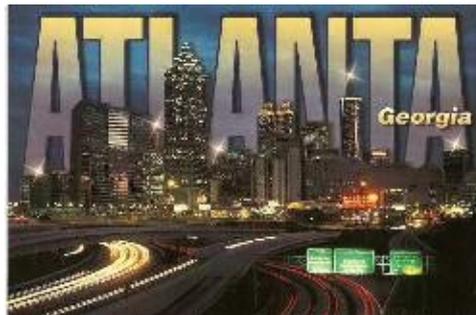


Atlanta Light Part One

By : Ghetto Gospel

What started out to be a Spoken Word piece ended up being this. In my three year stay in Atlanta, Georgia, I knew I would have much to write about. I didn't know how I was going to write it, but I knew I had to write it. With any experience like this, you have to write it or forever hold your peace. And that's just it, if I don't write about it, I will never have any peace. So here is part one of my poetry times and rhymes, community mutiny and religious scrutiny in the ATL.



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I have never noticed it before, but when I was in Atlanta, Georgia and I say â inâ because I didnâ t live. I was just there. I noticed how so-called African Americans have a deep love for money and/or success. Money has its purpose thanks to Satan and his trickery throughout generations. He has been successful because todayâ s false idols are the rich and the famous. Satan is so good, he has millions tracking the lives of other people rather than living their own. They damn near bow down to them and break their neck to get a better look or an autograph.

A personâ s name is much importance to them giving them star gaze eyes like the illumination of The Dark One. They worship movie stars, entertainers, a president who has the skin color of them, and always people with money, status or position. The supreme purpose to get money is the new drug which has been infiltrated into the so-called Black community everywhere. Even as far as the so -called established poets in Atlanta went, they were not bent on doing anything for free. It seems, in the poetry scene, generations before set that mark of the beast.

The spotlight of idol worship was found in Atlanta where it is the Mecca of so-called Blacks. It was a city filled with people whose primary focus was money and success and why shouldnâ t they? Isnâ t Indie Arie from Atlanta, Georgia? After meeting a few want to be singers who seem to mirror Miss Arie, I got the feeling that since local girl Indie did well from the hood; I think they felt so could they. It seems the â Watchersâ are always pulling a bronze trophy from a community where working 9 to 5 barely pays your bills and ordering pizza every pay (Slave) check is the family treat.

Before going to Atlanta, I never heard of Common and even though, of course, I heard of Indie Arie, I didnâ t know she was from Atlanta. When I first arrived to the city and started meeting poets at coffee shops, everyone had Common on their lips. As they were talking, in my head I would ask myself, â Who is this Common?â And usually I would ask people questions when I didnâ t know what they were talking about, but this time, I just continued to listen.

Everyone was in idol worship of this guy name Common and itâ s just funny at that time I didnâ t know who Common was until I went to Atlanta, Georgia in 2007. Since we were all Spoken Word Poets, I assumed he was some poet in Atlanta. I didnâ t know he had been paired with Serena Williams nor had any knowledge of his lists of present day performances. I saw â Brown Sugarâ but I didnâ t see him. But now that I know who he is, â Brother, can I borrow a dollar?â

Itâ s not that Iâ m out of the loop; I have my own loop. I was focused on my dream loop. Well, maybe I had a little bondage of the church loop I suppose and that church loop in Atlanta almost took me out. I met just enough people in Atlanta to still love Atlanta and a part of my heart is still down there in the dirty south.

This is what happens when you expect something and you get something, you didn't expect.

I left, but have never forgotten five very special people from the church where I went. We donâ t talk all the time but we make contact every now and again. Itâ s enough for me today and enough for me to want to return to visit them. Another plus is someone who is in every way, my daughter. This bond is different, she chose my wife and I to be her surrogate parents.

The yin of my personal contact is the ones who have made me cling even tighter to the scope of networking. Hotwordz, the company was founded on spotlighting other artists far over promoting â Ghetto Gospelâ . I went to college to make Hotwordz better. I majored in Marketing/Public Relations, but that still did not prepare me for reactions in the Poetry world in Atlanta.

I provided an internet venue where you can just call in from where ever you are. It was just that simple, or so I thought. Six months into the show being on the internet air waves, and after much advertising and promoting, I still had a poet creep up to me while I was standing outside of Java Monkey, â So how does this work?â I was thrilled for his concerned because I had tried to get him on the show many months before, but his school schedule got in the way.

He finally ended up on HLTâ s Sunday HOT Delight. I wondered if he spread the word throughout Atlanta poet land on how easy it was or if he said how he actually enjoyed himself. I donâ t know why the Atlanta

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poets didn't come. It was just an open mic. You didn't even have to see my face. Some thought they were just too plain good for HLT and I wasn't offering money, so that was out. I know for sure, if it had not been for Mieasha Stroud, the Atlanta poets would not have come to the Hotwordz mic at all.

With all of certainty, they didn't understand me. I was 48 and can get away with 35ish. I wore my hat to the back and wore guy's slacks. Back home in California, I wore a natural when I got on the mic.

