



AFRICA-FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

"AFROCENTRIC THOUGHT"



BEYOND THE '76 UPRISING: ACKNOWLEDGING THE STRUGGLES OF AFRIKANS IN THE AFRIKAN-AMERIKAN DIASPORA.

REBAONE TSATSINYANE.

As a young, Black daughter of Azania, the month of June is one that has become synonymous with the 1976 Soweto Uprising, a day where Black students were shot and killed for standing up and raising their voices, fists in the air against South Africa's apartheid Bantu Education system. Hundreds of Black students died during the Uprising, the likes of uBaba Hector Peterson; Mama Joyce Buthelezi; Baba Joseph Khumalo; Mama Yvonne Dube and many others whose names are constantly being buried in an attempt to completely wipe any memory of their existence from our minds.

This is a story that we've all come to painfully know and understand because it happened in this very country, on our land, in our own backyards.

On a different continent, a different country, the month of June also marks another painful chapter for the Black body - Juneteenth, a holiday on the 19th of June that commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States of AmeriKKKa in the year 1865. President Abraham Lincoln had signed the emancipation proclamation in 1863,

but the news of it only reached a town called Galveston, Texas in the year 1865. When the slaves who resided in Galveston heard of the news, a knee-jerk reaction for them was to celebrate and sing in jubilation at the prospect of their long-awaited freedom.

On the surface, it does seem like the proclamation was celebration-worthy. After all, slavery was being abolished and Black people wouldn't have to be the properties of anyone anymore. And this is a common misconception for so many of us. Not just in the context of the Afrikan-American diaspora, but also colonization right here in Afrika. We tend to think that the end of an era means the death of it, when in truth it's really just mutating. It later reincarnates itself in the form of neo-colonization tactics such as foreign aid, intergovernmental institutions, treaties and the likes.

In the case of our brothers and sisters in the United States of AmeriKKKa, their slavery reincarnated was Jim Crow, which refers to laws that enforced racial segregation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and aimed to disenfranchise and remove political and economic gains made by Black people in AmeriKKKa. The oppression of civil rights and racism were also rampant.

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This era was characterized by a lot of racially motivated violence and killings by white people on Black people. But it also gave birth to warriors such as: Malcolm X; Martin Luther King; Fred Hampton; Angela Davis; Assata Shakur; Elaine Brown and so many others. Black Power movements rose, as well as the incarceration and assassinations of great men and women whose lives were dedicated to the advancement and self-determination of the Black race.

"It is a vicious cycle that continues to eat our Black men and women alive."

In essence, Juneteenth ended physical slavery – the kind where Black people were whipped, kept in chains and forced to work in plantations. But it also created a new type of slavery, where those same Black people became targets for mass murder; mass incarceration; unfair policing and court systems; and discriminatory laws that were mandated by the AmeriKKKan government itself.

Natasha McKenna; Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor are just some of the names of Black women who have died at the hands of AmeriKKKan law enforcement officials, while Mumia Abu-Jamal; The Central Park 5; and Rodney King are just some of the names of Black men who have been victimized by the AmeriKKKan prison system. It is a vicious cycle that continues to eat our Black men and women alive.

While we may be separated by oceans, living under different climates, different landscapes, different cultures, different ways of life, we are still very much alike in our struggle for liberation. Not just in the historical context, but the contemporary one too. Azanians and Afrikan-Amerikans share similar experiences in how we've experienced hatred from our race enemies. The Soweto Uprising and Juneteenth are a fraction of these commonalities – commonalities that are historically marked as monumental days filled with joy for all who were part of them, when reality screams something entirely different, which is that racism and discrimination are still rife in our societies. They are embedded in the very fabric of our countries.

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As Black people, we need to have critical dialogues on issues of race and Black history. We need to create our own communities where we're able to study our history for what it really is instead of taking things at face value. A lot of the time, the stories of our historical holidays and what unfolded after them are narrated by the same people who've spent centuries oppressing us. This greatly contorts and distorts our history. And by continuing to allow them to do this, we're only reinforcing the mental bondage they have over us; essentially upholding white supremacy. You can't dismantle the master's house using the master's tools because they were used to build the house. If we don't get rid of the tools, all we're going to be doing is rebuilding that same house.

Lesedi.



Rebaone Tsatsinyane