

On Earth as it is in Heaven

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(Finding Rhythm and Harmony)

A Memoir of David August (Chapter 4)

As told to Ron Hardy by David August

The passage “ On Earth as it is in Heaven” from “ The Lord's Prayer “is intriguing and thought provoking when you examine it. When, where and how will one find the tranquility and peace which exists in Heaven while still living on this earth? Wow! That's a big order to fill.

In the late 70's going into the 80's the Black community residing in San Francisco, CA was on a roll. “Ain't no stopping us now, we're on the move” was the vibe of the city. The hit song from the duo McFadden and Whitehead, “Ain't No Stopping Us Now” echoed that sentiment as it was blasting on Black radio stations and in the nightclubs. I was in the mix myself as well. I finally had made it to be over 21 years old. Still without the knowledge of what exactly I wanted to do with my life but the journey was exciting with a lot of twists and turns. . I bumped a nice little lady named Joyce Jackson. She was college educated and worked as a Human Resource Officer at the Bank of America. I was making good money myself for just going to school. The school paid me 400.00 a month through the CETA program and I was also getting over 350.00 a month from my Veterans benefits. I was making more money than many people on unskilled 9 to 5 jobs. I didn't have any bills to pay. I floated between Joyce's house and my oldest sister Eula's house. I was running in the jet-setter click with nothing to lose and everything to gain. Both of my other 2 sisters had new cars and loaned them to me at the drop of a hat. The jet-set click that I also refer to as the upper echelon of Blacks were living a G. Q. magazine type lifestyle. From the corporate world to the street world the game was booming and as a collective Blacks were ahead in the game. Nightclubs and after hour Speak Easy joints were booming. Prosperity across the Black community was evident. We could see the light.

One night in October of 1978, I was kicking it at a typical house party gathering. We typically would congregate like that before hitting the club scene later in the wee hours of the night. I was chilling playing Backgammon with a my girl decked out in my green silk Christian Dior shirt with my green wool tweed pants and my green lizard Bally shoes. I remember vividly when the the girl's whose apartment we were at step father came in the door. He was a merchant Marine. He just had came home from a long trip.. He yelled out to everybody in the room, "Who wants to play baseball." He was referring to Free- Basing cocaine. None of us knew what he was talking about. Free Basing was new. He took some powder cocaine and put it in a vial along with ether and water. He then shook it up real good and began to draw out the ether with a eyedropper. He then put the liquid on a plate. He began drying the plate with a hair dryer. Waa laa the liquid turned back to a white powdery substance. He then pulled out a big pipe and started to smoke the white powdery substance. The procedure looked very intelligent and scientific. I think the procedure of making it is what caught a lot of people's interest and attention to Free Basing cocaine at the onset of this epidemic that devastated and demolished Black communities all over America.

This was something new to us and the world. No one knew at that time or had any sense of the devastation Free Basing cocaine would bring to the world. I held back for several months before I tried it. My girl friend Joyce who had the corporate job fell victim to it that night. The nightclubs quickly dried up. The party people were stuck at home Free-Basing cocaine. Cocaine was roughly \$2,000.00 an ounce during that era. People were going through ounces of cocaine quicker than they used a gallon of milk. There were many Black families in San Francisco whom had acquired property creating a generational wealth class of Blacks. During and after World War there was huge influx of Blacks arriving to San Francisco . They found good paying jobs. They invested in property and businesses. A

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great portion of this wealth was lost during the early days of the Free Basing epidemic. Eventually this euphoric highly destructive drug hit the masses in the community as the drug called Crack. The difference between Free Base and Crack was the way it was manufactured. Crack was made without using ether but by cooking the cocaine in water and baking soda. The masses couldn't wait couldn't to try this new trend of smoking cocaine. It's a common place throughout all civilizations and cultures that the poor masses want to do what the rich elite people are doing. Crack in the housing projects and Black populated neighborhoods took off like a rocket in the sky. The money and mentality in the Black community changed drastically. We went from the player finessing lifestyle to the present day thug mentality just that fast in the blink of an eye. The media also was a great help with that transition. I was there and watched it happen.

My Free Basing days didn't last too long. I studied Free Basing from every angle. When we all smoked together it seemed like I couldn't get the right high . I couldn't get a proper hit and coast through the high. My final episode came when I realized there was no satisfaction coming from Free Basing. It was the beginning of May in 1979. I bought 7 grams of cocaine for \$700.00 and commenced to smoke it by myself. I wanted to get a good hit so I could feel satisfied. I smoked throughout the night by myself taking large hits seeking to find the right zone that I was seeking. It never came. As the sun was rising I then realized I just spent \$700.00 and still wasn't satisfied. My Mother's words popped in to my mind. “ If something doesn't satisfy you then leave it alone. It could be your girl friend or any thing. Just leave it alone. Don't keep fooling around with it.” After being up all night I still went to school that morning. While riding the bus I noticed that my shoes were a bit scuffed up and my general appearance wasn't G Q and pristine the way I was used to it being. Something wasn't quite right. After much thought and deliberation, I distanced my self from my friends that were in the fast lane and Free Basing.

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My sister Judy had given me a bird named Pretty Boy. He was a cockatiel and I spent a lot of time training him. I also knew how to clip his wings. I would take him outside around town perched on my shoulder. On the Saturday after my big smoking adventure Pretty Boy and I went up in Golden Gate Park and I heard some music coming from one area. I followed and found the sounds. It was a guy that I knew jamming on his base guitar along with a whole bunch of hippie looking Black and White guys that were playing congas along with a lot of other strange looking little instruments. I usually didn't participate or pay much attention to these type of gatherings. I was always too busy to be fooling with these hippies plus I was too cool., slick and debonair This day I watched them a while then someone handed me a little shaker called a Cabasa. I began shaking it and got in the groove. Instantly I felt a great sensation. This little shaker was giving me the high that I desired. When the music stopped I felt satisfied. "Wow!" I thought. " I just spent \$700.00 and didn't get satisfied but this little shaker got me high and satisfied. From that moment on my life changed along with the people that I congregated with. I started hanging out at Golden Gate Park on Hippie Hill learning the tricks of the trade of congas and an array of percussion instruments. This was a shock to me and everybody that knew me. I was a jet setter and now I'm out there with these people who looked lost and rejected by society. That day I found my rhythm and harmony which led to me finding my "On Earth as it is in Heaven". I found a love for percussion instruments and congas. I found peace and tranquility in the rhythm along with the harmony of brotherhood with the guys playing. I was at the Hippie Hill faithfully every Saturday and Sunday learning how to play just for the sake of playing. I was hooked. I had no intentions or thoughts of a performing, being in a band or a career in music. My passion was just to learn and master this new found hobby. It was mentally stimulating and physically invigorating My whole demeanor changed. I found my zone and space to be in. One of my sister Judy's friends asked her, " What is your

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brother doing out there beating on drums with those nasty hippie looking people? What's wrong with him. He used to be dressed nice and moving up in the world. What happened to him?" When I started growing Dread Locks, it was very revolutionary in the early 1980's.

The journey to attain one's own "On Earth as it is in Heaven" space can be long, alienating and confusing to yourself self well as the other people in your life. I feel so blessed to have been able to endure through this process. "On Earth as it is on Earth" is a continuous compilation of experiences, challenges and tests. Mind over matter is a huge part of finding physical and spiritual oneness on the journey to "On Earth as it is on Earth". One of my biggest challenges and tests came much later in life when I decided to have 10 teeth pulled without being administered pain medication of any type. This was a huge feat for me spiritually, physically and mentally. Finding the keys to "Mind Over Matter" opens the door to "On Earth As It Is In Heaven".