

Transgenerational Sequela of Slavery in the United States, a Model of Why Atrocity

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Abstract

Background: Transgenerational slavery in the United States has created transgenerational emotional impoverishment of victims and masters. This theme is applicable to many societies in which one group righteously commits atrocities against another. The intent of the present opinion essay is to examine selected negative transgenerational psychological effects derivative of justified enforcement of slavery.

Methods: Selected are records of known history to unquestionably document at best insouciant atrocities conducted by all levels of white socioeconomic and intellectual strata for generations before and after the US Civil War.

Results: Slavery includes various forms of servitude, subjugation, subjection, oppression, exploitation, and persecution. Over many generations both before and after President Abraham Lincoln signed his final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, slavery challenged the values of citizens of all shades of color. The realities and sequelae of slavery did not end at the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, Complex transgenerational effects of slavery continued to persist.

Conclusions: The physical and psychological means that established and sustained slavery over many generations required mental disassociation from the shared compassionate realities of life's morbidity and mortality. Aspiration toward improving the objective study of scientific methods and testing was replaced by pseudoscience. With righteous transcendent knowledge, white religious study and practice exculpated unidirectional atrocity and righteously punished those not favored by the White God. Disassociation continues to permit mass murder of innocent men, women and children in search for power and greed to avoid unconscious horror of powerlessness.

Augur: The Original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation from the most destructive war in US history was destroyed in the October 1871 Chicago fire, arguably the most destructive fire in U.S. history.

Keywords: *Ideals; Atrocity; Lies; Shame*

Introduction

To treat a fellow human as if he or she were subhuman requires no compassionate bond and "an habitual emotional attitude in which distaste is coupled with sustained ill will," [1] resulting in an arrogant illusion of righteous superiority over an inferior "animal." To support the American slave market, African people were captured, forcefully removed from their homeland, and culturally mixed with different tribes. Common language, group identity, culture, and sense of home were lost. The undoing of historic group culture collapsed individual security and hope. Through an unconscious introjection of the perception of the masters, many slaves developed a self-identity

that was imparted by the master, which meant the loss of an independent appreciation of self and family values. The surnames of many African-American families were derived from the family name of the master. In the 1860 census, slaves were enumerated, but most census schedules did not provide personal names of the enslaved; mostly, the individual slave was counted by number and distinguished by age and sex. The names of their owners were recorded [2].

A perception became internalized among many black and white people that white was superior and cleaner than dark; black was considered “dirty” and “inferior.” White style of speech was considered superior to black speaking styles. Many slaves developed a self-denigrating image of inferiority and lost their personal self-value, believing that the lighter the skin and the closer the approximation to white, the better. 3 Slaves were denied opportunity for productivity that reflected their true abilities. Black children lacked a positive African-based heritage [3].

Effective methods to destroy Black African hope and internal values were applied. These methods included, but were not limited to, destruction of family structure and black parental authority, random public murder of blacks, inferior educational and socioeconomic opportunity, promotion of the myth of black genetic inferiority, abuse of black women to satisfy the sexual desires of slave owners (with resultant mixed-raced children typically raised as slaves), emasculation of black men to the status of a subhuman species, and destruction of black churches.

Many, not all, people accepted these mores without question. Dr. Samuel Cartwright and Dred Scott present an opportunity to appreciate the profound psychological bias still employed in too many parts of the world.

Iniquity planted and fertilized grows in the garden of respectability

Dr. Samuel A Cartwright (1793 - 1863) was well regarded by leaders in the antebellum south. He practiced medicine in Alabama, Mississippi and New Orleans. . He obtained an appointment as a professor at the University of Louisiana. He specialized in diseases considered common to the American South and to African Americans. His correspondence with prominent leaders of his era in the Antebellum South and other family papers are inventoried as The Cartwright (Samuel A. and Family) Papers 1826-1864 LSU Libraries Special Collections. His proposed medical opinions were perceived as merited by those sharing the same prepossession or bias. Cognition is not independent of affect. Methodologies leading to findings are tainted by conscious or unconscious motives [4].

