



EXODUS

“We, as a people, will get to the promised land!”



BY: B.W. SMITH

Preface

The idea of writing this book came to me in the Summer of 2015. In the wake of the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the ensuing riots that followed caused me to reflect on the plight of Black people in America. So, I want to thank my husband Anthony L. Smith, my Brother David Handcock, my Nephew Duane Handcock, and Author Steven Ivory for helping me to bring this novel to fruition. Without their input, help, and encouragement, this project could not have been completed.

It seemed like a never-ending story, I mean, ever since the arrival of the first slaves on the shores of Virginia in 1619, the atrocities against us have never diminished. We have languished under the 21ST Century cruel lash of this slave-owner mentality culture that has ruthlessly raped and pillaged our black souls, day in and day out. Not unlike the 1800s, there are those who seek to breed us as if we were livestock to profit off the sale of our offspring in their prison industrial complex.

We, as a people, have fought in every conflict faced by this native land, even before this was a nation. It was not without the help of Black men and women that this land state became a nation, yet we have never partaken of full-equal rights owed to all Americans. Although we as a people, have often been denied basic human rights inalienable to all human beings, yet we continue to help make this country, the greatest nation on the face of the earth.

After coming to the rescue of this Republic during the Civil War, we were rewarded for our efforts, the Emancipation proclamation, and a period in history known as “Reconstruction.” However, both of these societal teases as they turned out to be, were short-lived. Reconstruction was set up to help black folks become self-sufficient as recently freed people. Poor Whites became jealous of the success of these newly freed blacks. So, the hard-won gains obtained by blacks through Business, and Politics were stolen away or destroyed. Freedom from slavery was also surgically extricated from us as a people through the Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Many people, and unfortunately too many black people, are not aware of the actual wording of the Thirteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, Section 1 that states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Thus, the reason for over-policing of Black and Brown communities, but I digress!

As I was saying, with all the atrocities against Black folks in the news lately: Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd... I started thinking. What would this country be like if all Black people decided that they had enough and were no longer going to put up with the ill-treatment in this country? What if we as a people, were to cash in our chips and leave this corrupt card game of a nation and go back to Africa. I was surprised to see the following CNN News report: “June 17, 2020: Ghana has a message for African Americans: Come home.” I said, “Wow, this is more than just a novel; This is a clarion call!”

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CHAPTER 1: Why?

Jamille!? Jeremiah!? Hey – I need somebody to go to the store – we are out of eggs and OJ for breakfast tomorrow. Jeremiah answers “Mom – which one of us has to go?” I don’t care which of you goes – as a matter of fact – why don’t you both go? That way you will stay out of trouble! Sarah looks at her twin boys and smiles as she remembers the day, she brought them home. Doctors told her that she and Thomas would not be able to have any children. In her younger years, Sarah had developed endometriosis and had a lot of scar tissue, which resulted in her becoming infertile. So, everyone thought! One year and exactly two months after becoming husband and wife, Sarah was pregnant – WITH TWINS!!! She and Thomas were ecstatic!!!

When the twins were born, all the nurses on the floor said that the boys were sooo good and that they didn’t cry much. I remember the head nurse coming into my room saying, “Mr. and Mrs. Harris have you come up with names for your twins yet?” Thomas and I were so surprised and happy about the pregnancy that we didn’t think of names like most parents do when they are pregnant. We both poured over books and listened to suggestions from family and friends, but nothing hit home with us. We knew that we didn’t want the average “twin” names – whatever they were. Thomas wanted them to have their own identity, and he wanted them to have strong names. We finally came up with Jamille (we liked the spelling) and Jeremiah (a Biblical name). Thomas was so proud, holding his two boys. He just kept looking at them and smiling as if to say, “these are my boys”!!! I DID THIS!!! Hahahaha yeah while I laid there exhausted as all get out! Of course – I had nothing to do with it!

Sarah is a freelance accountant and works out of their home. She homeschooled both her children for the first 5 years of their school life. She did not want anyone other than herself or her husband to influence their lives until they reached a certain age. An age where they would be able to ask questions about things they did not understand.

Sarah came from a family where both parents were present in the home. Her parent’s marriage of 45 years was a testimony to how she wanted her marriage to

be. Sarah's mom was a stay-at-home mom, and her dad was an educator. Before Sarah became a Harris, she was Sarah Ann Myers.

