

FREE YOU MIND



A Community
talk with
Aondofe Iyo



Organized by

The UEF Library of African and Indigenous Studies
On the occasion of the Emancipation Jubilee Day
Saturday, August 1, 2020.

Lito



Dr. Aondofe Iyo, (PhD)

On Saturday August 1st, 2020 Aondofe Iyo delivered via the online platform ZOOM a community talk titled Free Yu Mind organized by The UEF Library of African and Indigenous Studies, on the occasion of the Emancipation Jubilee Day.

Iyo has been a leading advocate for an urgent and dynamic transformation of Belize's educational and learning processes.

A former professor of history at the University Belize and one of the founders of the University's History Department, Iyo has worked for the past two decades in Belize both at the academic and grassroots levels to deepen critical thinking inside schools and raise the consciousness of the nation.

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Contents

1. The Preamble
2. Contesting the notion of Primitive and Unfree Minds
3. African Minds and Bodies in Antiquity and the Middle Ages
4. Modernity and the Transvaluation of African Minds and Bodies
5. The transvaluation of African minds and bodies in British Honduras
6. The Power of Indoctrination and Predictive Error
7. Conclusion
8. Select References

Reasons for the "Community Talk on Free Yu Mind"

My dear compatriots, bystanders, and onlookers of the struggle, more than a year ago, I received a call from YaYa Marin Coleman. She was lucky because I don't usually take calls from unknown numbers. But for reasons that I am still consulting with the ancestors to help me understand, I answered the phone. We are not particularly acquainted with each other. However, when she introduced the reason for the call, my first instinct was to reject the offer to speak. I am yet to understand why I did not turn her down. As she rambled on to acquaint me with the details, my thoughts were on many imponderables. The length of time before the occasion bothered me. One year is a lifetime these days! My emotions were mixed. First, I am tired of talking to myself. Second, I am tired of writing to myself. And third, I am aware that our people only listen to white people. And to top it all, I am tired of doing things pro bona in a capitalist world.

I am here today as a beneficiary of many great Belizeans. Some are watching from the vantage point of ancestors. Others are retired like me but not tired. The majority of our people are still watching from afar, detached, as ever.

I will resist the temptation to call out all the names of my beneficiaries. The reason is that many of them would prefer I did not. Nevertheless, thank you all for allowing me to stand on your towering shoulders. Thank you for allowing me to be a nuisance. This talk may sound as if I am an angry black man, but I am not. What you hear is a passion for justice and equity. This talk is partially the result of a long and painful self-reflection and critical analysis. I only want to be left alone and free to pursue life as I see fit. I seek dignity and equity, not pity, not handouts.

The new perspectives and methods shared in this "Community Talk" simply seek to restore humanity and free will to the enslaved. Mintz and Price (1976), and John Charles Chasheen and James A. Wood (2005, p. 53) have maintained, *sui generis*, that the Africans are generally incapable of taking conscious actions about their conditions. Accordingly, they deny the possibility of any transfer of cultural forms in Belize.

This "Community Talk" acknowledges how the enslaved in British Honduras utilized their minds freely through a range of activities. I have written a lot on African cultural survivals in Belize and do not intend to bore you on the details here (cf., Iyo 2000, and Iyo, Tzalam, & Humphreys 2007).

This "Community Talk" also acknowledges how those classified as "House Negroes" may have gained access and intimate knowledge of the diplomatic tensions that existed between Britain and Spain. Their combined roles as loyal servants and as informants to their kinsfolks may have served a variety of purposes including the knowledge territorial and diplomatic tensions between Britain and Spain. As knowledgeable individuals with access to information, many enslaved Africans were well aware of the promise of freedom on the other side of the territorial dispute. As conscious beings, enslaved Africans were willing to adopt and adapt to the cultural demands of their enslavers. They accepted their masters' assumed superiority. They also accepted their masters' assumptions that enslaved Africans were too stupid and too ignorant to pay attention to their communications.

