

Give Me Liberty

or

Give Me Death!

Sweeter words, I dare say, have never been spoken by man. Then following the Revolutionary (now this is a good word to chew on) War, while debating the drafted Constitution of the United States, on June 5, 1788, he offered the following words of wisdom:

[W]e are told that we need not fear, because those in power being our representatives, will not abuse the powers we put in their hands: I am not well versed in history, but I will submit to your recollection, whether liberty has been destroyed most often by the licentiousness of the people, or by the tyranny of the rulers? I imagine, Sir, you will find the balance on the side of tyranny: Happy will you be if you miss the fate of those nations, who, omitting to resist their oppressors, or negligently suffering their liberty to be wrested from them, have groaned under intolerable despotism. ... My great objection to this Government is, that it does not leave us the means of defending our rights; or, of waging war against tyrants.

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The past is our guide; we can allow it to be nothing more; our future does not reside therein. On penalty of invoking disaster, we must not confuse our past with our future. We can mourn for our ancestors, but we cannot change their plight, and we cannot allow their plight to dictate our destiny; we can but learn from it. And we can use that knowledge to affect the present, which belongs to us, and to shape our future.

If we insist on focusing our attention on the past — demanding reparations and such — we pay the piper by ignoring our much more oppressive (and urgent) present situation: And we doom our future. And in this we play directly into the hands of our oppressors. This is precisely what they desire. Angry words over past wrongs fall from our lips in a magical avalanche that buries us, but leaves our oppressors unscathed. And our oppressors laugh at the spectacle, reveling in the victory we give to them. They know their systems of domination are safe and sound.

The government feigns concern, compassion, and a minimalistic commitment to make amends for its past wrongs, but this is an artful ruse, a cleverly engineered distraction. There is no government commitment to make amends for past wrongs; there never was nor will there ever be. The wrongs committed in the present are worse by far. The government's pretense, however, keeps those persons who would complain focused on the wrongs of the past rather than the wrongs of the present. And when those persons become angry, because of the government's unwillingness to act upon their commitment to make amends, their anger, like their attention, is focused on the past instead of the present.

Breach the Bonds! Force the Fetters!
Jinx the Gyves! And Shatter the Shackles!

And the light of our future dims ever so steadily!

What have WE in the past? We cannot drive this car focused on what is behind us. We must resolve to glean what can be gleaned from those past experiences and to look ahead, and to move ever forward.

In ante-bellum America, because blacks were held in slavery, they, typically, were not subjected to the machinations of society's criminal justice system. In fact, in ante-bellum America, the nation's prisons were populated almost exclusively by white persons. In today's America, the construct of the criminal justice system, with the Prison Industrial Complex in tow, has become the new (and much crueler) slave master.

At the height of ante-bellum America, she enslaved approximately four million souls. Most of these people, but not all, were black. They were; however, each and every one, either minority or economically disadvantaged. Today, the American criminal justice system, having enacted a plethora of laws that were engineered to affect, and which are enforced almost exclusively against, the poor (which coincidentally is disproportionately black), enslaves more than ten times that number --- 40,000,000 plus --- in fear, fear of harassment, fear of brutality, and fear of eventual imprisonment (where brutality exists, but is not seen, and is seldom spoken of).

When racism was in vogue (stemming from government actions, such as those seen in the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (separate but equal)) laws, such as the Black Codes and Jim Crow, were enacted that overtly targeted black persons. But overt racism has fallen out of favor in America.

That is, it has at least been declared unacceptable in written law. In today's America, governmental racism, as well as other forms of bigotry, have become more covert in nature. But make no mistake about it: Racism and bigotry are alive and well in American government, and are identifiable to all who are willing to see them. As an example, consider the laws providing for sentencing in violations involving crack cocaine (statistically, the preferred form of cocaine among black drug users), as opposed to other forms of cocaine. These laws are an incontestable demonstration of governmental racism. In today's America, the laws are written to appear race neutral, but appearances can be, and often are, deceiving. None can reasonably deny the racism demonstrated by the enforcers, the prosecutors, and the judges of those apparently neutral laws. Today, in America, governmental racism is cleverly hidden under the cloak of socioeconomic enforcement targeting. The involved government actors declare that the laws are neutral, that they apply to all equally, and this may be true in theory, but they only apply to the poor if that is the only population the law is being enforced against.

This will not change as long as those affected (as a cohesive group) sit by idly watching. Wishing and wanting will not effect change. Our cause, any cause, will only advance with much agitation. Frederick Douglass, and a large number of America's founding fathers also echoed this sentiment, said that ground once taken (by the ruling class) will not again be relinquished except by force.

And then, from Patrick Henry, on March 23, 1775, making preparations for America's declaration of independence from England, we get:

Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlement [i.e., the oppressed] wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me,