

The Perverse Slave Mentality *Jalil Muntaqim*

The 13th Amendment of the US Constitution reads: “Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

The 14th Amendment of the US Constitution reads in part: “Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.”

What does the exemption clause in the 13th Amendment mean? What does the naturalization clause in the 14th Amendment mean? Ultimately, it means slavery in the U.S. was never abolished, rather it was institutionalized in the prison system. The government ended chattel and instituted penal slavery. Today, in the US prison system, 47 per cent of all prisoners are of Afrikan descent. Do you believe this is by accident? Do you believe that 47 per cent of all prisoners, or 12.3 per cent of the entire American population are consciously and deliberately criminal? When considering the naturalization laws of the 14th Amendment in light of its history, the question must be raised: did Afrikans at the end of chattel slavery vote upon or agree to become U.S. citizens? Were they provided an opportunity to return back to Afrika, to establish their own independence and nation, or to have dual citizenship between the U.S. and Afrikan countries? If not, why not?

When we look at the socio-economic and political state of Afrikans in the Diaspora it is important to consider to what extent the peculiar institution of slavery continues to influence behavior and relationships between and among people of Afrikan descent and between nation-states. Obviously, there exists an extreme problem of assimilation and acculturation, where the dominant culture has denied or severely undermined the indigenous culture and ethos of Afrikan peoples. In my book, *We Are Our Own Liberators*,¹ it is stated that a need exists to commence a struggle to rectify the ill-effects of assimilation and acculturation. Until people of Afrikan descent resolve this issue of an identity subject to the misfortune of slavery, they will continue to suffer the ills of the experience of slavery.

For example, many identify themselves as Afrikan-American, recently acquiescing to the ideals promulgated by Black assimilationists of the integrationist movement. However, the acceptance of this identity, I dare say, creates a form of schizophrenia as described by Franz Fanon in Black Skin, White Mask.² For the question must be asked, when has America been in support of Afrika? These assimilationists' identification with the "American" part of "Afrikan-American" is with a system of government whose interest is in direct opposition to their very existence—the "Afrikan" part of "Afrikan-American". The conflict is real. The psychological dynamic surfaces in thinking and behavior, with actions that are not in the best interest of Afrika. Obviously, the American side of their identity overwhelms and dominates their Afrikan side to the overall detriment of all Afrikan descendants.

Unfortunately, this reality is not isolated to North America, rather it is an identity crisis of Afrikans in the Diaspora that hinders the advent of a Pan Afrikanist Movement. Afrikans in the Diaspora have been divided into a myriad of nationalities throughout the Caribbean and North and South America *as* the slave experience continues to adversely influence our existence, denying our common reality of national oppression regardless of our geographical location. This reality should scream out from the very pores, demanding you claim an Afrikan heritage and reality.

However, this does not require a negation of the horrendous Afrikan experience in the Americas. What is required is to rectify the assimilationist/integrationist philosophy, and forge a socio-economic, political and cultural determinant that coalesces in a New Afrikan reality. Hence, not only should this reality internalize the slavery history in the Diaspora, but also further incorporate the Afrikan history from the onset of the Atlantic slave trade. Who, then, are these descendants? In essence, we are the aggregation of all those who were a part of the Atlantic slave trade (Hausa, Fulani, Mandingo, Mandika, Ibo, Dutch, Portuguese, English, Spanish, Taino, Arawak, etc.), a forced composition of a genetic mix resulting in a New Afrikan.

It is here argued and postulated, we are not Afrikan-Americans, but rather need to identify ourselves as New Afrikans. But, even more, we need to embrace this reality with our common histories and mix of languages to speak to the rest of the world from that reality. The Dutch speaking Afrikans of Surinam, the Portuguese speaking Afrikans of Brazil, the Spanish speaking Afrikans of Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the English speaking

Afrikans in other parts of the Americas have a unique historical voice that, when united in Pan-Afrikan unity, must demand recognition from the world. Here lies the true significance and demand for reparations, the need to repair what has been broken as a result of the experience of the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, assimilation and acculturation. It is when we announce ourselves to the world as being New Afrikans that we will have divorced ourselves psychologically from the schizophrenia that ultimately denied our heritage and struggle for true liberation and independence.

So, when we look in the mirror, I hope we all will see the prison that continues to enslave; the prison without the bars, gun towers, and steel cages; the prison of the mind imposed by a perverse slave mentality adjusted and in conformity with the denial we are a New Afrikan people. Know that our salvation will be when we break the shackles that bind our minds to identify with those who never had our best interest at heart, and who continue to deny reparations for their crimes against our collective Afrikan humanity.

I urge all to free ourselves of the prison in our minds, and in doing so, liberate ourselves from a perverse slave mentality that denies our New Afrikaness in its totality. For America has never abolished slavery, only institutionalized it in the subtlety of making you believe yourself to be an American!

WE ARE OWN LIBERATORS!

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Muntaqim, Jalil, We Are Our Own Liberators (Abraham Guillen Press/Arm The Spirit/Anarchist Black Cross, 2002).
- ² Fanon, Franz, Black Skin, White Mask (USA: Grove Press, 1967)

Jalil Muntaqim: What's up out there! My name is Jalil Muntaqim, born Anthony Bottom. I am currently in prison where I have been for the last 35 years! I am a former member of the Black Panther Party (BPP). The U.S. government desperately wanted to eradicate the BPP and did so by a program called COINTELPRO which was short for counter-intelligence. Through this program many of us were assassinated and imprisoned. I was

framed for murder of two New York police officers. One of them's son has actually come forward in support of my co-defendant Herman Bell, saying he thinks we are innocent and should be released. I am committed to a better life for my people and for all people. I am still active from behind bars and am working for my release. I have obtained two degrees, and am an author, poet, and educator. I have established programs in prison including a Men's group for Therapeutic Training, African/Black studies programs, a Sociology class, computer literacy class, poetry class, earned a certificate in architectural drafting, and have worked as a teacher's aide. I am a proud father and grandfather. I want to be reunited with my family and community. I love music, letters, books, and stories from people on the outside. I have a great sense of humor! Unfortunately, I can't operate this site from prison, so my friend is running it for me. Check out www.freejalil.com