

The Impact of Slavery on Current day Parenting
Of Black and Minority Ethnic Adopted Children

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Parenting Roles and the African Caribbean Man
In Post Slavery Society
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This paper will explore the roles and relationships in Caribbean families with particular reference to the role of the father and what is left in the absence of him. This will be considered in the light of enslavement of Africans and its attendant violence rape separation and loss. The effect that slavery has had on African American and African Caribbean families has been grossly understated at the time, and since abolition. This lasting damage has had a veil pulled over it partly because of the shameful of slavery but also because the beneficiaries of slavery have been compensated for their loss after hundreds of years of exploitation, not the enslaved. Psychotherapy and counselling has had little to say about this period of our shared history in order to shed light on the psychological accommodation of slavery on the psyche of the descendants of the enslaved. The concomitant effect of this on the master's descendants has been given some attention in as much as it denies black and other people to equal access and opportunity. Psychological effects such as notions of superiority and the inflated sense of European worth in the world and the damage this continues to do on the world stage has been neglected. The topic is often avoided because it satisfies the shame of some Black people and the imperative to forget for those who benefited from slavery. Willie Lynch published a psychological tract in the 18th century on how to create a slave. This gave detailed instructions on how to break, divide, rule and humiliate. The legacy that African Caribbean and African American people have reaped from slavery is something that they sometimes find shameful and belittling, as if they had done something deserving of shame. Given the considered process of conditioning and brainwashing might it not be that African people are in part still

under the spell. The memory of slavery has died quickly even though people in their middle years are likely to have had great grandparents who were born of parents themselves born before abolition. Forgetting the painful history has meant that we have not considered its haunting effect on us. By forgetting we seemed fated only to repeat our trauma. It is by remembering and not repeating that we have the opportunity to work through, yet this is perhaps the greatest collusion that has to be broken.

The language of therapy has yet to find a way to talk about what slavery has left in its wake for both Black and white people. Thus far, all that we are able to see are the pathological patterns, not how they came about, the function or purpose for their existence nor how to change them. Therapists and social scientists in the USA have quietly worked away at these issues for the past forty years and have in recent decades had a hearing in the UK. Nancy Boyd Franklyn and A.J. Franklyn (1999) Amos Wilson (1978) Jawanza Kunjufu (2002) Na'im Akbar (1984,1991) and others have long made the link between present day problems in Black families and the dysfunctional position that they were placed in for over three hundred years. It is inconceivable to think of what life was like for the Black person in Africa before the middle passage.

Becoming De-sensitised to Violence

The violence that was used to control the slaves is well documented and in turn they learnt to meet out violence to each other when promotion or status was conferred on favoured slaves. The objective of the plantation was the creation of wealth and the means of achieving this was often fear and violence. The slave owner Willy Lynch's account of how to manipulate divide and rule create sexual jealousy appears to be alive and well. The skill he said was to have them all at each other's throats and breaking up trusting and loving relationships. Living in a world that is organised by violence has an insidious affect on families. Having imbibed the violence meted out to them in the fields and got used to this as a legitimate way

of being, violence then becomes the currency of the violated. Planters had grown so accustomed to the use of violence that many had nervous exhaustion for fear of reprisals if the slaves were to revolt. The conditioning was such that there were few uprisings in the British West Indies. Striking a White person in self-defence incurred a horrible death. Unable to defend or protect themselves or deal with aggression in other ways it came home. In the first instance to the slave quarters. Men's quarters and women's quarters until family or conjugal shacks were allowed towards the end of slavery for trusted slaves. Brutality came into the home, the male slave emulating what he knew to be the correct way to exercise control. As we know, domestic violence is often passed on in families having a devastating effect on communities. This often takes the form of spouse and child abuse passing from one generation to another, spawning the usual accompanying low self esteem shame and more dangerously the idea that this is a normal state of being. Being blind to violence is sometimes manifested by those who experienced it claiming that they got beaten and that it 'did me no harm.' The process of desensitisation shuts down the critical voice in the individual who is no longer able to have empathy with the victim because they likewise received none when they were small and vulnerable.

Violent families produce violent people and people who learn to capitulate to violence. This only changes when a family member believes this culture to be wrong, chooses to be different and decides not to pass on to their children, what they grew up thinking was normal. Given the familial transmission of violence and abuse the connection between slavery some five generations ago and contemporary problems in black families does not seem to be made. Parents in the Caribbean had become used to beating their children as punishment and believing that this also helped to instil discipline. Both parents administered beatings but this often fell to a father for sons and mother for daughters.