Her dad, Edwin Myers was the first black professor at the prestigious Austell Hall University in Arbor Michigan. It is no wonder that Sarah decided to go to an HBCU and chose Spellman in Atlanta, Georgia. At first, her parents were dead set against her going to school so far away from home, but Sarah was a determined woman (a trait she certainly inherited from her dad) and finally convinced her parents that it was where she wanted to go – and was going. That is where she met her future husband. Thomas was a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Sarah and Thomas met at a rally that was being held on Spellman's campus. The rally was focused on immigration and how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was being compromised. The two were chosen to be on a debate team, and they have been inseparable ever since. Upon graduation, Sarah and Thomas remained in Atlanta and lived together for one year (against both parent's wishes) before solidifying their union. Their marriage in May of 1999 was everything that Sarah wanted it to be. Here she was, marrying the perfect man for her – only she did not feel she was perfect for him because she was told that she would not be able to have any children. Even though Thomas constantly reassured her that he loved her and that they could adopt, Sarah felt like she had let Thomas down as a wife, as a woman. Well, the doctor's prognosis was proven wrong when in July of 2000, Sarah found herself pregnant with twin boys!

Jamille sauntered over toward his mother, "Aah mom I was in the middle of a great battle – HA YAH!!!" Jamille does a roundhouse kick over Jeremiah's head. Jeremiah ducks and grabs Jamille's leg and almost knocks over a lamp. Now see – I know your dad should have never bought you guys that doggone game. The twins have been studying martial arts since they were 5 years old and now, they are both black belts. They both enjoy games that have to do with technique and skill regarding martial arts. One game, in particular, was Samurai Warrior. The twins loved the competition-type battles that the game had to offer. Some of the techniques used in the game were remarkably similar to what they had been taught. I always thought those games were much too violent for 14-year-olds. Although, I must admit – you both are doing great in your martial arts classes. Just remember

what your teacher told you about discipline and behavior – remember what he said – NOT IN THE HOUSE!!!! Both boys yell out “sorry mom.”

Sarah gives Jamille the money. Now here’s a 20 – it should be more than enough for eggs and OJ. Jamille – do NOT spend my change on candy! I don’t know what I’m gonna do about that sweet tooth you have! On second thought – Jeremiah you hold the money. I know you won’t spend your momma’s change. Now go on before it gets too late – your father will be home soon and . . . here he is now. As Thomas comes through the door, the boys are running past him. Hi, pop – hey pop!! Whoaaa where are yall going? Babe they’re going to the store to get some eggs and OJ for our breakfast tomorrow. Thomas drops his briefcase and rubs his hands together saying “boy do I look forward to our weekends - ohhhh yeah – breakfast and then PJ’s all day! Movie weekend!!! Thomas walks over to Sarah and gives her a big kiss.

Thomas Harris, Morehouse grad, is an investment broker for a prestigious real-estate consulting firm. He is one of four people of color on his job. He works hard and loves spending time with his family on the weekends. He makes sure that he is available for them, as his father was not around when he was growing up. Thomas is a very proud man who, with the help of his mother, put himself through college and made sure that he positioned himself to obtain a well-paying job. Thomas did not know his father and had no one but his mom to teach him the things that he should know about being a man. His mother made sure that he acquired a thirst for learning, was neat, and mannerable. She told him that those three things would take him far in this cold world. Hey babe! I’m starving – what’s for dinner tonight?

Jeremiah, stop playing! Man, if you lose that money mom gave you, we are gonna be in a lot of trouble! Hiyahhh!!!! - Jeremiah kicks out at Jamille and then grabs him from behind. Jamille starts to laugh and does a move that gets him out of his brother's grip. Wow, nice Jamille!! I can never seem to get out of that hold easily - you have got to show me how to do that. Once inside the store, the boys continue to roughhouse a little more as they shop around for the items they came for.

The store is huge and carries everything from food to furniture. Jamille, let's go see if the new pieces are in for the Samurai game!!! Ok but we better hurry up and get back. You go check it out while I get the juice and eggs! Jeremiah finds the display and is mesmerized by the pieces that are offered. One of the pieces was a beautiful makeshift sword that looked very authentic.

Jeremiah picks up the sword and starts to do his martial arts movements. An elderly white woman notices Jeremiah with the sword and appears to be frightened. She looks around for a salesperson but does not see one, so she gets on her cell phone and dials 911 telling the police that there is a black male in the store wielding a sword. The police show up right away.

As Jamille is picking up the juice, he sees two officers running past him. Jamille says to himself - what in the world is going on now!?! He comes out of the juice aisle and heads toward the toy department when he hears, POP POP POP POP POP POP 5- or 6-gun shots fired. People are screaming and running everywhere. Jamille sees his brother laying on the floor in a pool of blood still holding the toy sword. Jamille drops the items in his hands and runs to his brother. The police try to stop him, but he is too quick. An officer grabs him from behind and Jamille uses the move that he used on his brother and gets out of the officer's grip. He runs to his brother crying why!?! What happened??! He was crying and holding his brother. Jeremiah looked at Jamille one last time and slowly closes his eyes.

