

Black tech entrepreneur wants to change social media experience with Inpathy app

by Melissa Noel | THE GRIO



(Credit: Inpathy)

(THE GRIO) - A new social app, Inpathy, wants to transform how people use social media. Rather than only posting the highlight reels of one's life, the app encourages users to be transparent and share the not-so-great moments as well.

Founder Ziarekenya Smith has spent the last six years designing and building the app to reduce negative stigmas and enhance understanding in online interactions. The platform's purpose, according to Smith, is to "recreate the human experience" and to build a more balanced atmosphere online.

This Black-led social platform is being developed at a critical time when more conversations are taking place about how social media is affecting mental health. Inpathy wants to make a difference by making people feel comfortable with sharing both their ups and downs online.

"We all have experiences that can cause a range of emotions. We're not just happy all the time, so why are we just showing the wins? That's not reality," Smith told theGrio.

Prior to starting the company, the Detroit native was an established design artist who freelanced for major brands like Nike, Air Jordan, and Bleacher Report. Despite his success, the 30-year-old says he came to a crossroads after college. He experienced feelings of anxiety and self-doubt while trying to figure out his purpose and wanted to express that on social media, but chose not to. Smith says he felt he could only use the platforms to share the good things happening in his life. That internal struggle is what set the foundation for creating Inpathy.

"Social media is not going nowhere. So, we can complain about it, or we can help to change the core of it and that's what I am doing with Inpathy," he explained.

The tech startup wants to inspire people to be themselves as they get to know others on the app, share their personal experiences, and speak freely on a social network where bullying, racism, and hate speech is not allowed.

On Inpathy, instead of sharing stories through pictures or words, users share via audio or video, providing what Smith hopes will be an immersive experience. As soon as you log in, the app will ask you how you're feeling. Users have the option to update their moods and choose words like happy, helpful, angry, insecure, hurt, and more.

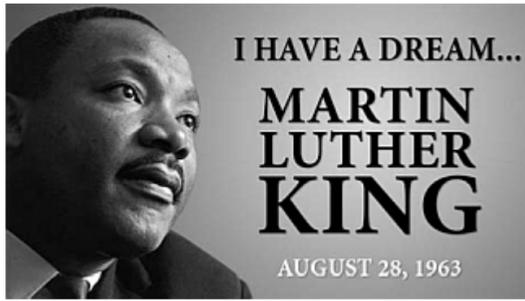
Additionally, people can't "follow" other users on Inpathy like they can on other social media platforms. Instead, they can add individuals to their "circle" by sending text or audio answers to other people's stories, or by direct messaging them to see how they're doing.

According to Smith, this is not a mental health app, but a social media app with a goal to normalize discussion about moods and the human experience built on authenticity and transparency.

"You may be going through a frustrating day or experiencing a certain emotion. But guess what, you're not the only one—other people are as well," Smith shared. "This is important so people can realize, it's not just me. This is normal. There's relief in that."

The startup is on track to launch the beta version of the app soon, but first has to meet its fundraising goal of \$250,000 to complete development and expand its team. Those who donate \$10 or more to Inpathy will receive an exclusive invite to its beta version once the company meets its funding goals.

"Inpathy is for everybody, it's free, and it's available in your pocket and I believe that's a vision worth betting on and I believe that's a vision worth investing in," he said.



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promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end but a beginning. Those who hoped that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

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Maya Angelou becomes first Black woman to appear on US quarter



The Maya Angelou Quarter is the first coin in the American Women Quarters™ Program. Maya Angelou was a celebrated writer, performer, and social activist. She rose to international prominence as an author after the publication of her groundbreaking autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." Angelou's published works of verse, non-fiction, and fiction include more than 30 bestselling titles.

Angelou's remarkable career encompasses dance, theater, journalism, and social activism. She appeared in Broadway and off-Broadway plays, including "Cabaret for Freedom," which she wrote with Godfrey Cambridge. At the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., she served as northern coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1978, she was a National Book Award judge for biography and autobiography.

Angelou read "On the Pulse of Morning" at the 1992 inauguration of President Clinton. Angelou's reading marked the first time an African American woman wrote and presented a poem at a presidential inauguration. She was also only the second poet in history to do so, following Robert Frost, who recited a poem at President Kennedy's inauguration in 1961.

Angelou received more than 30 honorary degrees and was inducted into the Wake Forest University Hall of Fame for Writers. In 2010, President Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She was also the 2013 recipient of the Literarian Award, an honorary National Book Award for contributions to the literary community.

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Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

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