A middle aged man of mixed parentage who I worked with in therapy some years ago recounted an occasion of being beaten unfairly by his father for something his younger brother had done. He spoke in a monotone. I sat in my chair motionless with my heart pounding and finding it difficult to breathe. When he stopped speaking he was perfectly composed and the room was silent. I commented that he had said something quite moving and he did not seem upset, but my heart was pounding and that I found it difficult to breathe. It was at this point that his face crumpled, he was breathing heavily and sobbed uncontrollably for several minutes whilst he was trying to apologise for his crying. Before this he had found it difficult to show his feelings particular his pain and was the picture of a proud and dignified man. He later said that he had lost touch with that little boy inside who had been frequently beaten but could not cry. He said that he knew that if he cried the beating would stop but he was not going to give them the satisfaction of seeing the hurt that he felt.

In a recent chapter about working with refugee children and families, Thomas (2007) develops the idea of how children incubate trauma only to act it out at a later date usually with the accompanying force of adolescence, if their trauma is not recognised and give some therapeutic airing. Work at the Refugee Therapy Centre has witnessed a spat of referrals of adolescent boys in particular but also girls who have lashed out at others with torrents of violence uncharacteristic for that child. Later in treatment it would be identified that this child had experienced or witnessed something overwhelming that was not dealt with and it was assumed that the child had forgotten or was over it. Similarly my middle-aged patient reported that he now understood why it was that he found it so difficult to deal with his young son's behaviour. He said that he must have been unknowingly measuring his son up against the controlled and usually well-behaved child that he had to be.

African Americans describe a process they call seasoning. Originating from the time of enslavement it is the harsh treatment meted out to their children particular

sons in order to break them so that they became submissive and did not get themselves killed by being rebellious or defiant of plantation authority. This was a measure for the young person's own good to help them survive slavery. This practice is described as still taking place today to save their children from 'the man' an African American term now used for white authority but previously for the plantation manager.

Men's Roles during and after Slavery

Black men were at the opposite end of the power spectrum to white men. The African existed in order to work in the fields his only power was his ability to work and to survive. Many did not live beyond their thirties due to exhaustion poor diet disease and floggings. White men, planters and overseers had access to the women, their white wives, slave mistresses creoles and whoever took their whim. As there was no law against raping one's property, black women had to be available. Black men were confined to quarters shared with other men and boys. If they had fathered children there had to be distance between himself and his partner because open displays of affection made them vulnerable to exploitation. A threat to sell your children or partner would be used as leverage to manipulate, to have you betray fellow slaves, or do anything against your will. Liaisons were also kept secret because an overseer would fear the development of a power base in the ranks and often break it up by forcing himself on the woman in order to enrage the man. This is an account from a collection of writings by former slaves: -

'It seemed that the overseer had sent my mother away from the other field hands to a retired place, and after trying persuasion in vain, he resorted to force to accomplish a brutal purpose. Her screams aroused my father at his distant work, and running up, he found his wife struggling with the man'

Account of Josiah Henson 1855, in Chapman A. (1973) Pp88

Defending his wife he stuck the overseer and was tied and publicly whipped to within an inch of his life and had his ear cut off for sticking a White man. The public spectacle served as a warning others who might dare to do the same.

From the account of Lynch, this was a technique of control designed to break the slave and to sow seeds of distrust among them. The black father existed in an understated and clandestine way unless he was favoured. Being favoured of course meant being hated and despised by the other slaves on the plantation. The favoured by their existence meant that the majority of black people on the plantation were without privileges and this often created splits. Lynch advocated that planters did not keep Africans from the same tribes or clans together but mix them up to fuel division. Just like a gaoler fears riot, the planter feared rebellion and did everything in their power to prevent it. The spitting up of loving relationships had a damaging effect on the caring capacities of the enslaved. Even children were removed from one plantation to another in order to weaken family bonds and as an exercise in power and control. Although unusual, this was sometimes the case even when the master was the father of the enslaved woman's child. The male slave had an unusual relationship with his biological children; they were all the property of the master. Mothers were in close contact with her sons and daughters and suffered the heartache of separation if sold on to another plantation or if their daughters were claimed as mistress by the owner or one of his overseers. Slave boys also suffered a similar fate but for this there is little documentary evidence. Where it exists it is veiled in slave narrative for fear of scandalising a Victorian readership. In an account of his life Fredrick Douglas alludes to this with great feeling in a letter to a former master after he had gained his freedom. He asks the former master how he would feel if his young daughter was kidnapped taken away from her family made a slave and made a *'degraded victim to the brutal lust of fiendish overseers, who would pollute blight, and blast her fair soul - rob her of all dignity – destroy her*

virtue, and annihilate in her person all the graces that adorn the character of virtuous womanhood'