The elderly woman starts apologizing saying she didn't know it was a toy - she didn't know it was a child - she seemed to be in a demented state. Jamille screams, "why did you have to kill him!!!???" The officers keep trying to get him away from his brother but Jamille would not budge. Someone says, "can't you see that they are twins!?!?" Leave them alone!!! One of the customers recognizes the twins and makes a call. Oh my God - yes Thomas - you and Sarah need to get here right away!!!!

When Thomas and Sarah arrive at the store there are people all around - news reporters are there and begin to stick microphones in their faces shouting, "are you the parents? How do you feel about your son's death?" Sarah begins to scream "death!?! What do you mean ohhhh nooooo" - they both begin to run in the

store - people shouting let them through - these are the parents, let them through!!! When Thomas and Sarah get to the scene Sarah begins to scream and cry shaking uncontrollably all the time running towards the twins, she begins holding her two children. Blood is all over them all. Thomas stands there looking around with tears streaming down his face shouting, "WHO DID THIS!!? WHY DID THIS HAPPEN!!?" The police begin to reach for their guns - Thomas says, "OH YOU'RE GONNA SHOOT ME TOO NOW!!?"

The chief of police tells Thomas to calm down and that this shooting was an accident. Thomas screams, "an accident? An accident!? My baby is laying there in a pool of blood and you tell me it was an accident!!?" The EMS worker is trying to talk to Thomas as the police chief whispers in Thomas's ear that if he doesn't calm down, this situation could turn into a riot. Thomas screams at the chief saying now you want some order!? Shoot first ask questions later? GET THE HELL OUT OF MY FACE!!!! Thomas is trying to cradle his entire family in his arms, but the coroner is there, and they have to allow them to remove the body. Thomas says Sarah - baby please - Jamille please - I need you to be strong and help me get your mom out of here!

The store manager has gotten a chair for the elderly woman that made the call. They ask her to please sit down and calm herself as she is crying uncontrollably and apologizing saying over and over that she didn't know it was a child - she didn't know it was a toy!

People were yelling obscenities and saying Trayvon Martin all over again - when is this gonna stop - Eric Garner - they've done it again - these kids live in the community they never did anything to anybody - these kids come from a good family - oh my God they've done it again - we are not gonna stand for this anymore - he was holding a toy - he is just a kid - that's his twin brother - wow he was only 14 - these kids never caused any trouble - I used to see them playing around here all the time - they were very close!

Jamille looks at his brother and kisses him on the forehead. He then looks at his dad, who is trying desperately to tie his dead son's shoestrings that have come loose in the altercation. Jamille wipes away the tears that are streaming down his face and gently pulls his mom's hands away from Jeremiah. She is rocking her

child in her arms, crying, and praying. Come on mom - they are here to take Jeremiah away and we have to go. The coroner is waiting patiently - telling Thomas that he understands and for the family to take their time. Dad, we have to go. Thomas looks at his family - feeling helpless he starts to heave and sob heavily. Jamille seems to have doubled his age in the short time that all this has happened. For him - time has slowed down and people appear to be moving in slow motion, as if they are all in a movie with no sound.

Sheila, the friend that called Thomas and Sarah has offered to drive the family home - telling them not to worry about their car and that she will get help and come back for it later. Thomas, Sarah, and Jamille follow the friend to her car with no objections. News media is all around trying to get statements from the family and any witnesses. The family says nothing - they get into the friend's car and are slowly driven back to their home.

Sheila and her husband Greg Carter have been living next door to Sarah and Thomas for over 10 years. As she is driving them home, she reflects on their first meeting, and how her husband was so upset about "those" people moving in next to them. Greg is Georgia bred with deep old boy Klan associations - compliments of grandpa and other male relatives. Greg grew up listening to stories about the "old South" and how it used to be when "blacks knew their place." Sheila is a city girl, being born and raised in Hollis Queens, New York. Greg had just graduated from Columbia University School of Law – at the top of his class when he first met Sheila. His parents wondered why he wanted to go to school so far up north. Greg replied that he wanted to go to one of the best, and in his eyes, Columbia was it!

