

THE FUN OF LIVING
TOGETHER

BY ROBERTA GRIMES:

The Fun of Dying
The Fun of Staying in Touch
The Fun of Growing Forever
The Fun of Living Together
Liberating Jesus
My Thomas

THE FUN OF LIVING TOGETHER

“WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER
AS BROTHERS OR PERISH TOGETHER AS
FOOLS.”

—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

BY
ROBERTA GRIMES WITH KELLEY GLOVER

The Fun of Living Together

by: Roberta Grimes with Kelley Glover

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**This book is dedicated to every child
whose ancestors were held in American slavery.
Dear beautiful lights of tomorrow, your time has come.**

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FOREWORD

THREE AMERICAN LEADERS

The United States of America is suffering its deepest divisions since the Civil War. The causes of the discord in our society seem to be varied and complex, but your authors believe they come down to one core problem that will have to be addressed before anything much ever can improve, either in this nation or in the world. Bringing our country together is going to require every heart to the effort! And we are confident that it can be done if all of us will rally around three transformational American leaders.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was quoting Thomas Jefferson when he said in July of 1965:

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by God, Creator, with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’

“This is a dream. It’s a great dream.

“The first saying we notice in this dream is an amazing universalism. It doesn’t say, ‘some men’; it says ‘all men.’ It doesn’t say ‘all white men’; it says ‘all men,’ which includes black men. It does not say ‘all Gentiles’; it says ‘all men,’ which includes Jews. It doesn’t say ‘all Protestants’; it says ‘all men,’ which includes Catholics. It doesn’t even say ‘all theists and

believers'; it says 'all men,' which includes humanists and agnostics.

"Never before in the history of the world has a sociopolitical document expressed in such profound, eloquent and unequivocal language the dignity and the worth of human personality. The American dream reminds us—and we should think about it anew on this Independence Day—that every man is an heir of the legacy of dignity and worth."

Then on January 16, 2017, four days before his Inauguration, President Donald J. Trump took note of the holiday that bears Dr. King's name with these words:

"Today our nation pauses to honor a legend, an icon, and an American hero. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lifted up the conscience of our nation—a towering leader in his day, and a lasting inspiration for all generations to follow.

"Our Declaration declares that 'all men are created equal,' and Dr. King challenged our nation to live out that sacred truth: to banish the evils of bigotry, segregation and oppression from the institutions of society and the hearts of men.

"His legacy of freedom is the true memorial to his life: no testimonial can pay better tribute than the faces of young children living out their dreams.

"But his work is not done: all around us today we see communities and schools falling behind and not

sharing in the prosperity of American life. Each of us has a solemn obligation to ensure that no American is left behind—and that all Americans are fully included in the American Dream. When young Americans of color are left on the sidelines, our nation is denied a lifetime of contributions to this society—and when any of our American brothers and sisters is forced to live in fear, or poverty, or violence, it is setback for the entire nation.

“We rise and fall together, and today we pledge to follow in Dr. King’s footsteps so that all Americans may know the full blessings of this God-blessed land.”

President Trump’s pledge is a challenge to us all that ties back to Dr. King’s civil rights struggle and then farther back, to the universal promises of freedom and equality of opportunity that were made at this nation’s founding. President Trump has vowed to make the American dream attainable for every young descendant of slavery, and in doing that he will need all our help.

If not us, who? If not now, when?

ROBERTA'S INTRODUCTION

ROBERTA GRIMES

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

—*From the Declaration of Independence*,
Thomas Jefferson, 3rd president of the United States (1743–1826),

“The assertion that ‘all men are created equal’ was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use.”

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States (1809–1865)

“Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation—not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a Declaration made over two hundred years ago.”

—Barack Obama, 44th president of the United States

“Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., Winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (1929–1968)

“There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.”

—Bill Clinton, 42nd president of the United States

“I like thinking big. If you’re going to be thinking anything, you might as well think big.”