In 1851, Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright published “Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race” in *DeBow’s Review* [4]. One of Cartwright’s pseudoscientific concepts was known as drapetomania, a “disease” that caused slaves to run away. Drapetomania, noted Cartwright, could be prevented in two ways. First, the master should provide reasonable housing and protection from other slaves, and he should avoid cruelty. Second, because God had decided that the Negro should be submissive, the master should never allow the slave to be anything but submissive. Cartwright wrote that “genu flexit”-awe and reverence—must be exacted from slaves, or they will “despise their masters, become rude and ungovernable, and run away.” Cartwright described another supposed disease called “Dysaesthesia Aethiopica, or Hebetude of Mind and Obtuse Sensibility of Body,” which was also known as “Rascality” [5]. Dysaesthesia aethiopica was said to be most prominent among freed Negroes who could not care for themselves without a white person to direct them.

The case of Dred Scott, a black slave who sued for his freedom, provides insight into the interpretation of constitutional law and its implications for optimism among Negroes. Mr. Chief Justice Taney delivered the opinion of the court. The entire opinion is worthy of study. Selected quotes provide how Justice Taney inferred the intent of the authors of the Constitution of the United States [6].

Justice Taney noted that the English government and English people strongly approved of the seizure of Negroes on the coast of Africa with the intent of not only personal use as slaves but also as “ordinary articles” to be “merchandized” in any country for profit.

“They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the Negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute; and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern, without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion”.

Justice Taney then infers that the colonists who crossed the Atlantic brought with them the same perception that the Negro of the African race was an article property bought and sold in all thirteen colonies, which then united to form the Declaration of Independence and afterward form the Constitution United States.

Dangerous Slaves

Because many white masters were convinced that their slaves were subhuman beasts-wild animals from the jungle that were in need of firm control, [3] consequentially the oppressed were consciously or unconsciously perceived as dangerous potential enemies possessing frighteningly superior animal body strength and animal sexuality. Ooppression intended to mitigate the potential for retribution.

Hypothesis

Generalizations are vulnerable to the facts of each person's unique intrapsychic life. However, questions and hypotheses about possible unconscious motives are warranted in circumstances of deadly or destructive behavior. These behaviors provide primitive gratification of sadistic and masochistic fantasies. As in the dream, the dreamer artfully crafts representations of her or himself through images within the dream. Does the aggressor violate another person as a reenactment of real or imagined events in the past? Is the behavior an undoing of powerless vulnerability but with the affect of enjoyment? The sadist is attached to the affect and searches for this affect to re-experience the gratification obtained through the victimization.

For some masters, there were likely excitements of aggression merged with sexuality in fantasies about dark animal sub humans-tantalizing sexual aggression in which black sexual power was equated to the bestial penis and vagina. Black men were perceived as dangerous to white women. These fears were expressed in Jim Crow Laws.

After slavery

Between 1877 and the mid-1960s in U.S. southern and border states, but not exclusively, 'Jim Crow' [7] referenced opprobrious laws, formal educational, and socioeconomic efforts to denigrate and humiliate the Negro community, family or individual. The options of African Americans remained extremely limited. White hatred became manifested in racist groups that burned down black churches. As self-perceived "good" Christians, these white messengers of hate attended their white church services to seek solace from their white God. The Negro was assigned to the back of the bus. United States military regiments were not integrated until World War II. Until the 1960s, blacks and whites had legally separate schools, water fountains, bathrooms, and entrances to public establishments. During the second half of the twentieth century, white families fled many large cities as blacks entered white neighborhoods. Black families were generally blocked from moving into white suburban communities.

Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male

Between 1932 and 1972, the United States Public Health Service studied 399 black men living in Tuskegee, Alabama, infected by *Treponema pallidum*, the spirochete that causes syphilis. The researchers lied to the infected men stating that the men were being treated for health problems caused by "bad blood." The main purpose of the study was to collect postmortem data about syphilis, and the men

were considered laboratory animals. There was no effort to treat the men or to warn their families of the potential dangers of the disease. There was no informed consent. When penicillin emerged as the treatment of choice for syphilis in 1947, none of the subjects were offered penicillin. The consequences to the families included 40 wives who became infected with the syphilis spirochete and 19 children were born with congenital syphilis. The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment stands as one of the most egregious post-slavery examples of the dehumanizing of black Americans by whites; those whites represented many levels of government and medical authority [8].

Civil Rights Movement

The U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s led to some legislative progress for African Americans in various areas of society, including education, housing, and employment. Nevertheless, the weight of poor education, poverty, and dehumanization that characterized most of African-American history in the United States evolved into the economic and cultural entropy seen today in black communities throughout the United States.