Until a week ago, I had no idea about the topic of my talk. The theme of the "Community Talk" was quite challenging. How can I talk about black minds without talking about black bodies? The motto of the United Negro College Fund saved me from the certainty of embarrassment. As "The mind is a terrible thing to waste" flashed across my mind, everything fell into place.

This talk has benefitted from my decades of teaching and researching continental Africans and Africans in the diaspora. My teaching and research experience across the liberal arts, the humanities, and social sciences has informed my perspective and methods of examining the African experience in time and space.

"Free Yu Mind," which is the theme of this "Community Talk" is loaded with philosophical, metaphysical, and epistemic innuendos and conundrums. Suffices to note that until recently, the majority of the Western philosophers excluded my kind, type, "race," and people from the nobler pursuits and discourses. The lives of black "bodies" do not matter! To many people, black bodies are still less than human. Black bodies have historically performed the mundane tasks of hewing wood and fetching water for the higher and nobler "races."

Immanuel Kant considered my kind to be incapable of "free will." David Hume suspected that black minds to be naturally inferior to those of the whites. He noted that no civilized nation of any other complexion than white existed. He also maintained that my kind was incapable of eminent action or speculation, indigenous manufactures, no arts, no science.

George Hegel concurred with Kant by excluding the whole of the African continent except Egypt, from history. He described Africa as the land of childhood and maintained that the people Africa are in the dark mantle of night.

Hugh Trevor- Roper agreed with both Kant and Hegel and emphasized that there was only the history of Europeans in Africa. He maintained that as a dark continent, Africa has no history.

On the question of whether or not Continental and diaspora Africans have minds at all, this requires deep philosophical, theoretical, and methodological analysis. Until Descartes' "Cognito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am), no one had paid closer attention to where thinking actually comes from, much less whether "reason" had anything to do with consciousness, concrete ideas, truth-seeking, knowledge, and what many of us take for granted: how knowledge is created and passed down from generation to generation.

Before Descartes, everybody believed that wisdom and knowledge derived from the gods or the wise ones. The notion that reason, which involves thinking, critical thinking, reflection, rationality, and thought experiments, comes from the heart is still very much alive. The Tiv of central Nigeria still believes in "Shima yam venda," which means "my heart has refused." MRI has revealed the regions of the brain where thinking happens.

The notion that "reason" can lead to wise decision-making is still difficult to prove! The view that "free will" can lead to different processes and actions further complicates the matter. The history of humanity is replete with irrational decisions than rational ones. The majority of humans still believe in destiny, Providence, intelligent design, and the providential plan. The enslaved Africans in the Bay of Honduras acted upon their free will on several occasions. Many desired freedom and believed they could achieve it. By taking independent, individual, and group actions leading to freedom elsewhere, these individuals successfully stood the philosophical assumptions concerning their "race" on their heads.

Bolland (1988), Shoman (1995), and Iyo (2000) have tried to peel off the layers of myths and untruths regarding the African enslavement in Belize. These efforts have not been well-received by the apologists of the institution in Belize. The evidence in Belize demonstrates that African and New World-born Africans, whether called Creole in French, or croulo in Portuguese, or black, mulatto, and mulatta were all, with varying degrees, opposed to their enslavement. Orlando Patterson's thesis that enslavement meant social death (1982) is very troubling.

The Muslims in the Bay of Honduras did not undergo social death as they continued to refuse to drink liquor, and eat pock on pain of death, clearly stands Patterson's thesis that enslavement meant social death on its head.

The Defence of Settlers (1824) has articulated the view that fresh imports from Africa were more inclined to take to flights in search of freedom in Petén, Guatemala, and Bacalar, Mexico. The documented and undocumented flights out the Bay of Honduras to freedom in Petén, Guatemala are clear testaments to the expression of free will as alluded to earlier. As individuals, and as groups of individuals, enslaved Africans certainly shared the vision and value of freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Active resistances like "riots," rebellions, and the flights through the inhospitable forests to the equally largely unknown territories, must be interpreted as expressions of free will. The series of individual and collective positive actions tend to contradict Hegel's insistence that "the Negro exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state" (quoted in Iyo 2000, p. 112). These positive acts of free will and deliberate actions by peoples considered as living in the state of nature contradict the generally accepted narratives that still evident in the textbooks read and internalized by our children.