—Donald Trump, 45th president of the United States

Some two hundred and forty years after it declared itself an independent nation, the United States of America still remains the world's best hope.

American presidents as varied as Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama have reminded us that this country is meant to be a beacon of freedom and an example to the world of good government that protects the rights and nurtures the ambitions of every American. Yet the United States at the start of the twenty-first century is a sadly divided and bummed-out nation. It is able to offer little hope for the future even of its own people, and it seems inadequate to the task of doing much for the rest of the world.

Every thoughtful American can see wounds and fissures in most areas of our civic life, but few realize how many of these issues are the fruit of one overriding problem that has plagued this country from its founding. Repeatedly we have thrown money at what seemed to be fixes for America's first sin. We have framed laws to kill it and declared it dead, but zombielike it blunders on. After federal spending greater than the national debt and the blighting of millions of children's lives, in truth we have made no progress at all in putting the burden of slavery behind us.

So it is time now, once and forever, to fix this core American problem. And I say this with some urgency. Those that we used to think were dead are telling us that unless we can arrest the negative course of the United States we face a worldwide decline into barbarism. What alarms me is that the beginnings of the

chaotic events these elevated beings predict already are plain to see! Exotic diseases and declining birthrates; universal hatred and mistrust; religious strife and the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of just a few: carry forward present trends, and the desolate hell that those that we used to think were dead now tell us soon will overspread the earth can be readily foreseen. Also, poignantly, a perfect alternative future occasionally can be glimpsed in small, hopeful flames that flicker to life but soon die to embers. Either future is possible. But at the moment, the worst case is ascendant.

Those of us living in the United States can look at the troubling trends beginning, and at the responsibility to start to fix the world that apparently we now face, and we can simply shrug and do nothing. It is going to take awhile for disease, famine, violence and chaos to turn out all the lights, so America likely will hold together until after you and I are dead. In the face of overwhelming odds against us, of course it is tempting to pass the buck; but unfortunately for me, I love my grandchildren. I am stuck with a desperate need to solve this problem, and to solve it right away!

One of the advantages of being old is that having seen many decades of history can give you some perspective. I remember the happy nineteen-fifties, the chaos of the sixties and seventies, the robust and hopeful eighties and nineties. And I can see now as I look back at my life how most of our problems are knitted together and derive from one gigantic mistake that was made at this nation's founding. We planted the tree of liberty without first clearing away one prominent rock, and by now that rock has caused the tree to grow in ever more twisted ways

as it struggles to remain precariously upright and tries to find enough soil to be nurtured. That destructive rock is slavery. We have spent the past two hundred and forty years busily building the United States, repeatedly giving slavery a little attention to try to make it go away. But it hasn't gone away. It is time to accept the fact that it won't go away on its own. I submit to you that until we dig that rock from among this nation's roots and finally, definitively haul it away, it will continue to unbalance the country upon whose stability and growth the whole world depends. And inevitably, if that rock remains, this American experiment in personal freedom and self-governance is going to weaken. The tree of liberty will destabilize and fall. And it could take civilization with it.

I understand that what I am saying may seem preposterous to you. Not only am I listening to dead people, but I am saying now that slavery still exists as America's core problem? This may seem lunatic to you at first blush, and I get that. But for the sake of your grandchildren, for the sake of your country and the world, for the sake of all that matters to you, I ask you please to be still for a moment and let me make my case.

Actually, this won't be just my case. A close friend of mine is melanin-enriched, and when I told her I was planning to write this book she offered to help me do it. Kelley Glover's life is the embodiment of what every American of color can enjoy once we finally fix this problem. She is a music teacher and an entrepreneur, the daughter of a retired college president, two generations into the upper middle class. I love her because she is wise and funny and she understands me as perhaps no one else does, so when she offered to help me write this book and

keep me from making a fool of myself I invited her to be its co-author. We have chosen to make it a part of my Fun series and to write it in my voice, but every part of this book is Kelley's work as much as it is my own.