Fredrick Douglas 1848, 264-271 quoted in 'The greatest Taboo' Ed. Constantine-Simms 2001 pp 351.

Douglas holds Thomas Auld to account for those things that we can only suppose happened to him as a boy and breaks the silence by alluding to coercive interracial sexual contact. His strength of feeling is such that he likens his experience to how Auld might feel were such a fate to befall his own child. Living in same sex environments it is conceivable that the nature of relationships would also be sexual between the slaves. Boys were moved to the men's quarters and would benefit from the guiding but distant hand of a father. This was one of the benefits of keeping quiet about paternity or kinship because it provided a protective system for the vulnerable. To a greater extent the enslaved African man was a 'sperm donor' providing a labour force for the person who 'owned' him. Having no rights or responsibilities this father could not protect his children openly and had to stand by seeing them beaten and raped. He could plead on their behalf or offer to take the beating. Hare & Hare (1993) argues that the slave cannot be a slave and a full human being at the same time nor can a black man be a man or a black woman a woman if the master can help it. After the *1807 Act* of parliament banning the transatlantic trade in Africans, the planters were falling over themselves encouraging the Africans to reproduce because this was the only way that they could have a ready supply of slave labour. Slavery was abolished in British colonies in 1833 but the slaves had to spend five years working their notice until emancipation on 1st August 1838. For plantation slaves their deliverance from slavery would not come until 1st August 1840 (Murray 1979), just ninety-nine years before Britain declared war on Nazi Germany.

Reconstruction and family life

The ambition of the slave was to be free men and women. Being granted freedom or buying freedom had a tremendous effect on the individual. The acknowledged offspring of the master and slave women were often favoured and given their freedom earlier which created a Creole group of mixed people in Caribbean society. This added further to the issue of skin colour and status to the colonies. The creoles occupied the centre position between the blacks and whites. Being free was of course a relative term, being stuck on an island without land of one's own to farm, home for shelter and without a name other than that given to you by the owner or bearing the name of the plantation was not a good start in the free world. Women and men who had learned the skills of fishermen, seamstress, masons, cooks, carpenters and bakers were in a good position to sell their labour. Those who had remained plantation labourers had to work as journeymen travelling the length and breadth of the island for work, going abroad to work or negotiating terms with the former master for work. Having had it for free for years the plantations were reluctant payers and tried to pay in kind with produce. Sugar and rum being the main produce made this a poor option for recently freed men and women, but an opportunity for the so called 'worthless' who previously did not have easy access to alcohol for fear of riot. The period after emancipation was referred to as the reconstruction by African Americans. It was the time when families were being formed for the first time and Black men and women were learning to live and love in trusting relationships, raise and protect their children. A report commissioned in 1965 by the US department of labour stated: -

"That the Negro American has survived at all is extraordinary – a lesser people might simply have died out as others have"

Thomas & Sillen 1991 pp89

Many Africans had lost their own forms of worship and were forbidden to practice it. Mainly West Africans they reverted to Shango Orishas Animism and Islamic

practices. Sometimes these old secretly practiced religions ran alongside the Christianity that they had acquired on the plantation. Judaism and Christianity were of course established in Ethiopia centuries before the slave ships arrived. The Africans had taken to Christian values and Baptists and Moravians had in the early days campaigned for the abolition of slavery. Living decent lives meant taking one partner and sanctifying the union in the more welcoming non-denominational churches. Given that many Black Women were higher on the social pecking order than some men, due to bearing the masters children they were given small parcels of land little shacks or set up in an occupation. It would have been unusual for a woman of childbearing age to have been freed without children often sired by different men. These children were adopted into the family of the new partner as indeed another man would have adopted his. The raising of non-biological children was frequently the case for most families and this was unproblematic.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association was set up by Marcus Garvey in 1913 on his return from London and North America where he had met up with African intellectuals and writers. Garvey a Jamaican and a potent figure of intellect, advocated Black Pride, a focus on self-improvement and a concentration on family values. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People set up in the United States was modelled on Garvey's UNIA. These organisations existed to support families and local enterprise in the face of many prejudices. Black self was important in the first decades of the twentieth century as beacons of Black Consciousness at a time when black people were seen as minstrels and coons in circus sideshows.

