

## CHAPTER THREE

### FEAR

*Fear is a state of consciousness one uses to escape from doing something one desires to do.*

Today, I must take the actions necessary to challenge my long-held beliefs and fears. "Sage!" I shouted in a loud voice. "You know, even before I begin my journey, I first must acknowledge my fear."

"I know," he said as he walked slowly away into the darkness of my thoughts.

Fear begins the moment we accept the idea that the powers of rational consciousness are greater than those of intuitive consciousness. For most of us this happens during our early childhood. For example, as little children we have dreams of being killed; attacked by dogs, snakes, or spiders; and falling from high hills. Our parents must constantly reassure us that ghosts are unreal, and that it is safe to sleep in a room without lights turned on.

As we grow older, fear comes up whenever we desire to do something, and we are unsure of the results. Fear is what prevents us from taking the small steps necessary to lay a foundation for success in a chosen profession. Fear also is one of the major obstacles that prevents African Americans from being empowered. In order for us to trust intuitive knowing, we first must transcend our beliefs of fear.

As a young boy, I was terrified of a boy named Joe Louis who was close to my same age. Needless to say, Joe Louis, the boy, tried to live up to the reputation of his famous namesake, the professional boxing champion named Joe Louis. For some unknown reason he decided I had crossed him, and he had to beat me up. He sternly told me, "If I see you again without your mamma, I'm going to kick your butt!" The fear of Joe Louis kicking my butt interfered with my life to the point that I couldn't go anywhere alone. I was very cautious to

ensure that wherever I went, adults would be present.

Quite coincidentally I was taking boxing lessons from my cousin. And, according to him, I was becoming a fairly good boxer. Like many other young kids learning to box, I had perfected my left jab, but I still had difficulties using both hands in a combination fashion. I threw punches like a "wash woman." It was a strange phenomenon to experience my self-confidence as a boxer (unafraid to put on the gloves with anyone my size) and at the same time know that once I left that boxing arena I was still afraid of Joe Louis.

One hot Sunday afternoon, after a long workout, I went to the movies with some friends. As usual, the movie theater was very dark and crowded, which pleased me to no end. However, fear was still with me. Without warning, as I was waiting in line to get my usual order of popcorn, candy, and a soda, I heard a familiar, ominous voice ring out: "I told you to never let me see you again without your mamma!"

The fear I felt just hearing Joe Louis's voice was enough to stop me from getting my refreshments. I ran out of the theater as fast as I could with Joe Louis in hot pursuit. Luckily, I was able to out run him and get to the police substation close by the movie theater. Breathless and overcome by fear, I pleaded with the policemen to help me by arresting a 12-year-old kid.

I explained to the policemen how Joe Louis had threatened to beat me up and how afraid I was that he would actually do it. With facial expressions alternating between seriousness and laughter, the policemen consoled me. "At some point you're gonna have to face this boy," they said. "You can't go through life being afraid of everyone who threatens to beat you up."

They continued their intended motivational talk for so long until

I almost, but not quite, decided to leave my sanctuary with them and take my chances with Joe Louis. Almost, however, is not the same as doing. So I elected to stay put, and listen a little longer. Knowing that Joe Louis watched and waited across the street, I was perfectly content to stall until he decided to give up and leave. Fortunately, after a few more minutes he left, and I left too, even though I didn't feel empowered or confident. My fear remained with me and continued to be my companion.

Weeks after the Sunday incident, I was just as terrified of Joe Louis as I was on the first day he threatened to beat me up. Even the great and intense fear experienced by a 12 year old was unable to stop life from continuing. The fear I faced didn't prevent me from playing sports, visiting with my friends, and doing all the social things that a 12-year-old boy does.

Several weeks later, while playing basketball with my friends, I came face to face with my fear: Joe Louis. Seemingly he came out of nowhere — threatening and bigger than life, even though he was shorter than I. My friends urged me to fight and gave me encouragement, while other boys encouraged Joe Louis to beat me up. I was cornered and had to make a decision. I chose to fight. In a moment of panic, I elected to challenge my fear rather than have my friends think of me as a coward.

Once I made the decision and we actually started fighting, I quickly realized he was no match for me in boxing or wrestling. I immediately became my old confident self and went on to punch him out, along with the fear he brought with him. Suddenly, I couldn't justify why I was so afraid of someone who could not beat me in a fight. But, as we shall discover later on, fear is not a monster or immovable object. It is something outside of ourselves that the mind gives great power and authority.

As adults we face so many fears that my experience with Joe Louis may seem like child's play. But fear, whether in the mind of a child or an adult, has the power to influence our actions. Fear has as many definitions as the people experiencing it. When we act as victims, then fear is as a state of consciousness we use to find an escape from doing something we desire to do. Fear prevents a person from taking the small steps necessary to travel on the road to empowerment. It causes us to doubt the existence of intuitive consciousness.

For those people who have traveled with fear for so long that all memories of empowerment are lost, fear is master and lord over their lives. It manifests in many different images, which form the foundation for our reliance on rational knowing. Some examples are:

1. Fear of losing.
2. Fear of peer ridicule.
3. Fear of success.
4. Fear of failure.
5. Fear of living.
6. Fear of dying.
7. Fear of rejection.

