

## Excerpt from "Young, Black Males: America's Most Wanted" by Wendy Kellam

### *Wake Up Everybody*

My prayer for the future of Black males is that they do two things: take care of their personal finances and take care of their brothers. Whether we want to admit it or accept it, we are our brothers' keeper. The quicker we begin taking care of one another, passing our knowledge forward and cultivating the future, the sooner we really push forward and change the world.  
D.J. Preston

Almost every day in the United States, a Black youth murders another Black youth. Just as a lot of us recognized Trayvon Martin could've been our son. One of these murdered children could've been our son also. There is a war going on from the small rural areas (that do not receive media coverage) to the largest cities in the country. The war is in every home and community that's burying a child before that child has a chance to live.

In 2012, five hundred mothers lost a child to gun violence in Chicago alone. If the murderer was caught, that number increased to one thousand mothers that have lost their sons because no one wins when a child is caged for the rest of his life. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that." We have to be that light for our young males. Our youth, especially young, Black males, are crying bullet instead of tears. Black organizations, churches, community leaders, hip-hop culture, we can't continue to ignore the sickness of our own race. Didn't Jesus say, "It's not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick?" We can't only preach in the church when the sick is in the streets. Our young, Black males are sick of broken families. They are sick of absentee fathers. They are sick of drug-infested homes. They are sick of schools minimizing their intelligence and setting low expectations or no expectations. They are sick of churches being more concerned about young people's appearance, rather than their broken spirits. They are sick of organizations who are supposed to advance the lives of youth, yet there is no one really trying to advance their chances of not being the victim of gun violence.

We all must accept a role in the demise of our youth. We spend too much time pointing the finger at each other. The truth is we all have a link on the pyramid built in the destruction of our young, Black males.

Our youth need to believe they matter to their parents, communities, schools and this country. We have to reach them where they are, not where we decided they should be. It is going to take a lot of work to show them their relevance; especially when Jonathan Ferrell of Charlotte, North Carolina was murdered by a police officer in the midst of seeking assistance for his car; or, when Jordan Davis was murdered because he was playing music loudly. When they do right, they can be murdered. When they do wrong, they will be murdered. The consensus seems to be less value is placed on our young, Black males. We must change that concept. We must break down the fears that are keeping our race divided as well as the division in our country. We have to be accountable for the examples we show our youth. We have to be accountable for how we treat one another in front of our youth. We cannot push tough love on broken spirits until we understand the brokenness. It took a village to destroy our youth and it will take a village to rebuild it, by any means necessary.

In the words of Tupac, "I am the reflection of my community."