Having no history and no model of living together in conjugal pairs this was very difficult. The women had their strongest bonds with her network of women on whom she and her female ancestors had relied for generations, and likewise the men had grown to trust and rely on each other. In freedom they were strangers to each other even though they had worked side by side in the sugar cane fields.

Many couples lived together in informal marriages and the pattern of possessing several women at one time became the sport of the Black man like the White master before him. Manliness was measured by the number of children sired with multiple women. This was not unfamiliar to women who in the later days of slavery were valued as breeding machines. Having being disempowered for many generations, physical prowess and sexual potency became the signifier of Black masculinity. Discovering how to be a loving husband and father was to take some time because no good pattern was observed from the behaviour of neither the lascivious and violent plantation owner nor his overseers. But sadly this was all that they knew.

Loss and Separation

In addition to the losses experienced by Black people during slavery by being forcibly split up to control them new losses were being incurred during the period of reconstruction. For the simple fact that men needed to travel to find work and did not return for weeks or months if they were employed on distant estates. Establishing a family unit was put under strain particularly if the men folk had to travel to other islands to bring in cane harvests. By the 1860's men travelled in large numbers to Cuba, British Honduras and Costa Rica in order to do plantation work to put food on the family table. By the turn of the century Caribbean men were travelling to Canada and the USA to provide labour on large farms and were the main source of labour employed in the construction of the Panama Canal, (Claypole & Robottom 1985). The Caribbean sugar estates were falling into ruin without free labour and by the 1850's a new scheme was devised to get people from India and China to work in the fields. They were indentured for five years to work without wage and then be rewarded with a plot of land to grow their crops and set up home. Indentureship did not stop until 1917 when the last Indians came to the Caribbean under this scheme. This practice of course undercut the freed slaves who increasingly had to travel abroad to find paid work. The separation had

a devastating effect on newly formed family units where mothers again became the main carer and focal point for children and dependant elders. The pattern of absentee fathers became something that was internalised through the generations.

‘Black males, for their part, accustomed as almost half of them are to losing the father’s presence in early childhood, and looking to their mothers for maternal and paternal sustenance, too frequently reach maturity with deep and unresolved maternal conflicts.’

N. Hare & J. Hare 1993 pp153

Similar themes arise in the novel ‘The Murder’ by Roy Heath the Guyanese writer, (1999) which forms the basis for Barbara Fletchman-Smith’s psychoanalytic study of the principal character Galton Flood in her book Mental Slavery (2003). Galton had a difficult relationship with his mother who raised him but was not allowed to get too close to his pleasure seeking easy going absent father. In the case of workers in Panama, many families were permanently deprived of fathers because one in three died during its construction, either through accidents or disease, mainly scarlet fever and malaria. The patterns of separation and loss continued well into the Sixties and seventies as a result of the search for employment. The call of the Mother country to her colonies to defend the realm came in 1914 and again in 1939 when the colonies in the Caribbean and elsewhere responded with enthusiasm. After fighting two World Wars, service men and women were called back to help repair the devastation caused by war. In Jamaica there was a move to get people decently married before they left the island because marriage was considered to be more middle class. These mass weddings were an initiative of the wife of a colonial official and supported by a charity (Norris 1962). A dozen couples who had cohabited for several years walked down the aisle at no cost to themselves. These mass weddings did not catch on and most couples preferred the arrangements that they were used to. They came to staff the transport systems hospitals and factories. This galvanised emigration from the Caribbean to the

United Kingdom in the late 1940's starting with the Wind rush people. Here was an opportunity for work and possibly a new life for family members. Children born in the Caribbean were coming to join parents who were strangers to them or in some cases to stepfathers if the parental relationship did not survive the move to the United Kingdom. The children experienced yet another separation from grandmothers and grandfathers whom they had known all of their lives. These separations occurring at all generations would lead one to think that this was normal in the life of a Caribbean child throughout the years. If relationships broke down between the recently arrived children and their parents they were often separated again and taken into the care of the local authority. These children from the 60's and 70's are now parents and grandparents. Separation of children from mothers and fathers continues in the Caribbean where in the absence of a welfare net for the unemployed, travelling abroad to find work is the only alternative to going hungry. Many travel to Canada and the USA to do short and long term contract work. The children left behind are locally referred to as 'Barrel children' because their only contact with parents sometimes is the barrel of clothes shoes and tinned goods that is sent to their grandparents or carers twice per year (J. Sharpe 2005). The term also makes reference to the adolescents who have grown beyond the guidance and authority of their grandparents and fall prey to gangs get into trouble with the police or suffer from serious psychological and attachment problems.

