean*, Patrick Ibekwe, ed., 1998

One hand can't tie a bundle.

~ Basa Wisdom ~

One hand cannot clap.

~ Jamaican Wisdom ~

It is in all things that are pure and social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

~ Booker T. Washington, 1856-1915 ~

Cotton States Exposition Address, 1895 September 19

Living together is an art.

~ William Pickens, 1881-1954 ~

Address, 1932 November 2

If we must have justice, we must be strong; if we must be strong, we must come together; if we must come together, we can only do so through the system of organization.

~ Marcus Garvey, 1887-1940 ~

No organization can do everything. Every organization can do something.

~ A. Philip Randolph, 1889-1979 ~

The unity, the balance and the harmony of African civilization, of black society, (is) based both on the *community* and on the *person*, and in which, because it was founded on dialogue and reciprocity, the group (has)

priority over the individual without crushing him, but allowing him to blossom as a person.

~ Léopold Senghor, 1906-2001 ~

*Négritude: a Humanism of the Twentieth Century*, 1970

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

~ Nelson Mandela, b. 1918 ~

*Long Walk to Freedom*, 1994

We must either learn to live together as brothers or we are going to perish together as fools.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968 ~

*The Trumpet of Conscience*, 1967

Change did not begin with you, and it will not end with you, but what you do with your life is an absolutely vital piece of that chain. The testimony of each of our daily lives is a vital missing remnant in the fabric of the future.

~ Audre Lorde, 1934-1992 ~

Commencement Address, Oberlin College, 1989 May 29

One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team.

~ Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, b. 1947 ~

It is a fact that in the right formation, the lifting power of many wings can achieve twice the distance of any bird flying alone.

~ Unknown ~

We got each other. We got our hearts and our brains and our hands, and if we work together we can do it, we can change the world.

~ Bill Strickland, b. 1947 ~

in John Brant, "What One Man Can Do," *Inc Magazine*, 2005 September

We have a stake in one another ... what binds us together is greater than what drives us apart, and ... if enough people believe in the truth of that proposition and act on it, then we might not solve every problem, but we can get something meaningful done for the people with whom we share this Earth.

~ Barack Obama, b. 1961 ~

Speech, 2006 December 1



## COMMITMENT / DEDICATION

Commitment means that it is possible for a man to yield the nerve center of his consent to a purpose or cause, a movement or an ideal, which may be more important to him than whether he lives or dies.

~ Howard Thurman, 1889-1981 ~  
*Disciplines of the Spirit*, 1963

It takes a deep commitment to change and an even deeper commitment to grow.

~ Ralph Ellison, 1914-1994 ~

I want to make something of my life? ... Work. There is no substitute for work. There is no substitute for commitment. You've got to commit to something that you love. Invest yourself in it. And trust it.

~ Lloyd Richards, 1919-2006 ~  
 "Broadway's Groundbreaking Director," Academy of Achievement Interview, 1991 February 15

To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger.

~ James Baldwin, 1924-1987 ~  
 "My Dungeon Shook," *The Fire Next Time*, 1962

You need to make a commitment, and once you make it, then life will give you some answers.

~ Les Brown, b. 1945 ~

If you have visibility, whether deserved or not, you need to use it to connect to a cause bigger than you.

~ Cornel West, b. 1954 ~

You have to stick to your plan ... very few people get anywhere by taking shortcuts. Very few people win the lottery to gain their wealth. It happens, but the odds certainly aren't with them. More people get it the honest way, by setting their goals and committing themselves to achieving those goals.

~ Michael Jordan, b. 1961 ~

Learning to love ourselves is not an easy process; instead it is a lifetime commitment that requires continuous nurturing. Like marriage vows, we must promise to love, cherish and accept every aspect of ourselves, for better or for worse, through good times and bad.

~ Roderick Terry, b. 1964 ~