While attending a graduation celebration at a nearby club with some of his friends, Greg noticed this very pretty girl sitting alone having a drink. Instead of walking over to introduce himself, he just sat there and stared at her. Feeling a little uncomfortable after noticing this strange man staring at her, Sheila started gathering her things to leave. As she fished in her pocketbook to pay her bill, she heard someone saying to the bartender, "this is on me." Sheila said no – no please – you don't have to do this – I have money. Greg smiled at her saying "no one said you couldn't pay – I just want to pay it for you." Please – let me do this. After years of school, don't make me have to use my law degree to convince you and the

bartender to let me pay! I'm good and you will never win. They both start to laugh. That was the beginning of their love affair.

Sheila was an RN at City Hospital in Queens but was in the city visiting a friend when she decided to stop and have a drink before she headed home on the subway. Greg would be in New York for about another month before he headed back to Georgia, and he spent most of that time with Sheila. Sheila fell in love with Greg's southern charm rather quickly despite their cultural differences – and when it was time for him to leave, she was heartbroken.

Greg made many trips back to New York to see Sheila, and it was during one of those trips when he proposed marriage. Greg told Sheila that he had joined a law firm in Georgia and that he intended to raise his family there. He did not want to put any pressure on her, but she had to know that Georgia is where he wanted to live. Sheila did not have to think too hard about Greg's proposal. She was living alone as she had lost her mom when she was 15, and her dad when she was 21. After marriage, Greg and Sheila bought a house on the outskirts of Metro Atlanta, in Cobb county. Sheila knew that with her being an RN, she would not have a problem getting a job. That was 17 years ago.

In that time, Sheila and Greg had a son, who is now 14-years old – the same age as Sarah and Thomas's two boys. Phillip was 3-years old when the Harris' moved in next door with their 3-year-old twins. She hates remembering how Greg behaved. All he kept saying was “nigger this and nigger that” and “why do they have to live here?” Sheila felt as if they had gone back in time. A time that she did not want to be a part of. Sheila had grown up in Queens, NY! She went to school with all types of people from many different nationalities. She found out that Greg's experience with diversity was very limited, and if it wasn't for him going to school in New York, he probably wouldn't have intermingled with other races at all. It is hard to believe, but up until the Harris' moving in, she hadn't come in contact with this side of Greg, and she did not like it at all.

As the years went by, and the boys started school, Sheila would see Sarah at PTA meetings, and they would exchange friendly nods. Sometimes, they would discuss issues that pertained to the school and how the children were impacted by what was going on. Sheila also knew that their sons had become friends. The kids

could not understand why they couldn't visit each other. Sheila explained the situation to Sarah and Greg, apologizing for her husband explaining it on his upbringing.

Around the time when the children were about 10 years old, Sheila found out that their son Phillip was being bullied in school. He would come home crying and scared not wanting her to tell his dad. Phillip did not want to disappoint his dad. He was a very timid young man – more like his mom. He wasn't much of a fighter. Phillip felt that his dad would be embarrassed that his son could not fight.

One day, Sheila and Greg both were summoned to come to the school, but when they got there, Sarah and Thomas were there also. Greg started yelling and demanding to know what had happened. He immediately thought that the twins had done something to their son! The boys were sitting in the principal's office, along with another child that was holding his arm as if it were broken, and the police were there also. Phillip had blood all over his shirt due to his nose bleeding. The police were there and had to calm Greg down because he kept yelling obscenities at the twins. Thomas started yelling back and threatening to do bodily harm to Greg.

It seems that the same bully had started a fight with Phillip – punching him in the nose. The twins came to Phillip's rescue. No one at the school knew that the twins were taking martial arts lessons – it was part of their disciplinary training. They were to be humble about their knowledge of the arts, but when they saw what was happening to their friend, they attacked the bully and wound up breaking his arm.

When Greg heard that story – his whole demeanor toward the Harris' changed. The parents of the bully came in and demanded that the twins be taken to jail. Greg stepped in and said, "I am the attorney for the twins – let's talk about this and see if we can get this resolved without anybody going to jail." Greg informed the parents that it was their son that assaulted his son and that he had been bullying him for quite some time. Greg also informed them that he could press charges and have their son sent to a detention facility (exaggerating a little).

From that point on, Greg and Thomas became the best of friends. Sheila and Greg knew that their son was a little different from the other children and was very thankful that the twins had befriended him. They loved their son immensely.

Sheila made a sigh of relief as she could now be open about her friendship with Sarah, and the boy's friendship (as well as their parents) blossomed into a brotherly love for each other.

