

THE TRIAL OF A CITY: CAMDEN
(A Discourse)



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AVENUE A. "In a Dream".

This article is one less stone thrown at south west New Jersey. In the developing years of me freelancing, with my origins in extensive writing in the realest years of my life, I understand today that my approach as a Black Journalist always deals with the essence. The essence of a situation, a city; a conflict, a war, a people in transition. In this case we have Camden, New jersey, A city that as you sit and read this brief essay is evidently labeled "The Black Hole". In its founding the substantial Motto was:

"In a Dream, I saw a city Invincible"...

If a Camden politician, co founder and visionary can interpret a city as Invincible; there are evident reasons why its currently evolved into the "Black Hole". This is the place where death may be inevitable on broken blocks, where the male seed grow into the grimy product. Where daughters become mothers, and Criminals are re produced faster than Lawyers or Doctors, and from Seaside to Municipality resembles a failed City. Walk with me among stats of men, drug trafficking, and Gentrification. The economy of a below the poverty line district, survival and Precinct numbers. A Black Journalist that understands the struggle will search the ruins, dangers, and courts of this city called pain, for where there is **Life**.



" We need more warriors soon, sent from the stars sun and the moon"-

Nasir Olu Dara Jones

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THE ALLEY: County Blues.

A general, but true statement; that the poor and middle class help carry the mass production of America's industries. While the corporate councils conduct decisions and issue change over city landscapes, urbanization calls for bigger businesses, franchises, and sweeps of gentrification. Contractors erect buildings, and the laborers of the middle class and poor respond to employment. An example of Camden's yesteryear; booming industries, food and other. Camden was clean, a symbol of the American Manufacturer, that served nationally. RCA Victor. Campbell's soup. The shipbuilding corporation. Some of the nation's biggest corporations reigned for 3 % of the 20th century, and they reigned out of Camden. Within the leading string of companies that provided employment and a lucrative picture for Camden's economy, the demographic changed. Today's demographic includes African American, White, Latino (Domenican, Puerto Rican etc), and other. By 1970, some of the factions that began to tear Camden at it seams were racial tensions, infrastructure issues, urban decay and downsizing.



THE BLACK HOLE: Descent

As corporations dissolved, political corruption thrived. As corruption thrived, funding for law enforcement and city campaigns were mostly ineffectual, and political offices were troubled. Some communities became more divided following the racial lines of division of American yesteryear. And last but not least: one of the weapons of Hoover's COINTELPRO (see Wikipedia), the reason for the greatest systemic American profits to date, the cream and destruction amidst American poverty: the American drug trade. This force and all others listed has rendered the streets, political bodies and the face of Camden NJ close to a failed city. Those in the belly of mass incarceration, county and state, and the despairing areas of the city can testify. I currently mentor the promise of a few young men within its border's, and when I pass through I see the bearded, the young mother with a smile, and pain on her brow. "Waki" burning, stash houses where profits, heroin, freebase are kept frozen as the hearts as the system that governs it. And youth in a scramble for a dollar and a dream. Blood as the Piru flag. What lifts this depression? What challenges it? Who cares? Change is constituted when there is a percentage of the community ready for it.

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THE LIGHT: Redeemable Causes.



***“Yeah Im’a make sure they get me right,(Right dog)
flipped on the pages of my life”..-
Kool G Rap***

In my early years of transitioning, one of the greatest sources of personal and social reformation was my involvement in Africana studies. There was a correlation I needed to find, in the matrix of my own community. How it suffered from the same crippling issues, generations after generations. Stepping out onto my block, a pre-dominant Black community, I asked “why”? Why is it like this. Why do these social dysfunctions impact us so, to where we hate each other, to where we kill each other, and hate each others success. Through study I was able to see what is labeled “Minority” in its current state, and their ancestors in Glory, and struggle, in centuries prior. Camden is not given to the dogs. And in this case its not, given to the swift. But those that see the greater need of a dark city, an economy that won’t balance the ration of the poor, and health to a generation raised only by the violence, gangs, incarceration, and drugs they know.



“POPPY”

“ The power structure in the city once trembled whenever Poppy Sharp climbed to a podium. He freely acknowledged during an interview with The Inquirer in 1993 to having had a hand in each of the city's riots in the '60s and '70s, the earlier of which claimed the lives of a teenage girl and a city police officer.

The turning point in his life was his hearing a speech by H. Rap Brown in which Brown asked members of the audience what they had been doing for the last five years in Camden. It was late in 1967. That night, Mr. Sharp went to a corner bar where a relative was the emcee, grabbed the microphone, and began talking, urging people to come together, Mr. Sharp said in that same Inquirer

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interview.

Shortly thereafter, he founded the Black Believers in Knowledge, which later merged with an NAACP youth group to become the BPUM.

“Certainly, for all people of color, Poppy brought the civil-rights movement to Camden,” said Harvey R. Johnson, president of the BPUM’s economic-development committee.

The organization that Mr. Sharp founded set out to give power to the people in a host of ways, including through economic development.”

PHILLYNEWS 1999

The Crucible

Above is a reference of a unsung legendary activist who poured out his efforts into Camden streets and politics from transitional years of civil rights, to the redeeming causes of future generations. For anyone who knows the current state of affairs of south Jersey; Municipality to projects, I propose a salvation in the face of this. Lets start with questions, saying how can communities of people fulfill livelihood in dysfunction? Where is economic opportunity when corporate businesses through gentrification sweep impoverished areas? Where is ambition when half the community is destroyed by the drug trade, the other half eat, and the whole is addicted on the welfare mindset? Camden NJ has been broken, infected, but this city doesn’t lie dead. If it has been modeled as a poster boy of poverty and violence, then it models the dysfunction of every American inner city. Camden is capable of challenging its dysfunctions with positive standard. In the “Cornucopia”, an article I published last year, I illustrated a corporate resolution that syncs the entire community, for the cause of its own redemption. Bringing this Model to middle class to below the poverty line. It commends one call for cities like Camden to look on its streets, and government. And see, if the educational system fails us, If Prison capatilizes from us, If violence divides and decreases us, and little restores us...theres one element that still thrives: Us. If the Host takes on the offensive, the people will see, where there is Life in Camden. To people of all shades in this region I bid you empowerment. I bid you Life. In the words of a clothing campaign launched recently, Sa Lute: “RUN-CMD”

Consciously Yours, Z.A

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