

Whitney Houston's Sacrificial Choice and the Bobby Brown Factor

Whitney Houston's Sacrificial Choice:

Fame and Fortune, or the Mirror! –

and the Bobby Brown Factor

By Cleo Manago, CEO and founder of the Black Men's Xchange (BMX)

Washington, DC – The Whitney Houston story and finality is profoundly tragic, and may have been inevitable. The whole story may never be told. Given the often daunting or de-dimensionailzed imagery of dark-skinned Black men in America, Houston's former husband, New Edition's Bobby Brown, is an easy target to successfully blame for Whitney's demise. Though Mr. Brown has been allowed little air time to speak for himself, so many think they already know what kind of dastardly person he likely is. On the other hand, it is so easy to constantly depict Whitney Houston as a fallen angel, who was abused by Bobby, the big bad [Black] wolf. As a result, many would look at the cruel and anticipated mistreatment of Bobby Brown at Whitney's funeral as par for his course. This done at what supposedly is God's house – a church, at the funeral of Bobby Brown's former wife and his daughter's mother.



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Bobby Brown could never ever be accused of being a fallen or troubled "angel." Angels (in our mind's eye) don't look like Mr. Brown. Comparatively, Whitney is more the angel type. Yet, the fact of the matter is, no angels were involved here, just

a couple of earthly [Black] human-beings who tried to get through the gauntlet of life – as they were and are – in this society.

Whitney had rumored struggles connected to her sexuality, her race, her family's (and society's) expectations; being subject to the wrath of the often hypocritical, abusive, judgmental and omnipresent [Black] church culture; and the irony of achieving superhuman iconic status, while never working out the kinks of her deep struggles. Whitney used drugs to self-medicate, then brought a husband and child into the firing-line of the glamorous looking Whitney Houston volcano. Any reference to Bobby's "bad behavior" while leaving space to critique Whitney's behavior empty (if you must critique at all) is simply the residue and proof of how successful Clive Davis' Houston propaganda machine was, and how well people have been influenced by the racist imagery of Black men.

Millions of aspiring [Black] singers, if given the opportunity Clive gave Whitney, would have made the same sacrificial choice (and many have): fame and fortune or the mirror! If Whitney had chosen to deal with the mirror, she may still be here. She did not survive her choice and the preceding pressures long enough to get old, and that was not because of Bobby Brown. Michael Jackson, Luther Vandross and Whitney Houston all inherited the deadly circumstance and mixture of being brilliant, famous and Black in this society and unable to make peace with the mirror.

What we could learn from facing the premature death of even another beloved icon is the importance of co-creating a culture and climate that allows people to accept themselves – for who and what they really are. Fame, fortune nor religion make us immune to the consequences of not being able to fully embrace ourselves. We can save lives by ceasing to disrupt the personal peace of same-gender-loving (SGL), Black, famous or non-conformist people.

About Cleo Manago

Cleo Manago is the CEO and founder of the AmASSI Centers for Wellness, Education and Culture (AmASSI). He is the creator of the strategy and practice entitled Critical Thinking and Cultural Affirmation (CTCA), a prevention model applied by the AmASSI Center in Los Angeles. Cleo Manago is also the founder and CEO of the Black Men's Xchange (BMX), the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to promoting healthy self-concept and behavior among same gender loving (SGL), gay-identifying and bisexual African-descended males. His groundbreaking film "I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity" is available for online viewing at <http://vimeo.com/27859721> and on the Facebook page "I AM A MAN: Black Manhood & Sexual Diversity" by Cleo Manago (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/I-AM-A-MAN-Black-Manhood-Sexual-Diversity-by-Cleo-Manago/261476843882298>). Contact him at Cleo@AmASSI.com.