The enslaved Africans took arms against the slave masters in 1765, 1768, and 1773. According to one account, "... six Baymen were killed up the Belize River and five logwood camps seized by the 50 enslaved that were armed with muskets and cutlasses." Philip Sherlock (1969) has noted how the members of the Public Meeting, the Magistrates, and Inhabitants of the Bay of Honduras raised the alarm that,

"... their lives and properties are so uncertain through the harbouring of their runaway slaves by the Spaniards that, unless some immediate security from this oppression is obtained, the logwood trade must cease, and they must evacuate the settlement ..."

Of the 3000 enslaved African men, women, and children in 1779, "only 500 could be depended upon in the event of any Spanish invasion of the Bay Settlement."

The organizational abilities of the enslaved Africans are evident in the Baptismal records lodged in the church archives of the island of Flores. For groups comprising men, women, and children to escape, a priori careful planning must have taken place. The search for the intricate network of spies, guides, and lookouts is yet to bear fruitful results. Nevertheless, for the enslaved to achieve so much success over a long period deserves our praise. Such feats are not the hallmarks of individuals characterized in the recommended textbooks as brutes living in the state of nature! The careful planning which involved meticulous execution demanded more than luck. The escapes which began in the early 1720s continued until emancipation in 1839.

The series of acts of defiance brought so much pain and anguish to the European slave owners who claimed superior intellect deserves more than the current silence! The threats to the institution which involved the business of extracting slave labor for maximum profits account for the series of communications by the Superintendent of the Bay Settlement to the different Spanish authorities. The following samples will suffice:

"Superintendent to Commandant, Truxillo Requesting some runaway Slaves be returned" (R4b, 15.5.1822, p. 12).

"Superintendent to Magistrates Stating that he will forward to the Captain General at Merida referring to runaway slaves" (R4b, 6.8.1822, pp. 27-29).

"Superintendent to Commandant, Truxillo Requesting him to return runaway slaves" (R4b, 6.9.1822, p. 41).

"Superintendent to Governor Connayagua Requesting him to return runaway slaves" (R4b, 19.8.1822, p. 35).

"Superintendent to Mr. Bennett Thanking him for the vote made to him at the assembly meeting for recapturing runaway slaves" (R4b, 4.3.1823, pp. 77-78).

"Superintendent to Governor of Zacapa Requesting him not to harbor runaway slaves" (R4b, 10.2.1823, pp. 73-74).

"Superintendent to Magistrates Outlining arrangements with the garrison to control the Belize and Sibun Rivers areas to prevent trouble among slaves" R4b, 5.3.1823, pp 77-78).

"Superintendent to S – of – S Reporting on Mr. Wesby's mission to Guatemala to discuss the question of runaway slaves" (R4b, 2.6.1825, pp. 1-4; 6-11).

In 1830, James Stephen of the British Colonial office wrote that "Honduras is now in the centre of countries which have declared Slavery illegal, and if we persist in maintaining it we must look for a rapid depopulation of the settlement by slaves passing the border line, and returning no more"

Even though free will is evident in most of the actions and inactions are taken by the enslaved, the fact that the theme of this "Community Talk" is "Free Yu Mind" demand that we talk about it. We cannot mention black minds without black bodies. The amount of literature dedicated to examining black minds and bodies is evidence of their importance.

The more troubling question is why the organizers chose "Free Yu Mind" as their theme. My remiss is not in asking YaYa to explain this conundrum to me. I will nevertheless ramble on and hope that my musings strike a chord with the audience. Above all, the fact that I am talking to you about "Free Yu Mind" this very moment means that our minds are anything but free!

African Minds and Bodies in Antiquity and beyond

Africa's contentious place and role in world history have varied with time and with the individuals and their perspectives. No single world region has generated so much controversy as Africa. While writers in Antiquity wrote romantically about Africa and its people, those of the Enlightenment period did not find anything positive to write about Africa.

