

Was Slavery Really Our Own Fault?

Produced in association with the *Pan-Afrikan Society* of London South Bank University

The Pan Afrikan People's Phone-in
Every Sunday 10pm – 12midnight

PAPP Galaxy Radio PAPP

99.5fm (London airwaves) and www.afwestation.com (internet)

Phone Number (for on air discussion): 07908 117 619

The Pan-Afrikan People's Phone-in is a space for themed interactive discussions conducted over the airwaves and cyberspace. The themes are focused around issues affecting Afrikan people both locally and globally.

The Pan-Afrikan People's Phone-in regularly features guests from revolutionary Pan-Afrikanist organisations. From time to time others including non-Afrikan guests will be invited to contribute. The activities of all guests will be examined on the basis of their relevance to Afrikan people locally and worldwide. Interviews and presentations with guests will set the scene for the more general discussion (in the second half of the programme) where listeners will be invited to phone in, ask questions and contribute.

Spread the word: Please tell all of your family, friends, fellow organisation members, colleagues, associates and other networks about the show. Encourage them to listen.

Was slavery really our own fault?

Imperialism's false accusation against Afrikan people

In its attempts to hide and disguise its evil practices, imperialism tries to cover up its responsibility for the kidnapping, deportation and enslavement of Afrikan people by propagating the idea that the enslavement of Afrikan people was our own fault. The propaganda attack is divided into two parts. Imperialism attempts to indoctrinate the public by alleging that:

- We were in the habit of enslaving and selling ourselves before European imperialism came along, and
- The imperialists only bought Afrikan people because we enticed them by offering to sell our own people to them

The baseline of these arguments is that we deserve what we got because we brought it on ourselves. This wickedly misleading line of reasoning means that the imperialists, who planned and organised the most shamefully tragic episode in the history of humanity, get off 'Scot free'.

The situation is made even worse by a chorus of Afrikan people who spend their time shouting historically incorrect slogans like 'it's all our own fault' or 'we are responsible for our own enslavement' or 'we did it to ourselves'. They are displaying a lack of understanding of the history of how our people were stolen and compulsorily deported from Afrika into enslavement. Theirs is the behaviour of Afrikan people who have fallen for imperialism's classic blame the victim strategy.

It is the same strategy that the police use to cover up deaths in custody in the modern day. The idea is to isolate the potential threat resulting from the killing by vilifying the person whose life has been lost. When this is done successfully there will be little or no public sympathy or support for the victims or their families and the problem confronting imperialism will be minimised. Afrikan *Maangamizi* victims suffer the same blame the victim attack *en mass*.

It is clear that the so called 'slave trade' would have been impossible without the co-operation of a certain class of Afrikan people. Therefore in an attempt to deceive onlookers this is the factor that is given, not only centre stage, but the entire historical stage by imperialism. The fact that many Afrikan people had no part whatsoever to play in the so called 'slave trade' is given no attention. The fact that many Afrikan people actively fought against the so called 'slave trade' is completely concealed. Our ignorance of the details and incidents of our history is manipulated to trick us into incorrectly blaming ourselves for our own enslavement.

Onlookers are then further disorientated when imperialism presents its own European candidates as the 'saviours and heroes' of enslaved Afrikan people.

Propaganda Strategies

		Activity		
		Kidnappers	Not Involved	Fighters
Culture or People	Afrikan	Acknowledge Centre Stage	Highlight Ignore	Highlight Hide
	European	Highlight Play Down	Disprove Highlight	Contextualise Exaggerate

Brother Omowale

The fundamental purpose of the blame the victim strategy is to protect imperialism itself. However, within that a tactical element of imperialism's plan is to launch a vicious attack against us by fostering divide and rule amongst Afrikan people. If Afrikan people in the Diaspora can be made to hate Afrikan people from home on the false premise that 'they sold us into slavery', then the ground will be set for damaging battles between Afrikan sisters and brothers and such battles are diametrically opposed to our need for unity.

Imperialism's aim is to literally augment bloody wars between us on a scale equivalent to the wars that caused the majority of Diasporan Afrikan people to be in the Diaspora in the first place. It hand picks Afrikan people from each side of the home/Diaspora divide, which imperialism itself created and uses them to hurl public insults at each other in order to fuel a climate of Afrikan self hate. As long as this strategy continues to succeed, imperialism will be safe from any meaningful level of destabilisation as a result of Afrikan resistance.

Our response

It must be acknowledged that some Afrikan people did behave in despicable, disgusting ways that contributed to our downfall as a people. There was a certain class amongst us that abandoned the Afrikan principles of: Humanism i.e. 'people before profits'; Collectivism i.e. 'we before me'; and Egalitarianism i.e. 'we're all equal in essence'. They instead adopted the alien principles of: Exploitation i.e. 'money before people'; Individualism i.e. 'me before we'; and Elitism i.e. 'I'm better than you'. In doing so they sold their own people into captivity for

what they mistakenly thought would be their personal gain. The consequence of their errors was that all Afrikan people from that time to the present ended up losing out as a result.

Despite the fact that history has clearly proved these people wrong, some of their unprincipled behaviours still remain in our communities and continue to undermine the process of Afrikan liberation to the present today. It is vital that we unreservedly condemn these behaviours and fight for their total eradication. We must also investigate and learn from these behaviours so that:

- We stop them from occurring in our communities, and
- Once removed, never allow them to re-emerge

Allegation 1: We enslaved ourselves before European imperialism came along

Imperialism did not copy chattel slavery from Afrikan societies

If it is true that when European imperialists came to Afrika they found us busily enslaving ourselves, why didn't they stop it or try to persuade us to stop it? They must have known that it was wrong, so why didn't they refuse to participate? Why did they join in? Why did they create a system of enslavement even worse than what they found? Why did they choose to profit from such an obvious wrong? In a nutshell, it is because they are lying. Any enslavement systems that might have existed in Afrika were not the motivating factor that caused the imperialists to enter into the habit of kidnapping, deporting and viciously enslaving Afrikan people.