As Sheila pulled up to Thomas and Sarah's home no one moved. Sheila noticed that Greg and Phillip were home - she had called Greg from the store and told him what happened. When she pulled up, they both came running to the car. Greg opened the door on Sarah's side and tried to help her out of the car. Thomas got out and tried to help also – Sarah was still crying intensely. Both men helped Sarah into the house with Sheila following. When Jamille got out of the car - Phillip was standing there. Jamille noticed that Phillip had something in his hand. With tears streaming down his face Phillip held up a picture of himself with the twins. Jamille started crying and sat down on the curb, and Phillip sat next to him not saying a word.

The next few days were like a blur to the Harris family as they prepared for their son's funeral. They were receiving all kinds of correspondence from people they did not know – some were condolences, and some were regarding police brutality and how they should sue the police department. Civil rights leaders were calling and asking if the family wanted to seek justice for the senseless murder of their son. News reporters camped outside of their home for days. Jeremiah's schoolmates held a candlelight vigil on the lawn of the Harris' home the night before the funeral. The family also received a phone call from the President giving his condolences.

On the day of the funeral, it was pouring down raining. Jamille watched as his mom was trying desperately to get a pin on the lapel of her jacket – her hands were trembling so much that she could not do it. Jamille said mom let me do that for you. As he fixed the pin on his mom's jacket, he told her that he read somewhere that when someone dies, and it rains, the rain is washing their footprints from the earth. Jamille said mom – Jeremiah's footprints may be washed away but I will never forget him! Sarah looked at Jamille and said that's right baby – we will never forget our love. Sarah looked at her child and hugged him until Thomas told them it was time to go.

The funeral was beautiful. Brian Kennedy, a well-known Black activist flew in from New York to give the eulogy. As Brian spoke, Jamille wondered how somebody that didn't even know his brother could give the eulogy.

The days and months following Jeremiah's death were long and sorrowful. The activist from New York assisted Thomas and Sarah with filing a lawsuit against the police department. Greg asked if he could head up the legal team to help put the police officer behind bars – or, at the least, get him fired from the police department. As with most of the wrongful death cases involving police and citizens, the police officer did not lose his job, and he did not go to prison. The police officer was found to have acted appropriately, and that his actions were in line with the duties of his job. He was suspended – with pay for the entire time of the trial. Once the verdict was in, he went right back to work.

For Sarah – she was glad that it was over because nothing could bring her son back, and for her, everything else was just a waste of time. Jamille noticed that his mother, who at one time, was up and full of energy - lately, seemed to be a little out of it. What Jamille did not know was that his mother was battling depression. Thomas was angry most of the time – coming home yelling at Sarah for not doing something around the house. Jamille did not know what was going on with his family but he knew that whatever was wrong had to do with Jeremiah's death. He longed for the days when they were all a family. Jamille found himself being angry also and losing respect for authority figures. Jamille prayed that his mother and father would not give up and separate. He was so fearful of those thoughts, but he would not dare voice it to anybody. Those thoughts stayed bottled up inside of him for fear if he said them out loud it just might happen.

One day, while sitting outside, Phillip came over to see if Jamille wanted to go over some martial arts moves. Before Jeremiah's death, the twins had begun to show Phillip some moves to help protect himself against bullies like the one that attacked him in school a few years ago. Jamille told Phillip that he didn't feel like it right now and to maybe come back later. Phillip sat down next to Jamille and said, "I know that you are missing your brother... I miss him too. But I want you to know that you still have a brother Jamille – I will always be here for you!" Jamille looked at Phillip, and through his tears said, "thank you, man." Phillip

said, “I know you don’t want me to hug you, but we hug at my house so get ready – here it comes – I’m gonna hug you!” With that Phillip reached out to hug Jamille and they both started laughing – Jamille said, “no man - get out of here” playfully pushing Phillip away - but he allowed the hug anyway while the both of them kept laughing. Phillip said, “I love you man” – Jamille said, “I love you too brother.”

CHAPTER 2: The Project

Three years have passed since that dreadful day, and Jamille is now a senior in high school. Sarah, Thomas, and Jamille had to get counseling to deal with Jeremiah's death. The counseling helped to keep their family together. Things had gotten really bad with Thomas moving out for a couple of months. Although Jamille was fearful of that happening, the separation did some good. Along with the counseling and separation, Sarah and Thomas realized how much they loved and needed each other. They also realized how much of a toll the situation had taken on Jamille and that they needed to be a family again.

In the years leading up to his senior year, Jamille had taken a great interest in Brian Kennedy – the activist that gave the eulogy at Jeremiah's funeral began communicating with him continually.