The perspectives of the paleoanthropologists, archeologists, and anthropologists followed the part of the evolutionary biologists. The production of fake European skulls to rival the fossil finds in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia, were part of the grand plan. Despite factual problems, many European writers insisted that all the civilizations in Africa were the handiwork of the mythical Phoenicians.

What could account for these incompatible perspectives? The answer lies with the nature of history as an inexact science. Anyone and everyone can write history. The ignorance concerning the African continent and its peoples is a more recent phenomenon. The ancients either did not know about Africa besides the areas neighboring southern Europe, the Mediterranean, and its immediate environs, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula. The Greeks, and later, the Romans interacted with the African hinterland via North Africa and the Nile Valley. Besides the Nile Valley civilizations, not many European monarchs, traders, merchants, and soldiers knew much about the African hinterland.

Herodotus recorded Hanno's voyage along the west African coast as far as the Bight of Bonny at the mouth of the Senegal River. Modern scholars have suggested that Hanno sailed past Sherbro Island, off the coast of Sierra Leone or Cape Palmas Cape Verde. Any other historians believe that Hanno's voyage went as far as the south-east coast of Liberia.

Herodotus (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Aldine House, Bedford Street, London, W.C. & E. P. Dutton & Company Inc., 286-320 Fourth Avenue, New York, 1936) collected oral accounts of the regions that bordered the Sahara. According to him,

"As far as the Atlantes the names inhabiting the sandy ridge are known to me, but beyond them, my knowledge fails. The ridge itself extends as far as the Pillars of Hercules ... Beyond the ridge, southwards, in the direction of the interior, the country is desert, with no springs, no beasts, no rain, no wood, and altogether destitute of moisture (Book IV, pp. 359-360).

It would appear that much of the history of the African hinterland beside the stretch of land in North Africa and Egypt have come down to us through wild and speculative stories. Herodotus is one of the earliest historians who visited Egypt and collected some of the more accurate versions of the history of the known parts of Africa. Herodotus speaks of the silent trade carried out between the Carthaginians and the Maghreb (present-day Mauritania). He speaks of the exchange of wares for the West African gold dust. Herodotus provides the earliest account of the circumnavigation of the African continent during the reign of Necos, the Egyptian King. The Phoenicians navigators sent spent three years before "they doubled the Pillars of Hercules [Strait of Gibraltar], and made good their voyage home" (Herodotus Book IV, p. 303).

Herodotus' account fails to provide insights into the peoples that inhabited the tracts of land upon which the voyagers claimed they planted "with corn ... and waited until the grain was fit to cut" for each of the three years they spent on the voyage of circumnavigation of the Libyan (African) continent. Herodotus nevertheless provides us with another account of the Carthaginian attempt to circumnavigate the African continent. According to Herodotus,

"Sataspes went down to Egypt, and there got a ship and crew, with which he set sail for the Pillars of Hercules ... and proceeded southward. Following this course for many months over a vast stretch of sea and finding that more water than he had crossed still lay ever before him, he put about, and came back to Egypt. Thence proceeded to the court, he made report to Xerxes, that at the farthest point to which he had reached, the coast was occupied by a dwarfish race, who wore a dress made from the palm tree. These people, whenever he landed, left their towns and fled away to the mountains; his men, however, did them no wrong, only entering into their cities and taking some their cattle" (Book IV, pp. 303-304).

Few of the historical details alluded to from this voyage have been the subject of contention among Africanist historians. The first bone of contention is the suggestion by some historians that the "dwarfish race" are the modern-day so-called "Bushmen." The "Bushmen" are mainly nomadic hunter-gatherers. They live off from the abundance of the tropical forests of West-central Africa. The "dwarfish race" mentioned are supposedly urban or city dwellers. More importantly, they are said to have domesticated their cattle.

Pliny the Elder recorded how the Greek historian Polybius sailed down along the west coast of Africa in ships lent to him by his friend Scipio Aemilianus around 146 B.C.E. Polybius gives us the very first written place names in areas south of the Sahara. Ptolemy more details on the place names.