Further doubts can be cast on the imperialist's line of reasoning by examining the consistency of their behaviours. For instance, the imperialists found Afrikan people practicing certain types of spiritual rituals, but they didn't copy them. Instead they set about destroying them. They found Afrikan people using particular names, they didn't copy those either, but set about destroying them too. They failed to copy Afrikan languages, methods of dress, cuisine or family patterns. In all these cases they tried to destroy them. Perhaps we can be forgiven for being just a little suspicious when they tell us that the only thing that we had worth copying was a system that they described as 'slavery'. Indeed, whether they forgive us or not, we must state categorically that they did not get the idea of enslaving Afrikan people from us.

The Afrikan form of 'slavery' was less draconian

Given the nature of the allegation, it is important to establish the type of so called 'slavery' the imperialists encountered in Afrika. The first revelation undermining their allegation of Afrikan 'slavery' is that before the coming of European imperialism 'slavery' was not widespread in Afrika (Fryer, 1989, p. 10). Next we discover that the system that existed in Afrika more closely resembled European serfdom or villenage than chattel slavery. The system seems to have emerged because in Afrikan societies there were no institutions such as prisons. The

absence of such an institution raised the problem of what should be done with wrong doers and this is what led to a kind of 'Domestic slavery'. It was a kind of debt repayment through labour or penance for wrong doers and captured enemy soldiers etc. (Martin, 1999, p. 156).

It would be incorrect to attempt to claim that 'Afrikan slavery' was good and 'European slavery' was bad. All slavery represents the opposite of freedom which means that there is no such thing as good slavery – all slavery is bad. However, that does not mean that all systems of slavery exhibit the same degree of evil. It is clear that 'domestic slavery' in Afrika was significantly less draconian than European imperialism's 'chattel slavery' system (Diop, 1987, p. 152). For instance, under 'domestic slavery':

- Enslaved people were full human beings
- Enslavement was not usually a life long experience
- Enslavement was not usually passed from generation to generation
- Enslaved Afrikan people did not outnumber their enslavers
- Enslaved people were not generally sold
- No Afrikan economy was based on enslavement
- Enslaved people could marry into their enslaver's family
- Enslaved people could rise into positions of leadership
- Enslaved people had their own plots of land
- Enslaved people kept a proportion of the fruits of their labour (Fryer, 1989, p. 10)

Afrikan 'domestic slavery' was so different from European 'chattel slavery' that it would be completely false to suggest that the existence of 'domestic slavery' inspired European imperialists to engage in the chattel enslavement of Afrikan people. The Afrikan system obviously did not provide them with their blueprint. This then raises the question of where they really got the idea of chattel slavery from.

Slavery is integral to European imperialist culture

If it is true that European imperialism discovered slavery when it arrived in Afrika during the 15th to 17th centuries, then an examination of European history prior to that time will reveal no traces of slavery in European culture. This analysis provides yet another line of reasoning that that helps to demonstrate that imperialism's bogus story, that Afrikan culture introduced it to slavery, does not fit the facts. On the contrary, from classical history right through to the present, European culture had and continues to have a variety of forms of slavery intimately bound up within it.

Any honest attempt at establishing the truth about the motivation behind chattel slavery must recognise that slavery was not the sole domain of Afrikan people. All peoples have been affected by slavery at some point in their history. Furthermore, there is an abundance of evidence which confirms that slavery is deeply imbedded within European culture. The first

'high culture' of Europe i.e. the Greeks had slavery as an integral part of its structure (Carruthers, 1999, p. 80). In addition, the greatest ancient empire of Europe i.e. the Romans was built and expanded on the basis of slave labour (Diop, 1991, p. 145). Even the word 'slave' is derived from the term 'Slav' which describes the Slavic people of Europe who were subjected to enslavement by their European kith and kin for centuries (Chandler, 1999, p. 167).

There is also documented evidence confirming that the British employed systematic processes of slavery in their own land long before any of their 'explorers' came into contact with Afrika. Bristol, for instance, was notorious white slave market in the 11th century (Fryer, 1984, p. 38). It is therefore wholly misleading to suggest that Europeans came to Afrika in ignorance of slavery and were somehow persuaded or corrupted by the systems practiced in Afrika into carrying out the chattel enslavement of Afrikan people.

Imperialism created the market for enslaved Afrikan people

In order to see through the lie of self inflicted slavery, observers need to be clear that there were no Afrikan people on the shores of Afrika waiting (with their sisters and brothers in chains) for foreigners to come along and buy them. Even if that had been the case, then there was certainly no external market for stolen Afrikan people to be deported to. In other words, since there was no demand, there would have been no internal basis for the kidnapping and compulsory deportation of Afrikan people.

European imperialist culture with its history of mass murder and mass enslavement created the market for enslaved Afrikan people when it committed genocide against the American Indians (Ferguson, 1999, p. 20). The process of genocide which was to have such devastating and traumatic effect on both American Indians and Afrikan people was officially sanctioned by the European Christian Pope Alexander VI when he signed the Treaty of Tordesillas on 7th June 1494 (Justice, 2005, p. 94).

After having wiped out the American Indians they initially imported European 'indentured servants' (Honychurch, 1995a, p. 66). However, European indentured servants proved to be too weak and too few in number to satisfy the European imperialists demands for labour. It was at this point that they turned to the systematic theft and compulsory deportation of Afrikan people to satisfy their lust for personal profit. This process was officially sanctioned by Britain's head of state Queen Elizabeth I when she granted her royal navy ship, *Jesus of Lubeck* with 300 crew, to Francis Drake (Fryer, 1984, p. 8). So pleased was she with his conduct that she later knighted him in reward for the profits he made for her through kidnapping and deporting Afrikan people from their homes (Fryer, 1984, p. 411).

