

**CHARLES SMITH**

**10 SEPTEMBER, 1994.**

I'm expressing the depth of the experience of the brothers like Robert Sandefel<sup>Sandefel</sup> and the multitude of the experience, and knowledge, and information that you have to correct the lives of some of the young men that we gotta deal with today.

This is your country. You cannot claim Africa because you have been brought on a ship 400 years ago brother; you gotta claim an identity of your roots which is here, and bless it with the knowledge you have from your homeland Africa. Now you are a better person for your experience.

Your pain and your suffering is what you teach your kids with.

Who is Mogadishu? It's not a person, it is a country in Africa, and (this piece shows) what took place there, and the pain that she suffered. That is the cultural teaching guide to the African-Americans-that's how they did it in Africa-they used art to teach. They didn't have a blackboard and chalk like that piece hanging on the tree over there...it's warning you that there is poisonous ivy growing on that tree.

I structure each piece around the problems and the conditions, so that it quickly reminds them what situation we

are in and what the piece represents, such as this piece which will be carried to the Black Family Reunion. This is the Mother piece, a heritage piece when blacks migrated to Chicago, and she will have in her hand a legacy form of a grandmother that they did an article on in the newspaper. She was showing how nine of her grandchildren was killed, and gangs, and drugs, and violence, and what I'm sharing with them at the Black Family Reunion is how can you have a Black Family Reunion when so many of the black families have fallen apart...What are we going to do to help renew the roots of family unity and love, and guidance and respect?

That piece on the tree represents the leadership and the stand of Dr. Martin Luther King...That is how all men are measured by that man right there in terms of their leadership... His dream was that we all come together and live as brothers and sisters regardless of race, creed and color. Do it like he said: judge them on their character. When the character is wrong, the whole person is wrong.

That African cultural piece there...This is the way we got the greatest package of deliverance in South Africa today, made in 1994, when Nelson Mandela, a man that has spent 27 years in prison for the freedom of South Africa, is now done, and now you memorialize it, and teach to the school kids the price that was paid for their freedom. Here is Stephen <sup>BEKO</sup> Beco, the man that was beaten to death while he was incarcerated in

jail; here we had a cholera epidemic that broke loose in Africa and that is killing a lot of people in Rwanda; and then you have the various men of vision like bishop Tutu that must be on for his part in South Africa; than you have the small children that is left homeless without mothers and fathers... The red represents the blood which is common to all flags showing that white and black worked collectively to bring Apartheid to and end and give us total victory. That's why the blood runs through all the pieces and has a part of victory as a whole...You teach the children the various names and places and shapes of the country of Africa, so they can identify it geographically, they can identify it by pieces and by color memorization...

This piece here is a child prepared for the housework, as a slave being prepared for the housework...Black people were relegated to only two segments of society, house and field.

That is Sally <sup>Hemmings</sup> Hemmond, that is the oral history of the information on the 3rd president of the US, Thomas Jefferson - that was his slave and that was his mistress, and they had eight children...

This brother piece is Wisdom. This is what you teach in all elderly teaching programs to the young people, you always honor your age because they have live sufficient enough lives to explain all your problems. You gotta accept wisdom.

Wisdom exceeds knowledge in college, because wisdom teaches you what to do, when to do, where to do, and how to do. College only teaches you the procedure, and gives you the permission to go forward with the credentials, but wisdom is the principal thing...That's why the process of teaching is better done by someone who has suffered the pain.

What I would explain about this one (female figure) is the quality and the tone of the paint that I can go into for various tones and colors-and it's the beauty of them in the various cultures. The color of the African female that you show in terms of her presence-she is Miss Sassy...Regardless of her stature, of her ability, she is drawn deep within her cultural ancestry, the rich roots of proverbial teaching, to remain a woman of honor. She carries it in her dignity, her stand... When you drop down to that level where you have reduced yourself beneath your dignity, you can't stand like that...She takes care of her hair, she cleans herself...She is not trying to be somebody she is not. She is proud of what she has, she stands there with total dignity. You put dignity in a woman real early-then she will let no man belittle her or fall beneath the level for which she stands...The face is distinctive because I stay close to the African-American features...Somebody knows somebody that looks just like her.

My greatest audience of support is 90% white, 9% Hispanic, and 1% black. These figures are unbelievable, unacceptable, and horrendous. I fight in here, in Aurora, to get a cultural awareness of the African-American experience in Aurora...and some people think that I'm crazy. How can a man be crazy if he committed himself to do this much work for the people that he loves, and for the God that he adores? You gotta accept that you are just too deep for some people.

The integrity within this piece carries a multiple dimension of facts. This is a young man that has entered and is pursuing the field of law. This piece is a hot plate. When I'm having coffee and I'm outside working, I hook up the piece, and that is a lawyer. It is a hot plate which keeps my coffee warm, or my food when I'm outside. All functional pieces serve twofold purposes, and that is to give the highest honor to the profession that every young black men must be introduced to...your first pursuit is to get you a law degree. Once you're a lawyer you can have anything come up. That is deep.