For most of my life I have been whitebread-clueless about the problems faced by African-Americans. I have loved the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., but like most of us who are melanin-deficient, I have assumed that the battles that he fought had been won. It is only with Kelley's help that I see that the terrible effects of American slavery are as much an immediate and desperate issue as they were a hundred and fifty years ago. I look now at little dark-skinned children, beautiful and bright and with eyes full of dreams, and I vow that their lives are going to be lived entirely beyond slavery's stain. We are going to fix this now, for every child of every race.

To make our success at ending slavery possible, we emphatically ask that you not assign blame. Blaming people will just make our problems worse! Please assume that everything done until now was the fruit of well-meant efforts by people of kindness and good will, and work with us to understand the present well enough that we can fix the future. Please forgive the past altogether! If we don't do that, all our efforts will be useless. And if you wish that Kelley and I had said something differently in some spot, had mentioned something that we have left out, or just had not written this book at all, then we ask that you forgive us as well.

And because minced-words silliness is the current weapon that is being ineffectively tried against slavery, we are not going to be politically correct here. To be perfectly frank, words are

not our problem! All the many times in a century and a half that we have condemned and destroyed people for using the word “nigger” have done nothing whatsoever to change the condition of descendants of America’s chattel slaves, so to hell with it now. *Who cares what we say? All that will matter from this day forward will be what you and I will do.*

KELLEY'S INTRODUCTION

KELLEY GLOVER

“I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality . . . I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (1929–1968)

“You’ll make mistakes. Some people will call them failures but I have learned that failure is really God’s way of saying, ‘Excuse me, you’re moving in the wrong direction.’”

—Oprah Winfrey, American media entrepreneur and talk show host

“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.”

—Maya Angelou, American poet and civil rights activist (1928–2014)

“I will not have my life narrowed down. I will not bow down to somebody else’s whim or to someone else’s ignorance.”

—bell hooks, American author and social activist

“It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (1929–1968)

“Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.”

—Victor Hugo, French poet, novelist, and dramatist (1802–1885)

I am so tired! And I'm tired of being tired! I know we have to be careful about how we make “I am” statements, but, you know what? *That* is part of the problem. When humans have a strong *belief* about something, it becomes a part of our *being*. Beliefs affect our thoughts, and those thoughts become a part of our bodies. Why do you think African-Americans have such a high rate of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes? I've read that 47% of American Blacks have high blood pressure, as opposed to 27% of White Americans. Melanin-enriched Americans *feel* tired and *think* we're tired. This racism, prejudice thing becomes an “I am” statement in our minds and bodies, and that energy affects everyone else because, guess what, people? We really are all one: black, brown, white, yellow, and red. We are all in this together, whether we want to realize it or not! We are only as strong as our weakest link, so **“We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”** Martin Luther King has been right all along. It's time that we finally listen to him!

So, why am I tired, you ask? I can barely think of a time when the amount of melanin in my skin wasn't a major part of my awareness, or when my presence didn't make some people uncomfortable. I first became aware that my chocolate skin was seen as “less than” when I was four years old. We lived in an upper-middle-class Black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, and many of the people who lived around us were very light-skinned African-Americans. (There is a reason why this was true which I will explain later, since you may not be familiar with

color and class within melanin-enriched communities in the U.S. and around the globe.)

My dear friend, who I will call Bobby, used to play with me in my front yard almost every day. Whenever the occasion arose for me to go inside my home to get something for us to play with, my friend Bobby would disappear from my yard and would not return for the rest of the day. Puzzled, I asked my mother why Bobby always disappeared and wouldn't come back, so she watched from inside to find out what was going on. Bobby's mother, who was a very fair-skinned, naturally red-headed Black woman with freckles, came over to our yard, grabbed his hand, and said to her little boy, "I told you I don't want you playing with that Black girl!" Translation: I don't want my light-skinned Black son being with a dark-skinned Black girl. Where does this mindset come from? Why did Bobby's mother not want her son to play with a darker shade of Black? S.L.A.V.E.R.Y. Vestiges of slavery. This is an example of what is called "colorism," or internalized racism, which I will delve into later in my own chapter of this book.