The myth presented by imperialist 'historians' is that Afrikan people were responsible for the so called 'slave trade'. However, history reveals that the highest echelons of Europe clearly controlled and directed the 'trade' and made multi million pounds worth of profit from it. It is difficult to contest the fact that European imperialist involvement in the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people was wholly controlled, supported and sanctioned by their state and business mechanisms.

It is also important to note that when European imperialists finally decided to stop the trafficking, the compulsory deportation of Afrikan people dried to a trickle. If Afrikan people were the motivating and controlling force driving the kidnapping and deportation process, they would have built their own ships in order to continue to send their sisters and brothers overseas. They would have used their ingenuity to find ways around any ban that European imperialists had erected. As it happened, even those chiefs that wanted to continue to sell their own people were eventually compelled to stop, because the overall process was controlled from outside Afrika.

Furthermore, after the so called British abolition of the 'slave trade', the British deported Arabs, Chinese and Indians, on a voluntary basis, from Asia to the Caribbean. The reason that these people moved to the Caribbean was purely and simply because of the demand for labour created by British imperialism. The whole trafficking process was organised and conducted by British imperialism in order to service its own need. Just as with Afrikan people before them, Asians did not control the trafficking process it was the British who provided and peopled the entire infrastructure.

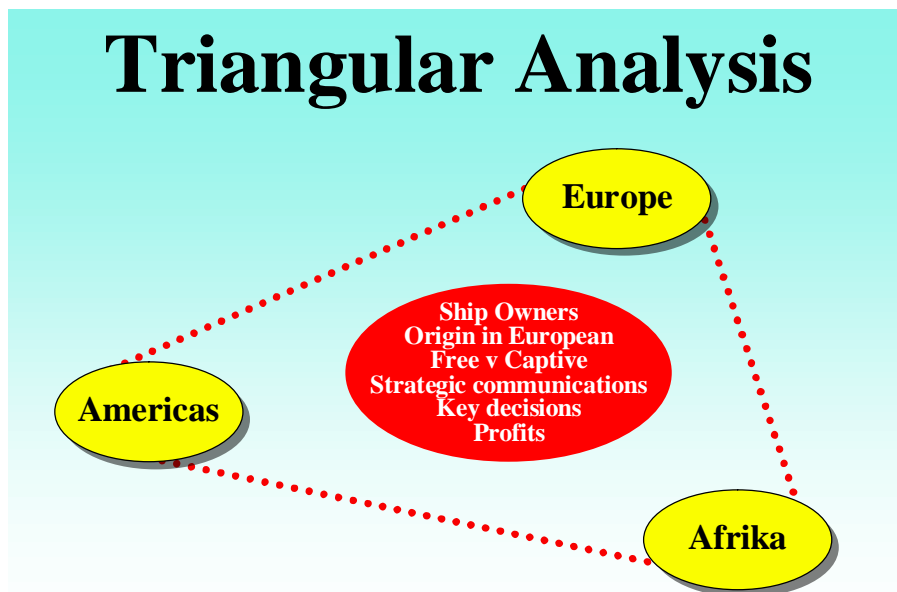
It is also important to note that there are no accusations of Afrikan people operating as middlemen in this period of the people trafficking process; they were not needed and therefore excluded by the British imperialists who had all the power. All of this evidence clearly illustrates that the reason for moving people from one part of the world to another was provided by imperialism's demand for labour and nothing else. The imperialists simply included Afrikan people in their affairs on an as and when needed basis – imperialism was always in overall control.

We can reasonably conclude that if Afrikan people had controlled the kidnapping and deportation of their own people, then they would have been in a position to control the secondary trafficking of Asian people also. History confirms that Afrikan people were not in control of either of these deportation processes. The truth is that the theft and compulsory deportation of Afrikan people started because European imperialists needed labour in the Caribbean. It was not because Afrikan people were previously enslaving themselves or because they had some kind of innate mystical desire to sell fellow Afrikan people to Europeans (Shepard & Beckles, 2000, p. 5).

Allegation 2: We sold our own people into slavery

Human trafficking and the 'Triangular trade'

If we take a panoramic view of the so called 'Triangular trade', we notice that all ships started their journeys in Europe; sailed south to Afrika and then west to the Americas, before returning to Europe. Their point of origin is the first clue as to who was in *control* of the trafficking process. European imperialism built the ships, owned the ships and *all* contents, staffed the ships and profited massively from the ships' voyages. European imperialists were obviously and clearly in total *control* of the 'transportation' process and therefore *responsible* for it. The kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people was an integral part of that 'transportation' process.