Atlanta's poetry scene never saw that. When I got on the mic, I wrote about the happenings of my life, I deliver messages if you listen and not try to dissect what was said, you will hear some type of message. In Atlanta, they didn't want to hear the message, so I tried to show them the message. I forgot to tell them that I am not Poet. I spit simple lyrics to express my complex surroundings.

I heard rumors in Atlanta that the poets were waiting to see if I was going to last or to see if the show was going to be successful. I don't know what measure of success they wanted from me, but I do know, many young people saw my example and followed their dreams. They make me proud and they know who they are because I tell them all the time. I didn't realize the impact of these young people believing in their abilities until after I left Atlanta. Through the muck of rumors, speculations, and perceptions, there were some wise young people who saw the way. I give applause to them.

These young people need encouragement in the "Chocolate City". It seems the Black Artist community supports people who they feel can help them and get them to another level which is okay unless you are only driven by that direction. If Atlanta poets would stop talking about unity and growth in community and nurture that into the Spoken Word Poetry scene, the culture of poetry in Atlanta would be what we are led to believe coming out of Atlanta.

Instead, the young entrepreneurs on the scene get little to no help unless, the people who probably could help them are the people satisfied with led by the nose artists kissing their ass. I don't know, but my perspective if I may have one is, some young artists are taken in more to help the seasoned Atlanta poet more than the other way around. When I think of the really good Spoken Word poets in Atlanta, there is only one who is in the click and the others are outside the click pursuing what they want.

There are slam poets who become teachers and take young Spoken Word Poets and try to mold them into their own likeness. That lyrical light of their individualism comes to a low flicker as they tilt their head back and walk their fingers up their arm each time they get on the mic. Or they are told that you have to perform your lyrics by memory only. That is the sign of a true poet. They make new to the scene poets feel some kind of way if they read their piece. The teacher looks for trainable specimens and then they let the slam games begin.

For a person of my generation, it was sad to see the Black Mecca city keeping professional yokes on other artists. They are creatively bound and set to keep them on their circuit of coffee shops, any building that'll let them in and surrounding cities. They make their rounds and support no one who is not in the official click. On the outside they walked around so Afr0-Centric but brother and sisterhood were kept within the Atlanta clicks. Politics had won out over art and for some; pure raw Spoken Word Poetry was dead. They put a price on their lyrics and they were not doing any shows unless they got paid. Atlanta poets had paid their dues and they want their money. The Black Mecca showed me who they were and yes I believe them. Money and fame was their god and they could give a damn about art.

No Atlanta, I didn't have dreams of big money and fame. I only came with my big dream of surrounding myself with people of my own nationality. I thought I wanted to be around people predominate of my race. I had a dream to soak up the culture and share with my brothers and sisters what I have heard of sweet Atlanta. I am no poet but I had the impression that Atlanta was a good place for the arts and since I wrote lyrics and my wife was a visual artist, we felt it was a good fit. But that's it, we didn't fit and that's okay because it wasn't my dream to fit, we wanted to just be.

In 2006 we met and in 2007 we exited the city of Compton because if you are on the side of Rosecrans and Santa Fe and if you are a male and your ancestors came from the continent of Africa, your chances of being shot by your Latin brothers who come from Mexico is anybody's guess. Many times we would come home from work or the grocery store and find the Compton Sherriff's surrounding our building, helicopters in air and dead folk tape all around. So before we could get all the way home, we had to show our ID. Yeah, home where my wife had lived for over eleven years and watched more people die right in front of her than she

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cares to remember.

One night in our home we were sitting up waiting for the results of the new American Idol. It was all that we could do to see if Fantasia won. While she bellowed and hit that high note, rapid gun fire rang through the air from outside of our window. A flash of light hit my peripheral, my wife screamed, "Hit the floor" and we did. While holding cinnamon rolls bought straight from the 99 Only Store in Compton, we hit the floor. As she and I watched in the kitchen, her son crawled on his knees, hand reaching up, finger pointing, and ding. He grabbed for his cinnamon rolls in the microwave. After watching him with contentment sitting on the kitchen floor eating his cinnamon roll, we glanced back to American Idol and ate ours. This is a moment for me where television certainly had its place. It kept my focus on the little boob tube and this time, I didn't mind being its whore because the other objective was to focus on the flash of bullets that just flew by my side eyes. I didn't think about the activities going on outside and tonight, Fantasia was my tranquilizer to the sounds of constant gun fire. And from this night on, we refer to the war zone that night as "Hit the Floor with the Cinnamon Roll!"

My wife had seen more than I while living in "The Sante Fe" . She once watched a young man bleeding to death. There were children watching him move his bloodily body down the sidewalk. After the initial gun fire, he was still trying to drag his ripped body out of harm's way. The children watched like it was an afternoon school special. They didn't move, they didn't budge. This is a scene like my wife, they had seen far too many times. But unlike her, in their young lives, they were accustomed to these shootings. They had adapted to their environment. The young Black man's guts were pouring out all on the sidewalk, however, he was still able to ask her if he was going to die. She told him no, he wasn't going to die. She also told him to think happy thoughts and go back and remember a time before this. She waited with him until the ambulance arrived. He didn't lose his life, but he lost his leg. Gun fire was every day, so every night, we hit the floor.