At age five I entered kindergarten, and I had my first experiences with outright, blatant racism from White children and White teachers. My parents actually sat me down at the age of five to tell me that some Black people are "color-struck," meaning they believe lighter skin is better than darker skin. Lighter skin means having more European ancestry, which makes a color-struck person feel as if their lighter shade is better than an individual with a darker shade. *And* they also told me that some people of European descent believed they were better than Black people, no matter their skin tone, because of something called racism. My parents had to have this difficult

conversation with me because we were about to move from a mostly Black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, to a mostly White neighborhood in Mercer Island, Washington, an affluent suburb of Seattle.

Having to process that information at such a young age is a strange feeling. To believe you are awesome, and to learn that to others you are something less just because of the shade of your skin, is not an easy thing to live with day in and day out. However, I am so glad that my parents prepared me! The ways the kids reacted to me in my predominately White new school were interesting. Some kids approached me with curiosity, having never seen a Black person outside of television. Those classmates would ask me questions like, “Are you really White, and you just colored yourself with a brown crayon?” Or, “Why is your skin so dark? Did you get a sun tan?” Other kids were not as sweet in their curiosity. A few called me Blackie, nigger, or African. Back in the 1970’s, at least in the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest, being called an African was a *huge* insult to a Black person, and being called *that* would often start physical fights, just as much as the N-word! *Ridiculous*, but true! *This* is why I have no problem with someone calling me African-American now. For so long there used to be so much *shame* associated with being of African descent. Later in this book we will talk about how the emotions of shame (namely Black and Brown people’s shame) and guilt (namely White people’s guilt) affect all Americans today. And how these patterns of insanity have stopped us from ever growing beyond discriminating against each other.

So, what did my parents tell me to call the kids who tried to shame me by calling me African? “If they call you African, which

is accurate because that's where most of your ancestors are from, call them European if they are European-American, or Asian if they are Asian-American." Taking this approach helped these children who were being taught to hate to realize how *ridiculous* they were being. There was no shame in being European! There was no shame in being Asian, either. So, why would I be ashamed of being of African descent? It stopped them in their tracks *every* time! They would look shocked, think about it, and later on they'd ask me to play with them. Sometimes shock is the best medicine! Interrupting thought patterns helps to change belief systems permanently.

I am forty-eight years old. And yeah, I'm tired of dealing with this. However, I don't deal with it now in the same manner as I did at age six, or even at age twenty-five for that matter. I use spiritual tools to help me release things that have nothing to do with me. What other people think of me is really none of my business, so when racist things happen to me, I "go high" and soar even higher. I now view these kinds of negative experiences as opportunities to tap into my higher self and higher power, and I see them as only that. *Experiences!* I'm not saying that I never feel anger, hurt, resentments, etc., but I sure get over them faster now that I am older and wiser and have been dealing with these kinds of things for the past forty-four years! The spiritual tools I use transcend race, gender, religion, and sexuality, and can be used by all human beings who are trying to be kinder to themselves and to each other. It's time to finally get over ourselves so we can at last find "The Fun of Living Together."

That better world is still out there, ahead of us. And it still is not too late.

**UNDERSTANDING
AMERICA'S MOST
INTRACTABLE PROBLEM**

CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY OF AMERICAN SLAVERY SINCE ABOLITION

“Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (1929–1968)

“Our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all and thought to include all; but now, to aid in making the bondage of the Negro universal and eternal, it is assailed, sneered at, construed, hawked at, and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it.”