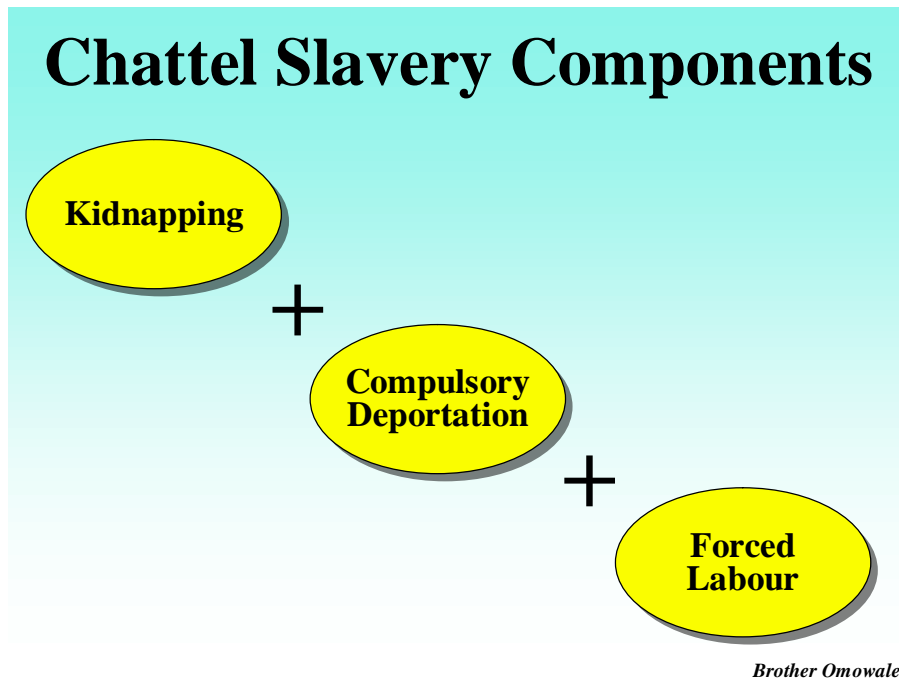


Brother Omowale

If we look at the three points of the geographical triangle, we get another clue. Europe had 'free' people at all three points of the triangle. Afrikan people, by contrast, were enslaved in two points of the triangle i.e. the Americas and Europe and were either kidnapped or living in constant fear of being kidnapped in their own homeland. Only a 'free' people located at all three points of the triangle, working in a co-ordinated manner could *control* the destiny of those Afrikan people being trafficked around the triangle. In other words, only Europeans had the liberty and independently organised infrastructure necessary to be able to *control* the triangle. This is further proof that it was Europeans who were *responsible* for the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people.

Europeans were also in *complete control* of communications throughout the triangle and were the only people to have a strategic knowledge of what was going on in all parts. Any Afrikan

people colluding with the Europeans in the kidnapping and deportation process would have had no real idea about where their kidnapped countrymen were going or of the fate that awaited them. The ignorance of their position meant that there was no way that Afrikan collaborators could *control* the process. They could contribute to the process by capturing fellow Afrikan people, but only European imperialism through its communications network, had sufficient knowledge and understanding of the overall process to *control* it. Again it is obviously Europeans that were *responsible* for the system.



Eric Williams explains that Britain and other European states operated as the capital of the 'triangular trade'. All decisions affecting the whole triangle were made in Britain and other parts Europe. It was British and other European bankers that provided the subsidy needed in order to get the whole trade started. It was British and other European manufacturers that provided the products to 'trade' for Afrikan people and the bulk of the profits and industrial development went to Britain and their European allies (Williams, 1997, p. 51/52). Walter Rodney devoted a whole book to explaining how Britain and its European allies got rich by using slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism to stifle the development of both Afrika and the Caribbean (Rodney, 1981). The whole 'triangular' process, together with the activities contained within it was designed by Europeans and centred on accruing benefits for those Europeans who *controlled* it and were *responsible* for it.

Another point that becomes clear from this triangular analysis is that some Afrikan people in Afrika did play a part in the kidnapping and to some extent, the deportation of fellow Afrikan people. However, it would have been impossible for Afrikan people in Afrika to have participated in the 'seasoning' or the actual enslavement of their sisters and brothers because

those processes took place entirely outside the Afrikan continent. Afrikan people in the continent played no part in forcefully extracting labour, changing names, changing the belief systems of their deported sisters and brothers. This was organised entirely by European imperialism and any Afrikan people involved would themselves have been 'seasoned' outside of Afrika.

Through this triangular analysis we can reasonably conclude that some Afrikan people behaved badly towards their sisters and brothers and participated in the system created, controlled and organised by European imperialism. A minority of Afrikan people were complicit and colluded with the imperialists against the collective best interests of their own people. However, it is equally clear that no Afrikan person, group or nation can be held *responsible* for the institution of slavery. Both the *control* and *ultimate responsibility* for this institution rests entirely with European imperialism, with British imperialism claiming the lion's share.

The hypocrisy of British imperialism – The worse kidnappers

The British establishment shamelessly seeks to claim the credit for 'abolishing' what it calls the 'slave trade'. In this way it attempts to guide the public's attention away from its central role in the kidnapping, deportation and enslavement of Afrikan people. However, a closer examination of British imperialism's moral claims reveals the fact that the British were not rushing to 'free' enslaved Afrikan people.

The British historian Peter Fryer points out that:

"Some Europeans raised their voices against the slave trade, though they did not begin to do so in Britain until the second half of the eighteenth century by which time it had been under way for some 200 years." (Fryer, 1989, p. 9).

The British were late in raising 'moral' objections even by European standards. Furthermore, whatever the stories propagated, it is obvious that British imperialists did not engage in the theft and compulsory deportation of Afrikan people simply for the pleasure of later abolishing that evil process.

An honest analysis of the history reveals that the British had an overarching role in the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people. Their role was so central that they operated as the suppliers to the other main European imperialist nations of the time. For instance:

"In 1701, the Spanish gave the French a contract to supply them with 4,000 [Kidnapped Afrikan people] a year, but the French didn't fulfil it due to their needs in Haiti and their other colonies, so the contract was awarded to the British." (Justice, 2005, p. 117).

Further details reveal how:

"... in 1713, under the treaty of Utrecht, Britain acquired the *assiento*, the official contract to supply 4,800 [kidnapped Afrikan people] a year to south and central America, the Spanish West Indies, Mexico and Florida." (Fryer, 1989, p. 8)

Furthermore:

"A [British] government report of 1792 found that 50% of the [kidnapped Afrikan people] imported into the British islands were sold onto French [enslaver plantation owners]." (Ferguson, 1999, p. 131).

However, it was not just the Spanish and the French that came to rely on the British for their supplies of kidnapped Afrikan people:

"The Portuguese, having the largest South American colony, were still the largest importers of [Kidnapped Afrikan people], but British merchants had taken over much of their importation volume." (Justice, 2005, p. 117).

The overall pattern of British complicity is revealed when we note that:

"Until 1791, a quarter of the Atlantic slave trade was in British hands, and from 1791 to 1806 Britain's share was over half." (Fryer, 1989, p. 8 & 9).

