

My name is Abdul Kareem Fakir... now, most folks call me 'Duke'. Born in Detroit, raised in Detroit. This is my hometown and I love it. I can remember when I was like 8, 9, 10 years old we would be singing in little groups you know, the street corners, we'd be playing baseball and after the game, somebody starts singing and we try to harmonize and all of that. My young life was full of athleticism, playing everything I could and I could remember. It meant that much to my mom as she gave that to me... it meant that much to my dad. You know, as a kid, he made sitars and he sang on the street to make enough money to follow his dream, to come to Detroit and work in the factory so he can get equal pay like anybody else... just with a little hard work.

When we sang together just out of the clear blue sky, we were at a party. Singing was the last thing on our mind... it was the girls, Levi and I were invited by this young lady. So, we said, well, maybe lets bring a group. You know, we talked about the two guys we knew very well, which is Obie and Lawrence, they were both very sharp looking guys. Right in the middle of the party... the young lady announced that Levi and Duke was about to sing and then we told her that we do have a group... she said well just... that's even better. And right away, we just started making harmonies together and doing little runs. That it was like we rehearsed for years. We kept looking at each other and we got a standing ovation, of course... that helped us through the night... of course. I have a feeling that we were put together, you know, by the great orchestrator who don't make mistakes. We all said after that, look, let's form this group.

Now, I'm going to tell your story. My mama said in church... she wanted me to sing a solo. I sing about a verse and a half and I couldn't finish... I started crying. Well my mother was livid, she was upset at me. So she said, next Sunday, you're going to sing that song. So I did. I got up and I started singing and at the same spot... I couldn't finish. Now, this time I

didn't cry. I came off of the choir stand, ran down the aisle and I ran out the door and I had my little white robe on. And I'm standing there kind of wiping my tears out. A lady, she walked past me. She stopped very suddenly and she turned around, she said, "son, do you sing?" I said, "Well, Mam, I tried." And I was telling her... I wasn't able to finish this song. Then she said, "Oh, my God, look at all the angels around..." I said, "what do you mean?" She says, "just listen. Always remember, young man, that love is always the answer." And that to me is a ministry in the secular world.

At my age, the future looks pretty bleak. I think... the best is still yet to come. I'm a happy man. If you find any man happier than I am, somebody is lying... and it ain't me.