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States (1809–1865)

“As long as you are black, and you’re gonna be black till the day you die, no one’s gonna call you by your goddamn name. So no matter what you are called, nigger, you just let it roll off your back like water, and you’ll make it. Just pretend you’re a goddamn piece of furniture.”

—Lyndon Johnson, 36th president of the United States (1908–1973)

“Whatever someone did to you in the past has no power over the present. Only you give it power.”

—Oprah Winfrey, American media entrepreneur and talk show host

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., winner of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (1929–1968)

“We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth.”

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States (1809–1865)

I grew up in a little New England town where everyone was white. I was so far removed from racial tensions that two specific moments of my childhood stand out starkly in my mind. I recall that when I was six or seven I remarked to my mother that our family doctor looked exactly like Nat King Cole. Mom sputtered, “But he’s black!” I said, “Except for that.” And I was right. Except for skin shade, they could have been twins. Then later on, as a junior in college, I brought home my beloved to share our Thanksgiving turkey. He was tall, beautiful, gentle and sweet, and the smartest person I ever have known. It never dawned on me until my father first laid eyes on him that the fact that his parents were Chinese immigrants ever could matter to anyone.

I am to this day fundamentally clueless about America’s most intractable problem. I cannot understand why racial or ethnic differences would matter to anyone! But they do indeed matter, and the fact that we cannot get beyond the racial and class issues that lie at the core of America’s culture is destroying what Abraham Lincoln and others have called “the last best hope of earth.” So your authors have tried to step back far enough to look at this matter objectively, and we have spotted what we are confident is the reason why our country is so broken. You may be surprised at our answer! But we cannot ever fix this problem until we first can understand it, so please hear us out. As astonishing as this thought may seem at first, most of America’s current problems stem from the fact that to this day it never has entirely freed its slaves.

COMING TO GRIPS WITH SLAVERY'S CHANGING FACE

A century and a half after the Civil War, America continues to grapple with slavery. It's as if the guns still echo, since the descendants of America's slaves remain by and large debased and dependent and relegated to the margins of American life. Oh, a few have done better. There are some black doctors and lawmakers now, black athletes and business folks and entertainers, but their individual successes do little to elevate the condition of so many others! Nearly half of America's black preschool-aged children live in poverty to this day, as compared with fewer than fifteen percent of young white children. Perhaps most appalling of all is the fact that at the start of the twenty-first century, while only thirteen percent of the American population is melanin-enriched, *blacks make up close to forty percent of the 2.2 million male inmates now being held in America's prisons.* Indeed, forty percent of black American men are in prison now or are ex-offenders, as compared with only fourteen percent of the white male population. For far too many men with darker skin, moving in and out of prison is a way of life.

This disastrous lack of progress by the descendants of American slaves is hard to fathom unless we examine our history since 1865. It is understandable that it might have taken a couple of generations for the freed slaves' descendants to assimilate into American life, and of course we know that for a time there were Jim Crow laws and separate-but-equal theories and other attempts to enforce segregation and to subjugate those with darker skin that ended as late as the nineteen-sixties. But

even if we assume that the task of completing the emancipation of America's slaves has been ongoing for only the past fifty years, still we've got to say that when compared with the descendants of white immigrants, the descendants of slaves have made too little progress.

Take my own family. My grandparents were Danish immigrants who spoke little English and knew nothing but farming. Their children—my parents—made it through high school and became a bookkeeper and a secretary. Then I went to college and to law school. My children were born into the American dream. This is the way that it's supposed to be! And the fact that white immigrants to the United States routinely manage in two generations the kind of progress that most descendants of slavery still cannot dream of making even after a century and a half is a shame and a stain upon this earth.