If Afrikan people were really responsible for selling themselves and had a controlling interest in the so called 'trade', then all of the contracts mentioned above should have been developed and managed with Afrikan chiefs. The fact is that it was European imperialism, with Britain as its chief co-ordinator, that controlled the process of kidnapping and deporting Afrikan people from their homes. British imperialism has a 300 year plus track record of consistently imposing chattel enslavement upon innocent Afrikan people. This is unquestionably the worse national track record in the history of humanity. No Afrikan nation, anywhere on the continent can match that degree of complicity in the enslavement of any part of the human family. In short, no Afrikan nation has the blood of slavery on its hands to the extent that Britain has. We can honestly conclude that it was British imperialism, more than any other entity on earth that was responsible for the evil anti-human obscenity that it called the 'slave trade'.

An honest reflection – Afrikan people fought against kidnapping and deportation

European historians have been dishonest in so far as they have tended to concentrate the minds of the public on one tiny but important role played by Afrikan people at home in the enslavement of their Diasporan sisters and brothers. This propaganda strategy is designed to remove from vision the negative overarching role played by Europeans in the Afrikan *Maangamizi* i.e. the evil anti-Afrikan genocide. They were the driving force for the evil; even the Afrikan collaborators:

“... had to be seduced ... [by them through] the dispensing of gifts and with bribes.” (Walwin, 1993, p. 31).

In addition, it also hides the multitude of positive actions taken by Afrikan people in the continent, at great risk to themselves, specifically for the purpose of ending or hindering the enslavement of their sisters and brothers.

An honest reflection reveals that not all Afrikan people were involved in the theft and compulsory deportation of their fellow Afrikan people into slavery; In fact a substantial proportion were most definitely not. It is true that some such as the Benin chiefs Tegebesu and Adandozan consistently participated in it (Martin, 1999, p. 30; Rodney, 1981, p. 119). However, it is also true that others such as the Benin chiefs Agaja Trudo and Glele participated in it at one point and then bravely fought against it, even achieving its abolition at another (Shepard & Beckles, 2000, p. 5; Barkindo, 1989, p. 92; Rodney, 1981, p. 81). Yet others such as warrior sisters Nzinga in Angola (Shepard & Beckles, 2000, p. 5; Rodney, 1981, p. 80) and Kaipkire of Namibia (*Women in power, 1700-1740*) continuously fought against it. In the case of the latter, defeating the British and sending them packing. In some parts of Afrika such as Zimbabwe, there does not appear to be a history of Afrikan people participating as agents of the trans-Atlantic kidnapping and deportation process at all.

Furthermore, it is also clear that some Afrikan people living in parts of Afrika affected by widespread kidnapping were themselves enslaved under the domestic system (Fryer, 1989, p. 10). It is highly unlikely that these relatively disempowered people would have been responsible for the kidnapping and deportation of fellow Afrikan people. At worst they may have been coerced into kidnapping others and even if that happened, it would be absurd to blame them for enslaving fellow Afrikan people.

Afrikan people in Afrika were the first to abolish the ‘slave trade’

Afrikan people did not wait two to three hundred years to be persuaded that slavery was wrong; we abolished it immediately. One example comes from the Bini people who abolished the ‘slave trade’ in their area from the early 1500’s until the late 1600’s. Unfortunately for us,

their abolition of the 'slave trade' was itself abolished by European imperialism. Justice explains that:

"Eventually, there was a foreign inspired civil war, at the end of which Oba Akensua won and reintroduced slavery" (Justice, 2005, p. 132).

A later example comes from Agaja Trudo who became the chief of Dahomey in 1708. He inherited a kingdom with an economy based on the kidnapping of Afrikan people, but came to the realisation that it was against the best interests of Afrikan people for the kidnapping and deportation to continue. In 1724 he declared the abolition of the 'slave trade', burned down European camps and deportation centres and blocked all so called 'slave routes' to the interior. It was a very successful abolition with the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people being ground to a virtual halt (Rodney, 1981, p. 81).

In 1725 he attempted to consolidate his abolition by sending an ambassador to Britain. The ambassador's remit was to inform the British authorities that Dahomey was willing to trade with them in goods and services, but the trafficking of Afrikan people would not be tolerated. His ambassador was ignored by the British establishment throughout the entirety of his time in London. No one would agree to see him or talk to him and his attempts at securing diplomatic consolidation of the abolition ended in failure.

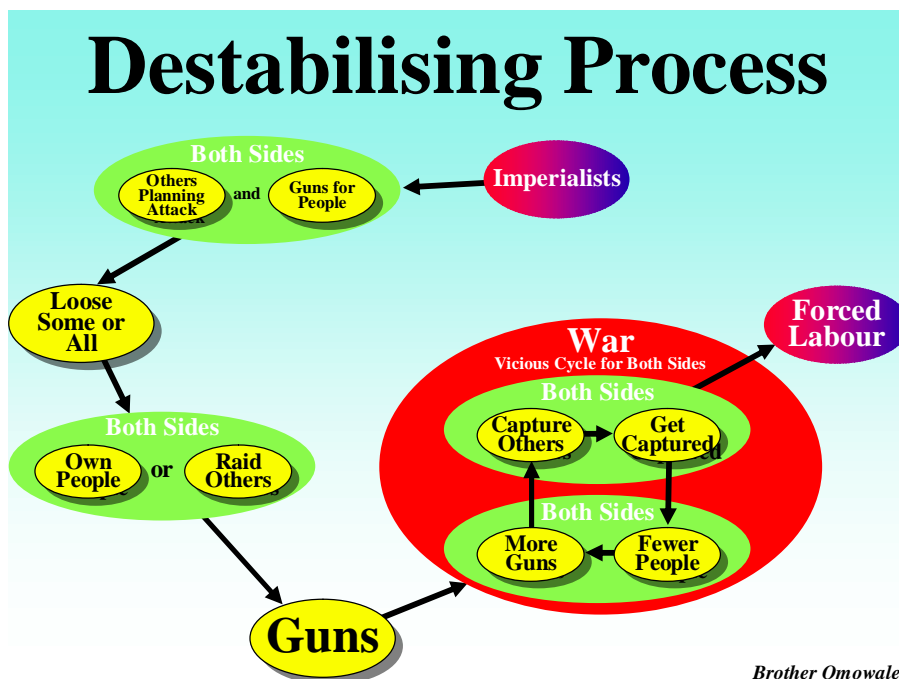
Instead of co-operating with Agaja Trudo's missionaries, British imperialism embarked on its own secret underhand 'diplomatic' mission. The British knew that there was a history of animosity between the Dahomey Empire and that of Oyo to the east. These differences were exploited by the British with the express intention of instigating wars between them so as to reintroduce the system of kidnapping and deporting Afrikan people into British enslavement – a process which was so lucrative for them. The British were eventually successful in abolishing this Afrikan abolition of the 'slave trade' and achieved this by instigating what were to become decade long wars between the two Afrikan nations. By 1730 the Dahomey abolition had been completely broken down by the secret British intrigues and a kidnapping spree ensued.