I am reminded constantly by new age thinkers, psychologists and religious leaders that the experiences of childhood become part of the makeup of the adult. While I may not have had many Joe Louis-type events in my life, I, like most adults, still have had my full share of fears.

Fear was an obstacle at each epoch of change and transition in my life. Every change required me to confront fear regardless of the societal importance of the decision. I was afraid to leave home, get married, change jobs, and have children. I was afraid to join and to leave the Air Force. And my most recent fears surfaced when I started a business.

For an entrepreneur, starting a business involves totally conquering some fears and unleashing many others. Some of the most salient fears confronting the entrepreneur include:

1. Fear of losing money.
2. Fear of failure.
3. Fear of success.
4. Fear that one's skills are inadequate.
5. Fear of competition.
6. Fear of loss of security.
7. Fear of not having fringe benefits.
8. Fear of accepting responsibilities for one's decisions.

Initially, all of these fears act as adversaries rather than allies to those who thirst for economic self-sufficiency. And because of fears we limit our capabilities to expand our businesses to reach their potential. We limit our vision of empowerment. When we use fear as an ally, however, we begin to accept challenges and take risks in our pursuit of empowerment. We stir the action, which lifts us to levels never before achieved.

When I first started my business, I was not preoccupied with these common fears because I was not very serious about succeeding. My primary reason for undertaking a business venture was to have an income while I pursued what I believed would be a successful political career. Only when my political career did not succeed immediately, did I commit to making my business a success. Then I came face to face with all my fears.

At the outset, I was overwhelmed by the fear of asking a friend or stranger for assistance or business. My fears caused me to involve my ego in all of my decisions and, in doing so, I personalized all of my rejections. (My ego, while good and useful in many areas, was not my friend in the early stages of my business career.) I had a number of sleepless nights because the success I envisioned for myself was predicated on the public recognition of my achievements. My ego

needed a constant diet of praise such as: "There's Malcolm Kelly! He's a successful business man. Let's put him on all the VIP mailing lists."

It is things outside of ourselves that feed the fears, causing us to become paralyzed and afraid to take the actions necessary to accomplish our goals. These fears must be treated as responses to appearances outside of the body and mind. They achieve their importance based on the acceptance or rejection by the individual experiencing them. And — this is important— African Americans have been taught to give power to things outside of themselves. Consequently, those who control the environment and our lives through their power of definition have been able to diffuse our unity and purpose. We become paralyzed and afraid to take the actions necessary to accomplish our goals.

Our fear-based orientations to life came to us through our guides. My childhood curriculum included learning fear as a basis for achieving success. It was as if the adults in my life believed that giving children a constant diet of fear would develop people free of fear. Obviously, the opposite occurred. Their tools went beyond words and included a form of psychology rooted in pain and reward. Children quickly learned that adhering to the teachings of fear meant less pain, whereas, disregarding the teachings brought violence and pain.

With its elaborate use of punishment and reward to instill fear, slavery is a prime example of how the will to dominate controlled the will to be free. Perhaps more than anything else, fear caused the slaves to remain victims even after slavery was legally abolished. The fear of death caused "free" blacks to accept racial segregation rather than fight for complete freedom. Today, some young African-American males use fear tactics to intimidate blacks and seize control of the ghettos.

Fear is powerful when it manifests through humans. The person

who triggers fear in others is perceived to have an aura of huge proportions, as in the case of young gang members. A victim finds it hard to imagine that these seemingly fearless aggressors could ever become afraid of the same tactics they use on others.

The fears that historically have ruled our lives are still present in this generation that seeks empowerment. Fear of moving or beginning causes us to maintain the status quo, whether that may be slavery during one time, or segregation during another.

In this age of empowerment, we cannot allow fear to prevent us from creating new businesses, building new buildings, forging new alliances, entering new professions, developing new moral principles, and elevating and empowering the entire race. Most of all, we cannot allow fear to prevent us from challenging and competing with major corporations. The future belongs to those who can conquer their fears by using them as allies. Fear, after all, is just an extension of our imagination that has been blown out of proportion by our conditioned responses to life

A few years ago, a woman told me, "Fear is dead and empowerment is alive." According to her, fear and empowerment cannot coexist. They draw their sustenance from each other; one comes into being at the expense of the other. I said to her that fear exists whenever someone has the desire to do something but is concerned about the consequences. Empowerment exists whenever someone has the desire to do something and knows that he or she has the power to create from a problem-free consciousness. Once you use intuitive conscious to create, fear is non-existent.

### **Suggestions for Overcoming Fear**

1. Reaffirm your original vision of empowerment.
2. Imagine yourself functioning and living completely free of all fears in the present and future.
3. Act as if you are free of fears. Write a minimum of five things you can do to ensure that you maintain your freedom.
4. List at least five fears that constantly occur in your life: for example, fear of losing your job, wife, clothes, business, or life.
5. Identify the sources of your fears. Examine what causes you to believe that your present challenges cannot be removed. Exactly what do you anticipate happening if you take action to remove the fear?
6. Imagine the worst-case scenario and the best-case scenario. Which one has the greatest power in your life?
7. Remove the fears one at a time until their individual and collective powers are harmless to you. Challenge every fear with a positive action of empowerment. To do this requires that you deny the existence of the illusions created by the senses.
8. Go within yourself and use your intuition to make decisions. Continue to do this, even if your senses tell you that your actions do not make sense.