In retrospect, it is hard to imagine how anyone could have thought the Civil War would end slavery. Slaves were descended from Africans who had been brought here against their will. They were treated like animals by their oppressors, marked by their skin shade as inferior, never educated and never encouraged to aspire to a future in the American mainstream. For the great mass of America's slaves, legal emancipation meant only that they were homeless and hopeless and living beneath the boot of everyone who was white. And to make matters worse, many of those white folks were extremely angry! Their region had just suffered a destructive invasion by their fellow Americans in what some southerners still refer to as the War of Northern Aggression. Little effort was made by anyone to help the mass of slaves to learn what freedom meant or how to behave

as free Americans beyond some efforts made to get them to vote (whatever voting was). They were strangers in a strange land.

This book includes two quotations from President Lyndon Johnson that will make your hair stand on end. His racial attitude was typical of whites who grew up in the Jim Crow south, hearing tales of the Civil War and its aftermath from the perspective of its southern white victims. Imagine being a dark-skinned person surrounded by folks who thought as he did! But yet, Lyndon Johnson was instrumental in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 over the strong opposition of his fellow southern Democrats. Despite his history, he became a civil rights hero.

It is obvious the American Civil War did not end American slavery. Instead, our failure then to complete the emancipation process only relegated the descendants of America's slaves to a century of what amounted to slavery without papers, and eventually to an appalling re-enslavement by our benevolent federal government.

AMERICA'S BOTCHED EMANCIPATION

Every slave held in the United States was legally freed by 1866, but still they remained in penury. Rather than stepping into their promised forty acres and a mule and being helped to learn to assume all the rights and opportunities of free Americans, the newly freed slaves simply joined the colored freedmen who for generations had been huddled at the base of American life. To have a dark complexion in the United States was then such a mark of inferiority that while some did manage to improve their station, for nearly all former slaves and their descendants

the American dream of advancement still remained altogether beyond their grasp.

We must never forget that southern whites had suffered devastation during the Civil War at the hands of their fellow Americans. By their lights, they had a right to be enraged! The United States as they knew it then was a union of semi-independent nations, so they seem to have seen their Civil War defeat very much as Europeans today might see the use of the army of France by the government of the European Union to defeat and destroy all the rest of Europe in order to impose better-quality wine choices. Or if you would prefer an American analogy, it was to them as if today every so-called “red” state were to use the armed forces of the United States to conquer and destroy all the “blue” states in order to prevent their use of unisex bathrooms.

We are appalled now to imagine that anyone would think that slavery was a lifestyle option, but slavery had been a common practice since civilization began. For those living in the American south in the first half of the nineteenth century, slavery was no more disgusting than brutally imprisoning felons is to us today. And the melanin-deficient folks who lived in the nineteenth-century American south were proud of centuries of what seemed to them to have been a rich and glorious history.

In hindsight, it might have been better if the federal government and abolitionist groups had instead conducted an intensive program of re-education—okay, we’ll call it propaganda—to enlighten southern folks about the evils of slavery. *After all, in 1860 fewer than a third of white southerners owned slaves, and less than one percent of them owned more than 50*

slaves. Were you aware of that fact? Not only did most southerners not own slaves, but many didn't even know a slaveholder. A nationwide anti-slavery propaganda campaign begun early in the nineteenth century could have led to a complete emancipation that would have included the compensation of slaveholders who were being deprived of what had been their legal property.

Compensating the slaveholders would have been expensive, but it could have prevented the brutal subjugation of the newly-freed slaves and their descendants that set in after the Civil War. And when compared with the cost of the Civil War, it would have been a bloody bargain! The estimated value of all the slaves in the Confederate states as of 1860 was just over two billion dollars, which is less than half of the more than six billion dollars that the north spent in fighting the Civil War. Add in the two billion dollars or so that the Confederate states spent on the losing side, and it is clear that for the federal government to have bought and freed every slave in America as part of a complete emancipation would have been much the better choice.

And then there is the fact that six hundred thousand Americans died in the Civil War, which is more than have died in all the other wars that we have fought, combined. Our attempt to end slavery by violent means was the most devastating war in American history, and yet even with the loss of so much blood and treasure it accomplished almost nothing. America so thoroughly botched emancipation by first tainting it with unthinkable violence and then ignoring the need to introduce the slaves to freedom and enlighten the public to accept these new Americans that even a hundred and fifty years later the evil that is slavery blunders on.