British imperialism used a divide and rule approach to reinstating slavery

It is important to understand the destabilising processes that were used to destroy both of the above mentioned Afrikan abolitions of 'slave trading'. In fact the destabilising processes were so devastating that they effectively ended up disempowering and destroying the Afrikan nations involved; reducing them to a shadow of their former power. British imperialism specifically employed divide and rule tactics designed to compel Afrikan nations to supply fellow Afrikan people for compulsory deportation into enslavement. It used Afrikan people to

capture other Afrikan people, both within and beyond their own nation, and then cunningly blamed the capturers for the whole act of enslavement.

The first part of the destabilising process was to create an environment of fear amongst Afrikan nations by promoting total mutual mistrust. They did this by lying to each of the two or more Afrikan nations or sub-groups that they intended to trick and subvert. They simultaneously presented themselves as the friends of the Afrikan nations that they intended should war with each other. They secretly 'advised' each of the nations that the other was well armed and intended to attack them to take their lands and enslave them. They secretly 'offered to help' each of the nations by supplying them with the guns that they would need to fend off their supposed 'aggressors'. The catch was that guns could only be bought if Afrikan people were used as currency (Fryer, 1989, p. 10).



Brother Omowale

Once the Afrikan nations had been tricked, the choice that confronted them was to either: (i) give up a few of their people for the guns necessary for the survival of their nation, or (ii) refuse to sell anybody and be overwhelmed by their supposedly armed 'aggressor' nation, with the consequence that of all their own people would be defeated and sold into slavery. Inevitably, the Afrikan nations chose the latter option in a desperate attempt to ensure their own survival. Some sold their own people, then organised raids on weaker neighbours to kidnap Afrikan people for whom the British would provide them with 'desperately needed' guns. When they felt that they had secured enough guns they would attack their supposed 'aggressor'. They would justify their own attack on the grounds that, in their view, it was a defensive tactic, designed to ensure that they themselves were not attacked and enslaved.

In addition to those Afrikan nations that were tricked into: (i) internal wars and (ii) warring against their neighbours to produce Afrikan kidnap victims for European enslavers, the imperialists used another devastating method. British and other imperialists set up their own proxy states. They were established for the specific purpose of destabilising Afrikan nations opposed to the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people. Again they armed them on the basis of guns being received in return for Afrikan people.

It is important to acknowledge that these proxy states which terrorised the Afrikan nations around them are guilty as charged for their part in the process of kidnapping Afrikan people. Their motives were purely and simply to make profits for themselves and they did this at the expense of the liberty of their own sisters and brothers. Their existence destabilised whole regions of Afrika and bred mistrust between hitherto peaceful neighbours. Formed in 1712, the Bambara state of Segu is said to have fulfilled this type of role (Breaking the silence).

Once the wars and raids had started some Afrikan nations became trapped in a vicious cycle where they felt forced to capture other Afrikan people in order to make themselves militarily strong enough to avoid being captured. The more they captured fellow Afrikan people to obtain guns for their own protection, the more their fellow Afrikan people captured them in an attempt to protect themselves. The continuous escalation of this cut throat environment, where all other Afrikan nations were perceived as enemies, eventually meant that it was beyond the capacity of any single group of Afrikan people to stop the kidnapping. All of the Afrikan nations in the affected regions were caught in a downward spiral whether they wanted to be in it or not.

To get an idea of how successful these vicious underhand activities were, we must understand that British imperialism alone dumped 394,000 guns in West Afrika annually as a stimulus to inter and intra-tribal war and the general political destabilisation of the region (Justice, 2005, p. 142). Another 50,000 guns were dumped in the Loango-Congo area every year (Justice, 2005, p. 143). Other European imperialist nations assisted Britain in this process. For instance, in the case of the Gold Coast, guns were supplied to the Ashante by the Dutch, while the British armed their southern cousins the Fante (Justice, 2005, p. 127).

Another part of imperialism's strategy for kidnapping Afrikan people was to flood Afrikan nations with drugs. The drug used for this purpose was alcohol. There is little doubt that alcohol was sold to Afrikan nations (Rodney, 1981, p. 77), but its undermining and destabilising effects seem to have gone largely unrecorded by 'historians'. A speciality of the imperialists was to shower Afrikan people with alcohol and enter into 'agreements' and even 'treaties' with Afrikan leaders when they were drunk. It did not escape the imperialist's attention that it was easier to kidnap a drunken person than it was to kidnap a sober one and they used that knowledge with deadly effect (Williams, 1997, p. 78-81). For addicted Afrikan

people Alcohol became a motivating force for kidnapping their sisters and brothers (Anderson, 1995, p. 60 & 78). Reduced to the mindset of a junkie, their personal 'fix' became more important to them than, either their own or their neighbours' national welfare.