Brian said that Jamille reminded him of himself when he was that age. Jamille asked Brian the question that he asked himself at his brother's funeral. How can someone that doesn't even know his brother give the eulogy for him? Brian told him that throughout his entire life, he was devoted to civil rights. It was his calling. He told Jamille that he had seen a lot of injustices and some that were taken out on him. I have been arrested on numerous occasions; I have buried a number of my friends in the name of injustice. I have walked with Kings and broke bread with Presidents. I think that – no – I have EARNED the right to give the eulogy for a fallen angel. Jamille – I see that you have that calling also. Unfortunately, it took the death of your brother to bring this out in you, but I see it in you. I see it in the questions that you ask. I see it in how the last three years you communicated with me about the wrongs you have tried to right in your own community. You established a neighborhood watch. You made sure that everyone in your community had some type of recording device. You submitted a grant and received monies to buy these devices for anyone that needed one in your community. Jamille – you even created a youth movement organization dedicated to Black Lives Matter! I'm proud of you son!

It meant a lot to hear Brian say that he was proud of him and what he was doing. Thomas and Sarah were very proud of him also. They were worried about

Jamille because he was always in his room reading, or on the computer. They were afraid that he was becoming introverted and hoped that he was not in his room plotting to shoot up someplace or something crazy like that.

Ever since the murder of his twin brother, Jamille had become very interested in civil rights, and the youth movement that he organized as a subdivision of Black Lives Matter. He found himself always having to defend what he was fighting for – or against. He would say, “most people are good people. My intentions aren’t to insult white people, but the facts are the facts. It’s a fact that 9/10th of the global population are people of color, and only 1/10th of the global population is white, yet we are being treated like we don’t matter. Yes – it’s true that ALL lives matter, but right now – black people are getting the real short end of the stick!” With the help of his friend Phillip, they solicited everyone in the neighborhood, including all their friends on their social media platform to sign a petition to get a neighborhood watch going. Jamille made Phillip the captain. He got names from people that didn’t even live in his neighborhood, but because they sympathized with him and his family, they signed. There wasn’t that much crime in his neighborhood but after the organization of the Watch, it brought the number of mishaps to virtually none. Jamille was getting recognition as a leader in his community, a go-getter. He was very determined to not let what happened to his brother happen to anyone else – not just in his community but also within the country.

Communication with Brian Kennedy led him to become affiliated with the organization Black Lives Matter and helped with starting his own chapter. While gathering information on the organization, Jamille found out that every 28 hours, a black man, woman, or child is murdered by some form of law enforcement. Jamille found himself to be engulfed with the issues concerning senseless killings like that of Trayvon Martin in Florida. Trayvon Martin was a young black man who was gunned down in Sanford, Florida by a neighborhood watchman that was not appointed by anyone in that neighborhood.

Michael Brown was another young man from Ferguson Missouri who was on his way to college a few days before he was shot and killed by a police officer who was just “doing his duty.” These killings and many others were brought home

when Jamille tragically lost his brother to the same type of violence. He knew that he would do something to make sure that his brother did not die in vain.

Jamille was so concerned with what was going on and wanted to help in some way that Brian Kennedy became somewhat of a mentor to him. Brian invited Jamille to New York on one of his summer breaks. With permission from his parents, Jamille met with Brian and got the history lesson of his life. A history lesson that he had never read about in the books he had in his school. Brian took Jamille to the site of the Audubon Ballroom where Malcolm X was killed. The site is currently the Audubon Business and Technology Center and the Shabazz Center. Brian gave Jamille a myriad of books to read and answered all of his questions. Brian told Jamille all about Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA was proclaimed to be the largest mass movement in Black American history with a “back to Africa” message. Brian was filled with a wealth of knowledge and he shared it all with Jamille.

Brian told Jamille that he had walked with Kings. Jamille was not surprised to learn that Brian had marched with Martin Luther King and went to jail on numerous occasions. Brian told him that he cannot be afraid. If you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk. He told Brian about the incident that happened on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The bridge is named after a U.S. Senator from Alabama, who was also a Grand Dragon of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan. That bridge was the site of a conflict that has gone down in history as Bloody Sunday.

On that Sunday, March 7, 1965, armed policemen attacked Civil Rights Leader, John Lewis and peaceful demonstrators with billy clubs and tear gas as they were trying to march to the Alabama state capitol, Montgomery. Brian was there, along with other civil rights leaders. On March 11, 2013, the bridge was declared a National Historic Landmark. Jamille told Brian that he doesn't quite understand why anyone would want to make something like that, where a tragedy happened, into a national landmark? Brian told Jamille that one should never forget their past lest they be doomed to repeat it. Maybe honoring these places and things may not seem appropriate but it keeps it, or them out in the forefront never to be forgotten.