Internalising pathological Patterns

After one hundred and sixty-seven years of freedom but three hundred years of enslavement the familial patterns that we have developed bear little relation to what African patterns might have been. Structurally and emotionally this separates out Caribbean family patterns and behaviour as distinct from those of West Africans, whose blood we share. Whatever patterns evolved when men and women began to live together for the first time in family units were adaptations of

what they knew from life on the plantation. Little positive came out of the plantations for the Africans and what we do, for better or worse, is what we have learnt from that experience of being enslaved. When some African Caribbean people put our behaviour and practices down to our culture, they perhaps do not realise that what we call our culture, is a maladaptive form of what we have learned as a result of our enslavement. Whilst some of us have a prohibition about washing dirty linen in public, we have to come to the conclusion that we have as a people been damaged by slavery in ways seen and unseen. Keeping the secret is about shame and denial, believing that it is our entire fault. Just surviving this experience has been costly to our social organisations and our state of emotional well-being. The objective of the slave master to have us at each other's throats has been more than well met. It does not take someone with a great deal of intelligence to see this played out on our streets by young black boys waging war against, and killing black boys who live a few blocks away. The motive for the killing is in part macho display, the desire to bond and belong to a powerful male group, to kill or be killed or simply because, they can. Amos Wilson (1991) considers these young men to have characteristics of 'reactionary masculinity', that behaviour which indicates that they have had little or no training for positive manhood. Similar conclusions are reached by Haki Madhubuti in his book 'Black Men Obsolete, Single, Dangerous (1990) Instead in the absence of an effective father they have approximated a misguided swaggering display of what might be considered to be masculine. One of the characteristics of this reactionary masculinity he cites as: - *'mistakenly identifies physicality, crudeness, with masculinity; views domination, insensitivity, unconcern, willingness to injure or kill, seek revenge, as essentially masculine traits.'*

A. Wilson (1991) pp34

The greatest figure of fear for black boys on the streets now is no longer 'the man' but another black boy with a weapon, in case you have strayed into 'his territory'. This fear of *the other black man* came to light in a black men's group run in the

1990's (Thomas 1997) Gangsta rap culture has provided our young men hungry for masculine introjects with poor unrealistic models to latch onto. In the absence of good alternatives the message of the music and the violent video game is internalised. The new images are only reworked versions of Shaft and Superfly but worse. These new types are openly and unapologetically homophobic and misogynist, hating and abusing women and presenting a cardboard cut out of male heterosexuality. It is important for both boys and girls to have loving contact with a father figure. In developmental terms the father is important to the boy when breaking away from mother and making an identification with father. This similarly happens for girls who learn a form of independence from this experience but also identifies with mother. The role of a good father is important for daughters in order to break the pattern of poor object choice, The choosing of an unreliable partner is reduced and girls have greater expectations of a mate when her experience of a father has been a good one. It is at this stage that the boy is on the path of learning how to become a man. It is a slow and silent process, but can be helped along in early teens by 'boys to men projects' that have had some success in the USA and this country.

In order to be restored we have much to unlearn. In contemporary British life the Caribbean pattern is the dominant form among Black people but its soundtrack is the hard lyrical style of American hip-hop. The West Africans could not understand the lifestyles and behaviours of their seemingly happy go lucky Caribbean Cousins. To some extent this corroborates the effect that three hundred years of slavery violence and the absorption of pathological plantation behaviour has had on the African Caribbean psyche, in turn on how this had had a concomitant effect on relationships, family functioning and the dynamics of social organisations. We are not alone in the experience of our massive social change and upheavals. Listen to the Scot talking about Culloden and the Highland Clearances, the Irish about Potato Famine and the Jew about the repeated pogroms in Europe, resulting in the last genocide, which ended only in 1945.