Afrikan groups and individuals who actively participated in the kidnapping and deportation of their sisters and brothers cannot be absorbed of their personal responsibility for their part in undermining the future development of Afrika. However, history demonstrates that Afrikan complicity in the theft and compulsory deportation of fellow Afrikan people eventually became a matter of survival for participating Afrikan nations rather than a desire. All Afrikan peoples in the affected regions were, in fact, unwitting victims of a system of internal kidnapping that had been externally created by British imperialism and its allies. Once they had set up the system, all the British had to do was stand back, with their supply of guns and alcohol and wait for the captured Afrikan people to be brought to them.

The fundamental truth is that the majority of Afrikan people were against the kidnapping and deportation of their people. There were many attempts by Afrikan people to abolish the kidnapping because it so undermined Afrikan nations, Afrikan development and Afrikan culture. Every time Afrikan people abolished the kidnapping and deportation, the imperialists used secret underhand methods to abolish the Afrikan abolitions. It was the imperialists that started the whole kidnapping process and did everything in their power to ensure that it continued, because their interests were intimately bound up with it. Up until the birth of industrial capitalism, when their interests changed, they constantly supported, practiced and profited from kidnapping, deporting and enslaving Afrikan people.

Afrikan people in Afrika battled against the 'slave trade'

Part of the important information that remains largely concealed is the history of how Afrikan people on the continent courageously fought against those that kidnapped and deported their sisters and brothers. Some of them were particularly courageous because they were operating against a tide of kidnapping orchestrated by the imperialists in their regions of the continent. These Afrikan defenders of liberty employed a range of methods to fight against the kidnapers [both Afrikan and European] operating in their lands. For instance there are historical examples of:

- ***Afrikan people in the motherland physically battling with the imperialist, sometimes loosing their lives in the process to prevent the kidnapping.*** For instance:

"...1767, when seven English ships - five from Liverpool, one from Bristol and one from London - were waiting [to receive kidnapped Afrikan people] on the Old Calabar River. A group of armed [African warriors] from Old Calabar attacked the English, but they were

unsuccessful because the King's soldiers helped the English [kidnappers]. The leader of the Old Calabar warriors was then beheaded, and the survivors were sold into slavery in the West Indies." (Breaking the silence).

It would be ridiculous to accuse these Afrikan warrior heroes, who gave up their lives and liberty, of selling other Afrikan people into slavery. It would be equally ridiculous to accuse other Afrikan people of selling these heroes into slavery.

- ***Afrikan people in the motherland risking their lives in raids to release kidnapped fellow Afrikan people.*** For instance in 1758, Afrikan people in Gambia were so horrified when they witnessed their sisters and brothers being sold to William Potter, captain of the human trafficking ship *The Perfect*, that they attacked it. In the process of restoring justice, they put the whole crew to death. These Afrikan heroes saved over 300 of their people from being deported into enslavement (Breaking the silence). It would be both harsh and incorrect to accuse these Afrikan heroes and their descendents of selling their fellow Afrikan people into slavery.
- ***Afrikan people in the motherland refusing to 'trade' at all with the imperialists.*** In 1876, the tail end of the kidnapping and deportation process, the British sent a warship to carry out 'gunboat diplomacy' against Glele the leader of the people of Dahomey. They tried to steal money and other resources from Dahomey under the guise of what they called 'compensation'. Using cannons to assist 'negotiations', they blocked all trade from Dahomey. Undaunted, the people of Dahomey retaliated by using only local products and blocking all trade to the British. In the end, it was the British that had to come grovelling to Glele and the Dahomey people. They begged him to re-instate trade with them. He proved who the real masters were by forcing the British to pay heavy compensation for their arrogant blockade of Dahomey's seas. Sadly, Glele will not be remembered as an Afrikan hero because of his enthusiastic participation in the kidnapping and deportation of innocent Afrikan people (Barkindo, 1989. p. 92).
- ***Afrikan people in the motherland shutting down the so called 'slave routes'.*** The example of Agaja Trudo has already been cited above. However around 1720 Tomba, one of the leaders of the Baga people in the Guinea-Conakry area of West Afrika, tried to build alliances amongst Afrikan people in the region with a view to bringing an end to the kidnapping and deportation of Afrikan people. It took an alliance between European kidnappers, mixed descendents of Afrikan people and Europeans and Afrikan people directly 'profiting' from the kidnapping to destroy his initiative (Rodney, 1981, p. 80). It would be absurd to suggest that Tomba and his descendents are responsible for the enslavement of Afrikan people.

- ***Afrikan people in the motherland refusing to supply fellow Afrikan people to the European enslavers.*** Captain Samuel Stribling was captain of the Afrikan Queen a human trafficking ship which left Bristol in 1792. The ship docked at Old Calabar (now Nigeria) to deport kidnapped Afrikan people. He found little in the way of co-operation from Afrikan people in the region because:

“At least 21 of the ship’s crew died during the 7 or 8 months spent at Old Calabar waiting whilst the captain purchased [kidnapped Afrikan people]” (Portcities Bristol).

This was one of a number of incidents that caused James Rogers, the ships owner to go bankrupt. This example clearly demonstrates that Afrikan people were not habitually falling over themselves to kidnap and sell their sisters and brothers. Even this calibre of ‘passive resistance’ through non-cooperation with the kidnappers contributed significantly to the destruction of the so called ‘slave trade’.