By the time Jamille's vacation was over, he was a different person. He was more aware of the world and his surroundings and seemed much wiser than other children of his age. He had so many questions and he was very grateful to Brian for spending time with him and teaching him about a history that showed no face in the teachings he had gotten in his school.

Brian told him about all the inventions that Black people contributed to this country. Inventions like blood banks, the refrigerator, the electric trolley, the dustpan, comb, mop, brush, clothes dryer, lawnmower, traffic signals, the pen and pencil sharpener; and from people like Otis Boykin, who invented the artificial heart pacemaker control unit; Henry Brown, the modern-day fireproof safe; Granville T. Woods, the multiplex telegraph; here's one he was sure his brother Jeremiah would have liked – Gerald A. Lawson, the modern home-video gaming console; Patricia Bath, the cataract laser phaco probe; Marc Hannah, 3-D graphics technology that is used in films; and Garrett Morgan, the modern-day gas mask.

On Jamille's last day in New York, Brian took Jamille to the site where the 911 bombings had taken place. His parents had told him and his brother about what happened, but to see the site was truly surreal. Jamille was overcome with emotion. Brian told Jamille that when this tragedy took place, American people seemed they had forgotten their differences and for a brief moment - all lives did matter.

Yes - when Jamille got back to Atlanta, he stayed in his room a lot and read all the books Brian had given him. He knew that his parents were concerned about what he was doing. Phillip was the only person that he had divulged his plans to. As a pre-requisite to graduating from high school, all seniors had to submit a thesis paper on any subject of their choosing. Armed with his communications with Brian, and the summer that he spent with him in New York, Jamille knew exactly what he wanted to write about.

It's Saturday morning. Thomas woke up to the smell of bacon frying. He couldn't help but think about how good Sarah takes care of him and Jamille. He thinks about how hard she took the death of their son, and how he almost lost her - once by leaving her, and once, because of her depression. They all had taken it so

hard and dealt with it in their own ways. Thank God they made it through and back to each other.

Saturdays were always dedicated to a big breakfast, pajamas all day, and movies – movies - movies. After working all week, Thomas looked forward to these Saturdays with his family.

Jamille!!! Get up man – don't you smell that bacon!!? Jamille laughs out loud – dad I'm way ahead of you (coming out of the room in his pajamas). They both start for the steps and then start running to see who could get down the steps faster.

Sarah hears the noise and tells them to stop running – you know your father is too old to be trying to run down those stairs! There was a knock on the back door before Thomas can give a rebuttal to Sarah's remark, Thomas looks through the curtain and sees Greg, Sheila, and Phillip in their pajamas. Come on in – you are just in time. Honey – we have guests for pajama day. Sarah tells them all to sit down because breakfast is served! Sheila is laughing so hard telling everybody how they had to sneak across the lawn in their pajamas without anybody seeing them.

What a spread – bacon, eggs, sausages, biscuits, grits, and OJ. Thomas asks Phillip to please say grace and when he was done, everybody dug in.

Sheila tells Sarah that breakfast was great and offers to help with clearing off the table and cleaning the dishes. Thomas tells all the guys to come on in the living room and leave the cleaning to the women. Everybody starts to laugh. Thomas and Greg take their coffee with them.

Greg and Sheila both thank Sarah for the meal and ask, “what's on the movie agenda for today?” Jamille and Phillip are looking through the cabinet for some movies. Thomas says that the youngsters are picking out some movies. Let's see what they come up with.

Thomas and Greg go out on the patio to drink their coffee. Greg looks at their boys and says – you know Thomas – look at them – they are both 17 now – seniors in high school. We raised them right. They could be anywhere, but they are here with us on a Saturday – in their pajamas – about to watch movies with their families.

Yeah, I know man – they could be anywhere else. Listen, Greg, – I wanted to ask you something. Has Phillip been saying anything to you about this organization that Jamille started? I mean – is he a part of it?

Well, I don't know if Phillip is a part of it because it has something to do with people of color and the injustices that they face here in America. Well, I take that back, knowing Phillip the way that I do – he probably is. I never asked him.

Would you be offended if he were Greg? No Thomas – I would be proud that my son was standing up for something he believed in. I wouldn't want him to get hurt in any way; nevertheless, I would be proud. Why do you ask?

Jamille has been doing a lot of reading. I saw some of the books and they were on the rise and fall of the Black Panther movement, Marcus Garvey, Gandhi, Malcolm X, MLK. He has also been communicating with Brian Kennedy throughout the years. Brian even invited Jamille to come to New York as his guest. Sarah and I gave him our permission this summer and he went for two weeks. You know Brian helped him to get funding for those recording devices. I don't know what to make of it. It seems my son has turned into an activist of some sort.