Current sequelae

In this writer's opinion, the economic and cultural entropy affecting many African-American communities caused some black men to forfeit realistic hope for an optimistic future-hope that would encourage them to bring their abilities and contributions to fruition for family and community. Speaking at Father's Day event in Chicago in 2008, then presidential candidate Barack Obama made what some viewed as incendiary remarks that may have reflected his personal life with his father: "Too many fathers are MIA, too many fathers are AWOL, missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it" [9].

The inner city culture became increasingly infantilized, lacking mature adults to offer cogent direction, meaning, and models to emulate for children. Many of the abandoned children grew up to become abandoning parents. Although in recent years, the traditional family concept of mother, father, and children has been increasingly challenged throughout American society, regardless of color, in black inner-city communities, the basic concept of a family with any parent is challenged.

Art is often a reflection of the social struggles of a society. The "gangsta rap" that first emerged in black communities during the 1980s alarmed police and government authorities. This music provides an illusion of identification with being a real or imagined aggressor, and its dissonant sounds accurately reflect the turbulence experienced in the lives of many of the musicians. Thus, it can be thought of as both an escape from reality and a representation of reality. An alternative form of escape for some African-Americans has been to move beyond the black culture of their upbringing and to essentially "act white" in their education, dress, and speech.

Street Gangs

The attraction to join a gang may range from survival in dangerous communities to the prestige of the gang's power and defiance of formal authority or other gangs. A gang member may feel like a warrior against other gangs. Manliness may represent ideals that cause failure. For example, instead of incarceration representing a failure in crime, incarceration becomes a badge of strength; members may display tattoos representing jail time or murders. Badness is idealized. Family life is diminished. Loyalty is to the gang, not the family. Manliness may equal many children with various women; ejaculation is the measure, not parental capacity.

The price of belonging to a gang is the loss of personal autonomy. Each member must be loyal to the group leader(s). Street gangs are reminiscent to the Medieval system of vassals offered a fief as a reward for service. The gang member's loyalty may lead to a fief for selling drugs and prostitution.

For some gangs, members have no escape. The 'deserting' gang member may face retribution. Some street gangs are very ruthless.

Earning money illegally is a high risk vocation with danger from the customer, police and other gangs. In street gang life, there is only the present. The immediacy of events, does not allow opportunity for thoughtful evaluation to reach the best judgment. The problems of gang members may be compounded by the incalculable burden of drug dependency.

Schools, teachers, students

To attend school and adopt the position of a student threatens the gang member with a loss of the identity and strength derived from being a street-smart gangster. The law demands school attendance, but simple attendance does not equate with being a student. A student wants to learn and accept, to some extent, authority from teachers and books—a type of acceptance of traditional authority that is contrary to the alternative lifestyle of the gang.

The word educate means *to rear or to bring up*, and is related is the Latin word *educere*, meaning *to lead forth*. It is assumed that the student will want to be led forth or reared. Education encourages a student to value and trust in a future. However, many students know and value only the present. Schools do not teach about how to be a gangster. Schools may be vulnerable to the entry of gangs. Faculty may be at risk of becoming victims of gang-related violence. Faculty feel the hopelessness that affects the students. 10 A retired principal told me he could not continue his job; on Friday he reviews the student's homework, and on Monday he attends the funeral.

Resilience

A strong education or strong family should teach children about resilience, the capacity to experience stress while continue to function. Sports can be very demanding and require much physical and mental resilience. Diseases vary in effect based upon the genetic or physiologic resilience of the individual. Because of their personal resilience, many people were slaves only in circumstance but not in self-identity. They were resilient and refused to surrender their self-value. One can only surmise about the basis of the resilience of these individuals.

Throughout world history, some people have been able to retain their self-value, family values, and spirit of hope regardless of the atrocities that surrounded them. The success of these resilient and courageous people provides invaluable hope for each new generation.

Disassociation

In an essay *Of Truth*, Sir Francis Bacon wrote, “But it is not only the difficulty and labor, which men take in finding out of truth, nor again, that when it is found, it imposeth upon men's thoughts, that doth bring lies in favor, but a natural though corrupt love, of the lie itself” [11].

Sir Francis Bacon's observations require expansion to better understand such a contradictory motive. Bacon wrote that when found truth can imposeth upon men's thoughts”, but imposeth what? Imposeth is the third person singular for *impose*, to place on authoritatively [12]. Given the choice between place on authoritatively or gratification of instincts places the individual to choose the reality or pleasure principle. The reality of the ultimate submission to mortality creates a common reality that supports compassion and not ambitions of greed and power. These later ambitions are in part to deny mortality.

