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Had Us Divided Then...

Got Us Divided Now

ROOTS, by Alex Haley, has done much to revitalize the almost forgotten kindred heritage of black people in this country, in this state, and in this city. If you don't believe that it has just listen to your friends, neighbors, relatives, business associates, and people in the street.

As vividly portrayed in *Roots*, the "masters" had us running each other down for their pleasure back then. However, the dividing line for our people then was doing the masters bidding to survive verses death or permanent maiming if a slave chose to exercise his right to be free. As Kunta said, "Chains ain't right for a nigger."

As indicated in the movie, the masters had no idea or refused to believe that blacks had their own culture, religion, and even communication problems of their own. Those that did recognize that the black was as intelligent as he and capable of breaking his bonds took extra precautions to ensure that the slave remained a slave. As we have seen, Kunta refuses to be a slave mentally and does what he has to do, according to Fiddlers teachings, to survive until he can find a way to escape.

Today, right here in good old Winston-Salem, blacks are still divided against themselves. We have heard with a growing consistency from various black groups, repeated attacks on other blacks. The line of demarcation this time is class. Poor or grass roots blacks are saying that our black professional or middle class people have forgotten from whence they came. A favorite line is, "They sit up there with those little ties on behind those desks and do nothing to help us."

Help you do what? Get to where they are is the logical answer. For black people in

this country there is really no such thing as class. As Asner, Master Reynolds' foreman recalled, "I was a bond servant for seven years, but after seven years I was free. A black will always be black even when he dies. He will continue to be a slave."

We here can not afford the luxury of thinking that we have come so far as to think in terms of class. We are still the newest generation of people in the world. Yes, we have made gains by leaps and bounds from the life and times of Kunta, but we are still divided against ourselves.

Our less fortunate people must remember that our fore-fathers, once they were brought to this country and realized there was no escape, survived so that some day some of us would be able to sit behind a desk and wear a tie.

For those who fit that description, our forefathers also wanted those left behind to be remembered and helped by you. You are in a position to help. If you don't then you curse everything our people fought and died for. Asner said keeping slaves on the plantation kept them from knowing which direction to take to escape. Taking tokens and refusing to open your eyes to wrong doings serves the same purpose.

Let us have no more talk of class. We are one, we must be, because the "masters" will never love us. Just as the slavecatchers chopped off Kunta's foot to keep him from running, we have our pitfalls today as has been recently disclosed.

Kunta, with a strong black woman's help, regained his spirit to try again. We can do no less than he to break the chains that bind us today. Believe this, the masters are still watching and waiting.



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.

Human Rights Activist

--Things for us--and President-elect Carter--to remember--

Black Americans, as they watch the American involvement in liberation movements in Africa, need to watch with minute care the actions of each succeeding American political Administration in the White House, whether Democratic or Republican.

At the outset, since we shall concentrate on Republican Party "clouds" of late, we must not forget that both Democratic and Republican regimes cooperated with the Mafia in maintaining a repressive regime in Cuba and that an idealized Democratic president, through the Bay of Pigs affair, sought to restore the Cuban "old regime." It was also a Democratic Administration which gave the greatest initial support to repressive regimes in South Korea and South Vietnam. What we say here, as a warning to blacks in America and throughout the world, is not partisan, although the most recent events have been in a Republican Administration's hands.

As the nation listened to the presidential debates in

San Francisco, there were at least three statements which blacks should have viewed as possible forewarnings as to what to expect, at least if the same policies as at this writing continue to be followed.

One statement which received little public discussion was the observation that the overwhelmingly largest portion of the "Food for the Hungry" aid had been sent under the Ford Administration to Chile.

Lest we forget, the present Chilean fascist regime was placed in office primarily with the help of the C.I.A.--as Congressional committees have revealed--and the death of Salvador Allende bore a striking resemblance to the death of Patrice Lumumba. C.I.A. "involvement," in some way, has been documented in both instances. But of the most immediate significance is the fact that the excuse for C.I.A. involvement was the protection of American business interests.

Well, it is "American business interests" which have been the greatest strength and support for the South African Vorster apartheid regime. And much the same case is true in Zimbabwe (or Rhodesia).

The present fear throughout black Africa is that,

with America's primary involvement in the transfers to majority rule, there will still be minority economic control and American economic benefits that still are spread inequitably among Americans as a whole.

Again, Mr. Ford sought, by an outright misstatement--which was denied by the straight-forward Elliot Richardson, Secretary of Commerce the next day--to cover up the federal government's protection of American business interests which discriminated against Israel.

This suggests several things. One is that our national government has not been beyond the dual blackmail by foreign governments and our one-side American business interests. The interests of human liberation have not been of the same high priority as economic and "diplomatic" considerations.

Black Americans should be wary, then, of any dealings of our government where human rights are concerned. This suggests that the greatest form of loyalty as Americans is to be vigilant in our concern that we do not forsake the principles of human liberty which at least originally, were at the heart of the American Creed as expressed in our public documents.