As you pause to consider how much better educating the public to accept a legal emancipation might have worked, think of the use of fur as clothing a hundred years later. In the fifties and sixties the rich still proudly wore their minks and sables. The rest of us envied them the wealth that let them do that, but few people thought what they were doing was evil. Now the idea of killing animals and wearing their skins is repulsive to many Americans, but that wasn't the case until fur activists began to work on changing the public's perceptions.

You ought to know, too, that one American Founding Father tried to end slavery at this nation's birth. There never has been a more ardent abolitionist than Thomas Jefferson was in his youth! Lincoln's insight that the first words of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence seemed to have been written as a plea to end slavery was entirely right. Then when Jefferson couldn't persuade his fellows to make ending slavery a founding American tenet, he developed a plan for ending slavery during his lifetime in a way that would have removed that rock from the roots of the tree of liberty and allowed it to grow straight and true. Unfortunately, events soon turned against him. We'll say more about this later.

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF POST-EMANCIPATION SLAVERY

Most American politicians living at the start of the nineteenth century seem to have seen slavery as something that was going to have to be addressed, only not quite yet. As had been true of the Revolutionary generation, they had more immediate things

on their minds. So instead of using gentle propaganda to turn the minds of all Americans over the first half of the nineteenth century toward a peaceful emancipation by law that could have been almost universally supported, this country's solons let slavery fester until it threatened the breakup of the union. Then of course there came a war that humiliated and destroyed a large part of these United States.

Most of the whites who lived in the South lost family members and were rendered destitute by an invading army unleashed upon them by their fellow Americans. Then when the Civil War ended you could not easily spot the large planters and the politicians who arguably had brought it on, but the newly-freed slaves were easy to spot so those innocents bore all the white Southerners' fury. Not only were the mass of Southerners unable to assist the former slaves when they themselves had lost almost everything, but there rose in them an understandable but highly troublesome determination to keep the newly-freed slaves from taking any part of what little the South had left.

For a century, those with darker skins were kept debased and in servitude by various means, from laws and rules enforcing segregation through suppression of their right to vote to the frequent and open use of violence. Even in the north, black people were commonly understood to be less than whites. In the south, many blacks continued to farm as tenants and sharecroppers, land-bound slaves without papers; while those who went north lived in poor conditions and generally worked as unskilled laborers. In the south, Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation, but even in the north the slaves' descendants lived largely segregated from the white population.

If you have any doubt that slavery still was thriving in the United States a full hundred years after legal emancipation, please go to Appendix I right now and read the excerpts there from Letter from Birmingham Jail. In 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr., was a superbly educated young American with the brilliance to have done anything with his life. Just look at the way that man could write! But he was as much enslaved in America a hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation as had been any of his slave ancestors. That white Americans have called the condition of their darker countrymen before 1965 anything other than a variant of slavery has been a parsing of words that has not served us well.

AMERICAN SLAVERY TODAY

Slavery could have been ended with the signing of our Constitution in 1787. It could have been ended gently in the 1800s with a public education program focused on getting federal abolition laws passed, followed by sufficient education and support as each newly-freed slave began to live in full citizenship. Even as late as 1900, slavery could have been all over if the will to finish the job that legal emancipation had begun had not died with President Lincoln's assassination amid the malaise of a war-exhausted nation. But since emancipation never fully happened, the condition of abasement, economic bondage, and the risk of violence if they tried to rise was a bitter fact of American life for nearly everyone with darker skin right through the first half of the twentieth century.