- ***Afrikan people in the motherland sending diplomats to Britain to negotiate an end to the trafficking of their people.*** The example of Agaja Trudo’s ambassador coming to London has already been cited above (Rodney, 1981, p. 81). This is an important example because whilst some of the violent resistance identified above has the potential to be (incorrectly) interpreted as spontaneous, ill-thought through reactions to injustice, international diplomacy cannot be belittled or dismissed in that way. This diplomatic initiative is clear evidence that the political will to end the process of kidnapping, deporting and enslaving Afrikan people was clearly institutionalised in the societies of at least some Afrikan people in the motherland. Furthermore, this political will was sufficiently well organised to seriously seek the abolition of chattel slavery in the international arena. Abolition was therefore an official policy in Afrikan over 100 years before Britain came around to practicing or even appreciating that level of civilisation and humanism. Indeed, the indictment against British imperialism is even more damning because of the way in which it passively and actively opposed this anti-slavery initiative.

If it is true that some Afrikan people from home were involved in the kidnapping and deportation of their own people, then it is equally true that many Afrikan people from home were actively involved in fighting against the same process. It does a great disservice to the millions of Afrikan people at home who were tricked into participating in the chaotic kidnapping situation orchestrated by European imperialism, together with those that actively fought against human trafficking to blame them for the plight of those Afrikan people who were unfortunate enough to be deported into enslavement. Perhaps there is a case for posthumously identifying, honouring and thanking our home based Afrikan anti-slavery hero

warriors for their role in ensuring that the gruesome kidnapping and deportation situation was not made even worse.

European imperialism a common denominator in chattel slavery

The track record of European imperialism as it bullied its way around the world reveals an unmitigated pattern of genocide against other peoples which included enslaving them. If we take British imperialism as an example, everywhere it went they imposed some type of slavery system. In addition, to the genocides that it has perpetrated across north, south east, west and central Afrika there is the pattern of inter-continental genocide that it has left in its slip stream. No continent on earth has escaped its anti-human crusade of devastation against the peoples of the world. It is beyond the scope of this essay to fully examine the enslaving activities of British imperialism. None the less, it is clear that British imperialism's track record of enslaving other people far exceeds anything to be found in Afrikan history or any other people's history for that matter.

Consider this tiny sample of the enslavement practices that Britain got up to. In its own native Europe, British imperialism invaded Ireland, enslaved the Irish people and stole their land with the result that we experience the so called 'Northern Ireland problems' today (Stewart, 1989, p. 21). It had to travel a little further to steal the island of Gibraltar from the Spanish and create a similar set of problems there also.

In Asia British imperialism attacked and enslaved the people of India in their own land (Chinweizu, 1987, p. 4). In China it used a cocktail of hard drugs to supplement their more conventional gun toting methods in order to steal Hong Kong and attempt to enslave the Chinese people (Executive Intelligence Review, 1992, p. 116). In Iraq it stole the people's land from under their feet, whilst in Palestine it took the additional step of giving the land away to its anti-human allies the Zionists (Shlaim, 1988, p. 1). Again, the repercussions can be seen to the present day through wars which appear to have little prospect of early settlement.

In Oceania it effectively managed to wipe a whole people i.e. the Aborigines from the face of the earth (Cole, 1986, p. 35). To 'achieve' this level of completely unwarranted extermination of a people once might be considered 'poor judgement' or even 'bad luck', but these explanations can be ruled out because British imperialism repeated the whole process. It was the virtual extermination of the American Indians (Peiterson, 1986, p. 21) and that is what created the labour vacuum that caused it to practice its genocide against Afrikan people.

It is the systematic pattern of enslaving different peoples across different parts of the world that reduces the argument that Afrikan people enticed British imperialists into engaging in slavery to the level of farce. There were no Afrikan people to entice British imperialism in Asia, Oceania, the Americas or its native Europe, but Britain and its imperialist allies practiced

a variety of forms of slavery in those lands anyway. If imperialism could practice slavery everywhere else in the world without being seduced by Afrikan people, then obviously it could practice it in Afrika without being enticed to do so by Afrikan people. That is exactly what happened. The truth is that the imperialists came to Afrika with a culture of practicing slavery, a proven track record of carrying out slavery and the intention of inflicting slavery on Afrikan people.

Other peoples collaborated with oppressors

Some Jews collaborated with the perpetrators of their holocaust, but we don't turn around and say that Jews caused their own holocaust and therefore deserved what they got. For instance, Chaim Weizmann described as one of the 'chieftains of Jewry' acted against the interests of his own people when he:

"... pledged allegiance to the British war on the young Jews fighting for freedom." (Hecht, 1961, p. 5).

Furthermore, this architect and first 'Jewish leader' of the Zionist monstrosity known as 'Israel' actually refused German Jews immigration rights to 'Israel'. This refusal effectively condemned his fellow Jews to suffer the consequences of Hitler's extermination policy (Hecht, 1961, p. 19-22).

Yet another example of collaboration comes from the records of the Jerusalem District Court. The court testimony of another prominent Jew Rudolf Kastner confirms that in June 1944 he personally operated as an official of The Jewish Agency. He admitted that the agency actively participated in the process of killing his own Jewish people. In his official capacity he knowingly worked closely with Nazi Germany's SS to plan, round up and transport his fellow Jews to Auschwitz so that they could be killed (Hecht, 1961, p. 55-68).

Unfortunate as these behaviours are, we do not absorb the German Nazis of their responsibility for the genocide against the Jews on the grounds that some Jews collaborated. Nazi Germans have been correctly pursued, put on trial and convicted for their crimes. Furthermore, state and business institutions involved in the genocide have been compelled to apologise and make substantial reparation payments.

The argument suggesting that because some Afrikan people collaborated in the kidnapping and deportation of their own people, the imperialists have no case to answer is fundamentally baseless. It is borne out of a specific and rancid brand of anti-Afrikan racism i.e. *Afriphobia*, ultimately designed to shield the real culprits. The Afrikan *Maangamizi* is arguably the greatest catastrophe in the history of humanity. There is no moral reason why it should be treated less favourably than the Jewish holocaust. It follows that Afrikan people must receive

full reparations for both historical and contemporary suffering and disadvantage resulting from the *Maangamizi*.

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