Are you worried Thomas? I don't know – should I be Greg? I mean – you are the lawyer – what do you make of it? I'm a lawyer – not a detective man. Why don't you just ask him what he is up to? I don't want him to think that I'm snooping around in his things. Yet – that is exactly what you are doing. The two men look at each other – take a sip of their coffee and go back into the living room. Ok – Thomas rubs his hands together – what did you guys pick out? Well, dad – we picked out an oldie but goodie – we picked The Clash of the Titans.

Sarah says, “Wow I love Greek mythology”! Sheila says “ok – I can watch that – it's been a long time!” Phillip says, “cool – they did a remake of this, but I want to see this one – it's the original!” Greg says, “alright start er up!!”

In bed on Sunday night – Sarah lets out a big sigh. Thomas asks, “What's on your mind babe?” Thomas – I was wondering about how many more pajama Saturdays are we going to have with Jamille. He will be graduating this year, and then he will be going off to college. I'm going to miss him so much! Sarah – you knew he had to grow up sometime. Thomas smiles and puts his arms around Sarah. Hell – I'm gonna miss him too – especially when I think about our pajama

Saturdays. Listen – you and I can still do pajama Saturdays – and it will be a lot more fun here by ourselves. We can do – NO PAJAMA Saturdays!!! Sarah takes her pillow and hits Thomas – they laugh – look at each other – then Sarah just lays her head in Thomas’ chest. They both lay there not saying a word – just holding each other.

Monday – Jamille comes running into the house – mom – where’s dad? What’s going on Jamille? Your dad should be home soon – what’s wrong? Mom – I turned in my idea for my senior project assignment today and I want to talk it over with the both of you. I am so excited!!

When Thomas gets home – Jamille asks him to come into the living room. Thomas wants to know what all the excitement is about. Sarah says, “he wants to talk to the both of us about his senior school project.”

Mom – dad – these last few years since Jeremiah’s death, have been hard. I have been watching news story after news story about injustices done to our people. It has gotten so that Black people can’t even go for a Sunday drive or walk in the park without being harassed. So, I got to thinking about a solution. I concluded that we are not wanted here, and I do not understand why we keep trying to live amongst people that do not want us here.

I have a hypothetical question to ask you. What would happen if every black person in America were to leave? Thomas says, “and go where?” Sarah looks perplexed – yes baby – go where? LEAVE – leave the United States to go live on their own island! What do you think would happen to the U.S. if that were to happen?

Thomas says, “first of all – an island would be too small for all the Black people in America.” Dad – this is just a hypothetical situation – work with me. We will use an island for now. See – this is what I am going to do my senior project on. There are some 43 million Black people in the United States. I did research and found that we will have spent 1.1 trillion dollars in America by the end of the year. Imagine if all that revenue was taken away? The United States would collapse. Thomas and Sarah look at each other. Sarah says – Thomas - Jamille has lost his mind! Thomas touches Sarah’s arm and says, “wait, babe – let’s hear him out.”

Mom – dad – it’s all hypothetical. My teacher says it is a great idea for a project. Well – I just wanted to share it with you and tell you dad that this is what I have been reading all those books for. Yes – Phillip told me that you asked about why I was doing all that reading. I have had this question in my head for a long time – well since we lost Jeremiah. I was so angry and wished that I could have done something.

At first, I wanted to hurt someone – kill someone like they killed him. Then I got to thinking that I just wanted to leave. I started reading about the Black Panther movement and how they took control of their communities until the federal government stepped in and disrupted everything.

Next, I studied Marcus Garvey and how he wanted Black people to return to their ancestral lands. We live in fear here. This is what Marcus Garvey had to say about fear (Jamille pulls a piece of paper from his bag and reads) “Fear is a state of nervousness fit for children and not men. When man fears a creature like himself, he offends God, in whose image and likeness he is created. Man being created equal fears not man but God. To fear is to lose control of one’s nerves, one’s will to flutter, like a dying fowl, losing consciousness, yet, alive” (2). This is what he said about Ambition: “it is the desire to go forward and improve one’s condition. It is a burning flame that lights up the life of the individual and makes him see himself in another state. To be ambitious is to be great in mind and soul. To want that which is worthwhile and strive for it; To go on without looking back, reaching to that which gives satisfaction. To be humanly ambitious is to take in the world which is the province of man; to be divinely ambitious is to offend God by rivaling him in His infinite Majesty” (3). Thomas and Sarah are speechless as they take in the excitement of what their son is sharing with them.