

CHAPTER 5

Don't Blame Slavery on white people

Don't blame slavery on white people. This is a popular misconception. It is very important to put the blame where it belongs. Most white people never owned slaves. Slaves were not cheap. Slaves were owned by a small minority, a small rich powerful minority of white people, the mighty rich. These are the real culprits. They were rich landowners, plantation owners, businessmen, the equivalent of our CEO's, big corporations, industrialists, our captains of industry. The majority of white people then were poor, not much better off than black people. They had a hard life and during hard times people are especially vulnerable to manipulation and distortion.

Even more than today, these moneyed gentry were highly respected, powerful, privileged and very influential. They were in a prime position to manipulate and distort and they did.

The society had a good religion, Christianity, which taught them to value and respect all people, but the rich powerful minority distorted that to justify slavery.

The society was founded on and championed a belief in a democracy that held that all men were created equal, but this small powerful rich minority distorted that to justify slavery.

The south waged a war to preserve slavery, disguised as "to protect our way of life", but that too was a distortion and a lie promulgated by the same rich and powerful minority. And off to war, the brutal civil war, many young men fought and died for no grand cause, but because of distortion and manipulation of a small rich powerful minority driven by greed and avarice.

So this distortion and lies by a small rich powerful minority sucked in innocent white people, trampled on their values and most cherished beliefs, and have left them a legacy of guilt for so atrocious an institution as slavery.

Sounds familiar. Money distorted then and continues to do so now. As long as money is king, that distortion power

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will continue to flourish and eat away at our most fundamental values as it did with slavery.

And it continues. The Iraq war. This same minority brought us the Iraq war. They justified it with lies and deception. Did you really believe there were any weapons of mass destruction? Do you think they themselves really believed there were weapons of mass destruction? Do you really believe that they thought that Saddam Hussein had links to Al Qaeda despite all the evidence to the contrary? They were all lies and transparent lies.

Mark Twain said, "There are lies, damnable lies and statistics. These were big damnable lies. These were lies that killed thousands of innocent men, women and children. These were lies that fouled the drinking water for the Iraqi population. These were lies which brought the inevitable pillaging and looting not only of valuables but also the ancestral relics of not only Iraq but of our civilization. These were lies which dropped bunker-busting-two-thousand-pound bombs into residential neighborhoods.

Then the old lies spawned new lies. "We are not invaders." "We are not an occupation army there to loot their oil." No, the latest operational lie is we are their liberators. Maybe we can sell them some bottled water. Just lies built upon lies.

These lies are so obvious and transparent that almost everyone must know these are lies. But it gets even worse. First loyal Republicans were required to believe those lies. Even defend those lies, those obvious damnable lies. Now it has become our patriotic duty as Americans to believe and defend those lies.

Loyalty! Our patriotic duty! As with slavery, this same rich ruthless minority, this time with the mass media embedded in their pockets, have distorted and manipulated our values again. How could this keep happening to us? It was easier because the slaves were black, the Vietnamese are Asian, and the Iraqis are Arabs. They are all 'different' from us. To too many, being 'different' translates into being lesser

than 'us'. The manipulators use differences between us as fertile ground for manipulation and distortion.

Being good is not good enough

Heigho come to the fair. So rather than spend my entire night in my hotel room in Garrett County in rural western Maryland, off to the fair I went. It was the annual Garrett County fair. So that night I soon found myself at the fair sitting in a crowded arena, munching on a Dutch funnel cake, waiting for the famous Hub Caps, an oldies singing group to begin the show. I was conspicuous as the only black in the all-white crowd. But, as we waited patiently for the show to start, late as usual, the people around me engaged me in conversation which was so warm and friendly that I felt very comfortable and at home.

These are good people", I thought and they are. I knew full well Garrett County is a stronghold of Republican party conservatives. I could tell from my previous visits to the area, listening to the local radio and so on that these people seemed to be hardworking, patriotic, family-oriented people. But that night at the fair really crystallized it in my mind that these are indeed good people. Or are they?

I also know that these good people like millions of other good people all over America supported passionately the killing of thousands of Iraqis in George W. Bush's illegal unjustified war with that country. They are not unique. All over the world and throughout history, 'good people' have supported or even participated in some of the most heinous acts against mankind.

- It was good Christian people that supported slavery.
- It was good Germans that supported Hitler and permitted the holocaust.
- It was good religious people that killed Christ
- I am sure it was a lot of good Christian Serbs that supported or permitted ethnic cleansing.
- I am sure lots of good white South Africans supported apartheid.

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- Good Christian people burnt innocent people as witches in Salem.
- Lots of good people supported segregation.

There are many more instances so I could go on.

I am sure many have looked back at their actions or their positions on some of these issues with great regret. I can just imagine them saying with great regret and consternation, *“What was I thinking?”*

The point is that we have tended to be concerned about bad people, but we need to focus on ‘good people’, keeping them good and insulating them from degenerating into support of, or complicity with, evil. Being ‘good’ is just not good enough.

How do such good people go so bad? Generally it is by manipulation and distortion. The irony is often it is manipulation of peoples very desire to do good too. For example it might be appeals to patriotism, racial pride, ‘defending Islam’, protecting our religious traditions and so on.

The brave patriotic God-faring Joan of Arc was horribly burnt at the stake by good religious leaders. In the words of my fellow Jamaican and legendary reggae singer Bob Marley, *“..how long shall they kill our prophets while we stand aside and watch?”* How long shall they kill innocent Iraqis while many good people stand aside and not only watch but cheer? It took good people 500 years to make Joan of Arc a saint. To many ‘good people’ I say, *“Break away from the overwhelming manipulation of the radio ,TV and newspaper media now and do not wait for time to rectify your convictions.”*

One of the nicest persons I have ever met was a maintenance man named Bob. He was white. Most of his colleagues at work were black. But he was so kind, helpful, and willing to help everyone without exception. I could tell from conversation with him that he had a secret, a dark secret. When he was younger I suspect he was a racist. When he was younger, he was kind, helpful and willing, but only to white people like himself. But time had rectified his convictions and

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he extended goodwill to all men. He was truly a friend to all. He had become a 'goodwillie'.

We have to become 'goodwillies' too. As with slavery, this same rich ruthless minority would have us share their collective guilt for their horrific actions. And, they will do it again and again in the future. They will continue to manipulate us, unless we change. We have to insulate ourselves with a philosophy of goodwill towards all mankind right now, and not to just our friends, family and people that look like us. I am sure lots of KKK members are excellent family men and patriotic citizens! That's not good enough! Good people have to be good to all. That is the best insulation to keep 'good' people from doing bad because of the manipulation and distortion of this small rich ruthless powerful minority.

We must join the goodwill revolution and become goodwillies. We must seek peace on earth and goodwill to all. Not just pay lip service to it, but live it every day. As with slavery, are we going to be on the side of the slave masters or are we going to be on the side of the abolitionists? Join the goodwill revolution. Become a goodwillie and become a new abolitionist.