

# The present effects of slavery

*Grassroot News, N.W.*—Slavery was an integral part of American history, and its effects are still felt by the Afro-American people. In a revealing interview, Dr. Darrel Millner traced the effects of actions in the 16th century on twentieth-century Afro-Americans.

**Q: What are the economic effects of slavery, that are felt by the former slaves in these times?**

**Millner:** The most overt effect is that it gave the Caucasian race a head start in terms of economic development. But it was Black labor that developed the Western Hemisphere. Although they contributed most of the labor they got very few of the benefits. One race benefited from two and three hundred years of free labor from another. When slavery legally ended many whites believed that we would start over as equals. But that is unreasonable. You don't start even after three hundred years of exploitation.

For today's Blacks find themselves in a hole in terms of competition. Another race has a three hundred year head start in economic development.

**Q: Are there any psychological problems inherited from slavery?**

**Millner:** The psychological effects are still strong today and felt in places like Portland where the Black population is small. We live in a society where Blackness and the Black experience are a source of embarrassment. It's a reality that every Black has to face.

There is also the psychological effect of the white mentality which says if it is not white, it's not right. Blacks who live in this culture are placed in a position of accepting that; being bad and wrong or making an effort to counteract that. It's hard enough being a human being in the modern world without having the additional burden of race.

**Q: What can parents do to counteract this negative psychological effect?**

**Millner:** The role that parents should play is to give love and support to the offspring. Many Black parents are in the least favorable position to economically improve the conditions of the children. But love is not expensive nor is psychological support. Parents can provide a positive home atmosphere and this will create a home environment to contend with the world.

**Q: Is there a social aspect of slavery that's felt?**

**Millner:** You can talk about this on many levels. The white response in some cases is that they are embarrassed by slavery and they try to avoid it. Slavery was no historical accident. It was a mainstay of American life. One of the legacies of slavery is that modern white Americans don't have to be racists to benefit from racism. Slavery was the beginning of the institution of racism.

When Blacks were freed there wasn't anything done to compensate them for three hundred years of slavery. So Blacks suffered in real terms because of lack of access to education, economic resources and voting. Without those realities Blacks did not function the way other minorities have. There was no way to pass through.

**Q: Does history repeat itself?**

**Millner:** No, just certain patterns in history emerge over time. But you never can return to an earlier historical period because some of the basic ingredients have changed. If human beings learn nothing else they should learn that change is part of the human experience.

**Q: Are Black people being put in their place the same way we were during the period after reconstruction?**

**Millner:** There is a desire on the part of white America to redefine racism to the way they were 30 and 40 years ago. And this is not to say that Black people won't experience any negative times. One of the problems for young Blacks is the passage



DR. DARREL MILLNER

of time has separated them from the realities of what Black life was like 20 years ago. I believe that Blacks may still remain the most oppressed and exploited group in this country.

**Q: How should the present generation view slavery?**

**Millner:** One mistake Blacks have made is to be ashamed of slavery. Blacks are not the people to be ashamed of slavery. They were the victims of slavery. They never wanted to be slaves nor were they happy as slaves. Blacks should look back at slavery for some of the survival tactics to use in the coming years.

**Q: What kind of survival skills?**

**Millner:** Just look at what we used during slavery as families and individuals. The extended family was invented in American slavery from its roots in Africa. It was this unit that enabled Blacks to survive for 300 years.

**Q: Is there a carry-over from slavery in Black male-female relationships?**

**Millner:** It's hard to identify what the problems are in male-female relationships. Certainly slavery contributed. We tend in this country to talk about slavery as an economic institution. But slavery was a sexual institution as well. One of the reasons white-male-dominated America hated to give up slavery was not so much the economic benefits but sexual as well. [Millner believes that this is one of the reasons Black people are so many shades.] Our definition of Black is not based on color but in social and political reality.

Another survival skill is how we use transportation. Whites have become spoiled. If they don't use their car they may not get to work. Blacks have always dealt with public transportation. We can use the survival skill individually or collectively as a race to get by in these hard times.

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It's a little-known fact that Napoleon, the famous emperor of France, was not French, but Italian. Both his parents were Italian.

When Stephen Foster wrote his famous song, "Way Down Upon the Swanee River," he misspelled the name of the river. Its correct name is "Suwanee." There is no Swanee River in the U.S.

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# "Voice of Our People" brings screen stars

*Grassroot News, N.W.*—On Saturday, February 27, the Urban League is sponsoring "Voice of our People," performed by the Media Forum Players. This group consists of six Black Hollywood stars; Denise Nicholas-Hill, Robert Hooks, Brock Peters, Janet MacLachlan, Charles Floyd Johnson and Tracee Lyles.

In a telephone interview from Los Angeles, Denise Nicholas-Hill talked about her introduction to this theater group. "About a year and a half ago the Media Forum Players asked me to perform. The most effective portrayal we could do was to compile Black poetry into a production benefit. From that we developed, 'Voice of our People.'" Last summer they made their national debut on public television.

"It's a thing in and of itself. It gives people another point of view. We're dramatic, musical and comedic. This is one way to deal with one aspect of Black literature. Most of the material is already composed so it's a lot easier than writing a script. It's a very simple and very moving show." Mrs. Hill goes over the premise of the show.

In light of the roll-backs in federal funds for the arts Denise Nicholas-Hill believes that the ball is back in the court of the community if they want to experience art. "If they want to expose their children and their families the community will have to support it. And I don't think that's bad. It is the responsibility of the individual and not Government to supply certain

things. Art has always been a step-child in this country, anyway. If we are going to have it at all we must get out and make it ourselves."

Denise Nicholas-Hill acted for five years with the series, "Room 222." She was involved with two movies starring Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier. She gives her reasons as to why Black movies are no longer distributed. "Black people as a whole were not vocal or demanding in what they wanted to see. We tend to sit back and wait for things to happen. You know, who cares if you don't care. If we were to make our demands felt people would respond."

Many of the Black movies suffered a Black backlash. Is this why they aren't around today? "Yes, it is. It caused a lot of fear in the industry and they needed an excuse not to do them anyway. Rather than coming up with alternatives we had a total icing over of all Black movies." Ms. Hill agrees with the

contention that we cut our noses off to spite our faces.

How does Ms. Hill feel about the way Black people are portrayed on T.V.? "I don't see any Blacks portrayed on television. The reasons why there are so few is, why should the white directors and producers care more about us than we do. They are not interested in making Black people rich or famous. They are much more concerned about themselves and each other than we are. They present and promote themselves. Unless forced to do something else, they won't."

On Friday, February 26, you can see some of our most popular actors and actresses at a reception held at Ben Franklin's Boardroom on the 19th floor, One S.W. Columbia. That reception is 25 dollars but on Saturday they will hold a media workshop at the Jefferson Gymnasium that is free. Let's get together and welcome this group to Portland.

## Black Awareness Day

In keeping with the nation's celebration of Black History month, Allen Temple C.M.E. Church members invite you to attend "Perspective" a Black Awareness Day Celebration, Saturday, February 27, 1982 at 7:30 P.M. at our church's location, 4236 N.E. 8th Ave.

Allen Temple's multi-talents will be displayed in the form of drama, poetry and music. Some of the

presentations will be original and others will be taken from the works of great Black writers. Music will be gloriously done by "The Black Awareness Corale." Rev. L.T. Strayhand, Pastor; Lillian Jenkins, chairman and Louise Jones, co-chairman and Director of Black Awareness Corale, feel assured that all who dare to come will have a most enjoyable, cultural and educational experience.

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