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CONTRIBUTE 2

Hi Folks!

My name is David Sylvester and I recently completed a charitable bicycle trip in Africa, riding over 7,000 miles from Cairo, Egypt to Cape Town, South Africa. The trip made me the first, and only, African American to cross two continents on a bicycle. I have plenty of great and fascinating stories. Many are funny, others bittersweet, some are poignant, but all are entertaining. Surprisingly one story has stood out and if it was not for the fact that I have a picture of it, many would never believe it; and it is for that reason that I am sharing it with you.

While in Lilongwe, Malawi, I came across a store by the name of “Niggers” —that’s right “Niggers”! The other riders, who were all white, could not wait to inform me of this to see my reaction. Initially, I thought that it was a very bad joke, but when the other riders were adamant about the existence of the store, I had to see it for myself.

What I found was a store selling what the owner called “hip hop” style clothing. It was manned by two gentlemen — one of them asleep! (Talk about living up to or in this case down to a stereotype.) I asked the guys what was up with the store name. After hearing my obvious non-Malawian accent and figuring out that I was from America, the man thumped his chest proudly and said “P-Diddy, New York City! We are the niggers!”



My first reaction was to laugh because many things when isolated can be very funny, but it quickly dawned on me that this was so not funny at all. It was pathetic. I did these bicycle trips across the USA and through the ‘Mother Land’ in honor of one of my good friends, mentors, and fellow African American, Kevin Bowser, who died on 9/11. Here I am, a black man, riding across the world on his bicycle in honor of another black man, riding ‘home’ and what do I see?? Some Africans calling themselves Niggers! They were even so proud of it they put it on their storefront to sell stuff. When I relay the story to folks back home in Philadelphia, most of them will laugh too and rationalize it by saying “well, we can say it to each other” or “there is a difference” or even “they just spelled it wrong. It should have been “nigga’s” or “niggah’s.” Gee, like that would make a difference.

The issue is not the spelling. I was wrong. We are wrong. There is no justification for an infraction of this magnitude. The word and the sentiment behind it is flat out wrong! We have denigrated and degraded ourselves to the point that our backwards mindset has spread like a cancer and infected



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our source, our brothers, our sisters, our Mother Land. I have traveled all over the world and have never seen a store by the name of "Jew Devils," "spic bastards," "muff divin' dykes" or anything like that—only the store niggers!

I am to blame for this. Every time I said the word I condoned it, by not correcting others or rationalizing it gave it respectability, by looking the other way when others said "hey nigga what's up" allowed others to see it and ultimately that when I purchase CDs, DVDs, T-shirts and other stuff, I enriched it. I now see the error in my ways and I am so sorry black men and women. The flame that we called entertainment, that was only to warm and entertain us, now engulfs us and scorches our own self-esteem. If a child only knows to refer to men and women as niggers, bitches, pimps and hoes, then what is he/she to grow up thinking of themselves and others as he/she gets older?

This is no joke. You can read some more stories on this site. The bottom line is this I rode over 12,000 miles on two continents through 15 states and 13 countries and broke two bikes in the process, to get to a store in AFRICA called niggers. I am willing to step and admit my part in the havoc that we have wrought on our mindset, but I think that we all are to blame.

I will finish with four things:

- **if you don't like being called a nigger, bitch, faggot, dyke, spic, Jew dog, wop, towel head or anything of that ilk- then THINK. THINK before you speak those words, write those lyrics, support that rhetoric and most of all THINK before you purchase! Purchasing is akin to compliance- I may like the beats and rhythms of some songs but I can not support it any more. You rappers are intelligent- find another word to describe your selves**
- **A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOSAND WORDS!**
- **read the quote below. If they call you a nigger is one thing but if you answer to it then there is really something wrong!**
- **please forward this to the black folks that you know and let us please, please stop the madness**

—DAVID

"It ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to." —Bill Clinton

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