Where children may grow as children into adolescence and adulthood, often obstructed by reality hindrances, there is an introjection of idealized images of significant others. Young children may see their mommy as the most beautiful woman and daddy as the strongest man. Likewise the young parent may see their little child is incapable of doing wrong; and surely evidence to the contrary needs scrutiny. Throughout adolescence there is a searching for ways to identify with someone idealized. In the estimation of the adolescent, parents fluctuate between they should represent all to dream to aspire to be or they know nothing. Idealization has a risk because there are two sides, a side of grandiose vision and a side of shame. This is a relationship within oneself. If the individual matures into adult mental life, the self and others are no longer measured in terms of ideals or failure to achieve unrealistic ideals.

Shame is a powerful emotion that is difficult to escape. The lie of righteous superiority is necessary to accept slavery, especially under circumstances of the African native involuntarily authoritatively placed into a reality abused of hope and dreams for themselves and their progeny.

This author fears there has been transgenerational conveyance of meaninglessness, nothingness. If hope has been destroyed after a long torturous journey through time just as land is seen in the distance, there is profound damage to aspiration. The collapsed inner cities of the United States contain hopelessness.

Jimi Hendrix wrote "Castles Made of Sand". The lyrics are, according to biographers Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeek, biographical about his childhood [13]. The lyrics express the essence of remarks about lost hope and dreams.

"A little Indian brave who before he was ten,
played war games in the woods with his Indian friends
And he build up a dream that when he grew up,
he would be a fearless warrior Indian Chief
Many moons past and more the dream grew strong until
tomorrow he would sing his first war song, and fight his first battle
But something went wrong, surprise attack killed him in his sleep that night
And so castles made of sand, melts into the sea, eventually"

Solution

If there were a solution to the transgenerational effects of slavery in the United States, it would enable all people—regardless of gender, socioeconomic origins, race, color, or creed—to have the opportunity for health, education, and social opportunity that provides solace through realistic hope.

"...a natural though corrupt love, of the lie itself" [12] has dominated many groups across the world. Slavery in the United States created transgenerational impoverishment of victims and masters. This model is applicable to many societies in which one group righteously commits atrocities against another. If there were a progressive learning curve from generation to generation the prevalence of atrocity would be a study for history learned [14].

Perhaps a poem is an appropriate summary.

A Rumor Sold But Reborn

I was a person; I had family
We were people, a Family
We were visible to any man's eye
We felt the Wind, Rain, and Sun

Together: We hunted and harvested
We ate and praised the Day
We danced and touched the moon
We celebrated; We kissed

We created a world of Ours
Ours worshipped Aving
But with Dreams of Hope
I belonged to Ours

We warred, won, lost
Lived, Loved and Died
Tomorrow awaited us
To grasp, explore, to Become

Tomorrow was Sold

THEY are entitled, To live and breathe
Above the Beasts of the earth
THEY know a God who loves them
THEY do no wrong, because.....

No i, no we; both betrayed
Abandoned souls scream in darkness
Disconnected souls yearning for
OYEZ: contemptuous death by Odium

Ignominious abandonment
Orthologous inferiority, mere chattel
To breathe and work but dead inside
Ignominious progeny without hope

Does ignominy Bleed? Spill the Blood
Hope became a Disease to be Blighted
Serve God and Blight the Disease of hope
Righteous Biological Warfare

Transgenerational death of Being
THEY begets Death that begets Death
Nameless bodies without Being
Black Death borne of Black Death

Abandon the dead unnamed souls
Dead only create dead unnamed souls
Feel NOT, be NOT, without soul
Mothered by NOT, without soul

Maybe

Once upon a time, not a Rumor
A Man believed He was alive
Although birthed from Not
He saw both darkness and light.

Gloom spoke: Burn hope,
A Mirror reveals thy shame;!
Tomorrow is not....
Dreams died long ago.

Life whispered He could BECOME!!
Will a future Desert his past?
Is there a home near Hope?
Loneliness is a price for Being

Journey into the Wind, Rain and Sun
Find & Embrace I and WE
Live and breathe, Not under water
Smell the Valley, feel its soft grasses

In the Valley's radiance Build A Castle
from stone, warmed by Mother Earth

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