Yet wonderfully, despite the long odds against them, by the nineteen-fifties many descendants of freed slaves were entering the American middle class. A million men who were melanin-enriched had served their country in the Second World War; and even though most of them were in segregated and service-based positions, just their participation in that war had begun to shift the boundary between races in the same way that women's working in American factories during wartime had begun to shift the boundary between genders. America's ideal of a post-racist and post-sexist country may not have been adopted for a few more decades, but it had its roots in the more equal nation that came out of the Second World War.

That more-equal-feeling America of the nineteen-fifties soon spurred a push to, for heaven's sake, desegregate the South a full hundred years after legal abolition. In the early sixties these efforts caused the festering boil that slavery still was to burst in the unpleasant ways that boils will burst. By the mid-nineteen-sixties it was clear that we had to do something! But as had been the case since the Civil War, it never occurred to anyone that slavery itself might still be the problem. We fixed that, right? Emancipation? How could slavery still matter? Sure, the tree of liberty is growing crooked, but things are getting better! At least that tree no longer bears the "strange fruit" of lynching victims.

Because it still didn't realize that slavery was America's fundamental disease, in the mid-sixties our federal government decided to throw money and social programs at some of modern slavery's most vexing symptoms. As a result, the black family in the United States was all but destroyed, and most of those green

shoots of progress being made by the descendants of America's slaves that had been appearing since the Second World War soon withered.

What on earth could have happened?

President Johnson's Great Society is what happened. We may not have meant to pay poor mothers to evict the fathers from their children's lives, but for fifty years that has been the result. *And children need both parents!* Boys, especially, need their fathers. ***If you want to understand the stubbornly high rate of black poverty today, and the appalling rate of black male incarceration, you need look no further than America's absurdly named "war on poverty" for an explanation.*** And when you consider our alarming national debt, now approaching twenty trillion dollars, just be aware that our national debt has largely tracked our means-tested social programs. Our entire cataclysmic national debt today is trillions of dollars *less* than the \$22 trillion that has been spent in the past fifty years to maintain a gentle kind of slavery and destroy the dreams of millions of American children.

As an aside, we should note that not all the recipients of fifty years of American welfare programs have been melanin-enriched. But while for white Americans welfare has offered a springboard out of poverty, for the descendants of slaves who never had been assimilated into American life it has been what amounts to a re-enslavement, this time by a benevolent federal government that gives them cars and wide-screen TVs while it makes no attempt to end their ongoing economic and social bondage.

Some have tried to explain the modern social problems of black Americans as cultural. They had no families during slavery times, so what do they know about families now? This notion is, to use a term politer than the one that we are tempted to use, pure hogwash. Even during centuries of slavery in America, those who were enslaved were forming families. They gave their children unique names so if the family ever were sold apart they would recognize those children later, and bonded couples who might have different owners remained faithful spouses throughout their lives. Perhaps family ties are even more important to people who have nothing else.

After legal emancipation, keeping families together became easier. During the hell of Reconstruction, the horror of Jim Crow, and every other kind of misery that was visited on America's melanin-enriched population during the century following 1865, they still kept their families proudly intact. *The census held in 1960 shows about the same percentage of intact black families as intact white families.*

But the nineteen-eighty census shows that in the intervening twenty years most of those black families had broken up.

We ask you to pause here and think about that. What centuries of legal slavery followed by a further century of debasement and outright brutality could not do to black American families was accomplished in less than two decades by a well-meaning but clueless federal government.

All of this has been tough to write. We know that it has been tough to read. But mincing words and papering things over and useless promises and halfway attempts have accomplished nothing in the past hundred and fifty years but the miserable

impoverishment of millions of Americans, the splitting-apart of American society, the blighting of millions of black children's lives, and the alarming indebtedness of this nation that was supposed to be the world's best hope. Unless we can recognize failure and call it by its name, we are going to keep repeating the same mistakes. And the world has no more time for that now.

In the chapters to come we will analyze some of the symptoms and effects of modern slavery, and then we will talk about how we might at last cut away that foundational rock so it never will trouble this nation again.