The last one she was to witness is the story of *Danny Ray*. He was a middle aged Black man who had just come home from work. He dropped off some things and walked to the corner market next door. On his return back to his apartment and as he was putting his key in the security gate, rapid gun fire was the last thing he heard. My wife cried as she told me the story. She cried when she told me every story that ended like this at The Sante Fe . She told me Danny Ray used to laugh all the time.

I came home to all this, then I wrote a lyric piece to express this called, " *Danny Ray's Laughter Went to Heaven*"

Danny Ray walked the street

A final time

Because a Brown man

Dropped a very negative

Bad sign

Hate filled the air

One deadly night

As fifteen rounds of bullets

Took to the air in flight

Danny Ray

Was not part of a gang

Or any sect

His fate was decided

By a racial effect

No looks were met

And no words were said

But by the end of the night

Danny Ray lay dead

He was only 45 years old

And this

Is another tragic story

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*That has to be told
You know
It would make more sense
If
They had wanted his money
Wanted his jewelry
Wanted his clothes
Off his back
They cut him down
Because he was not Brown
But Black
The color of his skin
Ended his physical living
Because the poison of racial hate
Keeps on giving and giving
The baton of racial hate
Has passed from the bloody hand
Of the White brother man
To the Brown brother man
And I Ghetto Gospel
Just wonder
Why the race of any man
Could make the decision
To end the life of any man*

I shared this piece at *Java Monkey Speaks*, a poetry spot in Decatur, but they didn't get it. Through rumors, I heard this piece branded me not liking Mexicans. When I heard that, I laughed. I thought how anyone could perceive that from this piece. It only confirmed to me that Atlanta wasn't listening and they saw only what they wanted to see. I had just left a freaking war zone right here in the western part of the country.

After Danny Ray's killing, I knew we had to leave that area. Two little girls got shot before we got out of the Santa Fe's. It wasn't fatal this time, but it was well past time for us to leave. Real estate is ridiculous high in California so we searched for another place outside of our home state. My job at the time was a retail company and they were international. Our options were quite open; however, we wanted to stay close to home for family.

We had our sights on Arizona, Nevada, or Texas in search of residence and transferring my job. Nevada dropped quickly off our list, then Arizona. Texas was hanging in there because we had some church friends who had just moved there. I had another friend living there as well. So Texas was a strong bet at that time. We entertained the ideal of Atlanta when a young woman who I considered my play daughter at the time was having a difficult time in Atlanta. She was experiencing what I had learned to experience. She was the first to join the Hotwordz Crewsader poetry group while living in California. As I was learning Atlanta was not the light, the end resulted in me learning what a play daughter really meant.

She told me some things about Atlanta and I told her don't worry because my wife and I have chosen Atlanta to be our new home. Texas had dropped out the equation and moving to a place filled with history as I saw it on television and read about in books were pure excitement for me. We had just watched a Drum Line and we couldn't wait. Atlanta was going to be the place where we would escape the constant rapid fire in the city of Compton.

We were so ready to leave all that behind. I was happy to be finally moving to Atlanta. I wanted to go there in 1996 when I first ventured out of my home state, but I chose Colorado. When I was ready to leave D-Town, the choices were Florida and once again Atlanta. I wanted to be closer to my family, so California won in 2001. But this time in 2007, Atlanta was our cover from a private war zone orchestrated by the system.

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There were rumors on the streets that the Compton Sherriffâs instigated many of the battles between Mexican gangs and the gang that donât wear red. My wife never wore red the whole time she lived there and her son grew up in another school system. He lived in Compton, but he was no way going to experience being another statistic in the hood, my wife saw to that. She wanted him to at least have a chance in life, she wanted better for her son.

You know when you live less than a mile from the police station and they still take past forever to respond, there is definitely a problem in the neighborhood. Mr. Rodgers never told you about that. One time the Mexican gang rolled up on the Sante Feâs and told the young Black men not to be standing there wearing white T-Shirts and of course they ignored them but the next time a car rolled by slowly in front of the Santa Feâs, there were clack clack clack in the hood once again.

The young Black men who stood there bold and said they werenât going anywhere was flying fast to get out of the way of rapid fire. Those young Black men had a mark on their head. Those bullets had letters on it. Each one of those bullets spelled, âShoot yo Black assâ, but in Spanish. The Compton Sherriffs never showed up on that day. But they showed up later that night all involved in another incident. If I never see another piece of dead folk tape, it would be too soon.

Besides escaping the east side of the *CPT*, I wanted to sit out on the porch and write in Atlanta and my wife wanted to be out in the Atlanta light and paint. These dreams happened, but it didnât happen in Atlanta. My dream to include Atlanta as the place to build a home and write turned out to be a place of nightmares in some areas. In the Poetry scene, in our church area and definitely the association among Black America area, there were lessons to learn and we learned them well. I grabbed my wife and fled into the night. I drove 3000 miles back to diversity away from the Atlanta light.

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