Having sustained themselves and survived, it seems that people from formerly enslaved Black communities have had difficulty recovering their equilibrium. Are we still in survival mode, the toughening that we needed for survival, has it affected our relationships and childrearing? It is not surprising that a state of equilibrium has not been achieved because at no time since abolition has any state organisation evaluated the damage that has been done, nor taken steps to ameliorate it. In fact the opposite is true and the damage blatantly continued well into the 70's after the civil rights movement. Lynchings continued into the 60's freedom riders black and white were killed, and in the 90's a black man was lynched in a different way, tied and dragged behind a pick up truck. In the UK we too have had our own experience. Currently some members of these communities have for some years found themselves more likely to go to prison than to college, In the UK. Between 6 and 12 times as likely to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital, 60% of our children are born to single parents, an early indicator of future impoverishment for families. ...and the list goes on. Dr Kwame McKenzie (2006) advances the idea that the day-to-day grind of racism restricts the life of BME men and contributes to the stresses that pushes them to the door of the acute psychiatric services. In Fanon's *Black Skins White Mask* () he said that there is a particular mental affliction that affects black people when they live in the land of their former colonisers. Amos Wilson (1987) comes to the conclusion that the black child who rejects heroes of his own colour and accepts commensurate white heroes for identification is inadvertently sowing the seeds of his own mental destruction. As long ago as 1939 (Clarke & Clarke) made us aware of the psychological damage to black children with the doll experiment. When this experiment was replicated in the 70's the findings remained the same. The need for parents to pay attention to their children's positive identification is important for their future mental health. Hopson and Hopson (1992) in *Different and Wonderful* give detailed information on how to raise healthy black children in what they call a race conscious society. Thomas (1995) uses the term *Identification by proxy* to understand patterns of

communication employed by black and some BME children in their relationships with figures of white authority.

Apart from the hard facts and figures, which indicate the problems experienced in the black community, I am interested in the qualitative, effect that separation, losses, and parents being in survival mode has had on childrearing. Does the loss or absence of fathers tell the young that relationships and emotional intimacy are dangerous or do not matter, Could the fear of abandonment, which appears as a repeated motif in Caribbean families inhibit the development of the relationships which we need to sustain us as human beings? In her book 'Breaking Down the Walls of Silence' (1991) Alice Miller, former psychoanalyst advocates for the care and understanding of children. She said that we should not forget what it was like to be a child and the reason why we forget is because behind the wall that we erect to protect ourselves from our history, still stands the neglected child that we once were, abandoned and betrayed. In her paper 'Ghosts in the Nursery' Selma Fraiberg (1974) discusses the ghosts of people's past family experiences that unwittingly influence and get in the way of how they raise their children. Working in an infant mental health program she said:-

'The baby is already in peril by the time we meet him, showing the signs of emotional starvation, or grave symptoms, or developmental impairment. In each of these cases, the baby has become a silent partner in a family tragedy. The baby in these families is burdened by the oppressive past of his parents from the moment he enters the world. The parent, it seems, is condemned to repeat the tragedy of his childhood with his own baby in terrible and exacting detail.'

S. Fraiberg 1974 pp101

At the end of the paper Fraiberg points out that it is possible to break the pathological cycle.

Conclusion

The parenting role for African Caribbean men have to change. Many more need to be present and active in the social and psychological lives of their children. Whilst the role of men as fathers has suffered considerably as a result of slavery we need to take stock and not perpetuate the damage that we ourselves might have incurred by inadequate fathering. Having become so accustomed to the pathological patterns that we have developed as a result of slavery, we still fail to recognise the damage that it continues to do to us, and we do to ourselves. Our ghosts continue to haunt us because we fail to recognise and exorcise them. To those people who say that slavery ended so long ago, 167 years, and you must be over that now.....go tell it to the legions of young black men in prisons, the overrepresented black people in the psychiatric system, the young black women on frightening council estates, alone with little children at her ankles, the frightened teenage black boy about to join a gang, and the black and mixed parentage children accommodated by the local authority waiting for a new family to love them. A discussion between Bill Cosby and Jesse Jackson on (17.5.2007) at a NAACP dinner led to the circulation of an e-mail. Cosby said that to find our enemy we need to look at ourselves. He cited the black under class as having confused values, buying their children designer trainers but not spending money on 'hooked on phonics' to help them to read. He insisted that it was time to teach our children to speak English and there was no such thing as 'talking white'. A failure to do these things will cost us.

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