It was not until after the Arab conquest of North Africa and Egypt that Islamic historians, geographers, and travelers began to collect information on parts Africa beyond the Sahara. The written accounts on Africa between the 10th and 15th centuries are concerned with the geography and lifestyle. The Book of Roger by al-Idrisi, al-Bakri's *Masalik wa'*, and al-Umari's *Masalik al-Absar* provide insights into the geography and the peoples of West Africa.

Ibn Battuta's chapter on "what is good and bad about the black peoples" is an invaluable source on the empire of Mali. As an inhabitant of Northwest Africa, Ibn Battuta's observations of the King of the Mali Empire holding court is fascinating. His accounts of the habits of ordinary people are a mixture of wonder and empathy. Leo Africanus' work provides a summary of Ptolemy's 4th book of Geography which divided Africa into 12 regions or provinces. The regions include Mauritania Tingitana, Mauritania Cæsariensis, Numidia, Africa proper, Africa inferior, Aegyptus superior, Aegyptus inferior, Libya interior, Aethiopia sub Aegypto, and Aethiopia interior' (Africanus, p. 21).

All the accounts detailed above are unlike those that were later written by the European explorers, traders, and missionaries. The pervasive image of Africans as primitive savages, empty-headed-human-flesh-eating barbarous natives, waiting to be civilized by the Europeans took shape after the Europeans stumbled upon the Americas.

By the time Adam Goncalvez arrived in modern-day Mauritania in 1441 with a band of Portuguese pirate-kidnappers with superior weapons to raid African villages for African bodies, many Africans were already familiar with the trading of Africans. When the demand overran the supply through kidnapping, the various African potentates, desirous of making profits from the bodies of their subjects, began to enter into alliances with the European flesh hunters and traders. But because many communities were unwilling to sell their loved ones, open warfare aimed at facilitating the capture, sale, and transportation of African bodies to the Americas for enslavement was inaugurated.

The wars for the capture of African bodies intensified on the African continent soon after. The rum produced by enslaved Africans in the plantations of the Americas became the currency of choice in the procurement of African bodies. Fueled by the rum and other hard liquors supplied by preferred European trading agents, European manufactured guns weighed heavily in favor of the African mercenaries fighting against rivals armed with bows and arrows.

Before the mass trading in African bodies, Africans generally did not consider the mind and the knowledge it produced as commodities that could be bought and sold by the highest bidder. The main reason African artworks have neither names nor the signatures. The Europeans who arrived in Africa regarded both African bodies and minds as commodities for sale.

The commoditization of African bodies was not a new phenomenon in European cosmology. The classical Greeks and the Romans relied on raiding less powerful European nations and entities for citizens whom they made slaves. The Vikings were fond of raiding and trading European slaves across much of Europe. The only thing that changed with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the ethnic ("racial") composition of the victims. The trading in Africans that became the dominant form of labor extraction between 1500 to 1899 was different. The owners were predominantly Europeans. The association between enslavement and "race" or color carried inferior status.

The need for African bodies to perform the arduous manual labor in the European-owned plantations needed moral justification. There was the need to convince Europeans that enslaving Africans was the right thing. The ill-treatment of Africans had to be justified by philosophers.

The practices and traditions which denied African bodies from seating alongside the rest of humanity needed philosophical and religious justifications. The brutalization, degradation, and dehumanization for 400 years had to be justified by Christians. Christians quoted from St. Augustine's (354-430 C.E.) belief that enslavement was ordained by God and beneficial to the enslaved. St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274 C.E.) defended enslavement by saying that it was God's punishment for sin. He justified slavery as a part of the "right of nations" and natural law. In 1442 C.E., Pope Eugenius IV granted Portugal the exclusive license to explore Africa. In 1452 C.E., Pope Nicholas V charged King Alfonso of Portugal with Christian duty to enslave any non-Christian. In 1510, King Ferdinand of Castile-Aragon, acting on his royal legal authority, granted the slaving license to a group of merchants. In 1548 C.E., Pope Paul III confirmed the right of the clergy and laity to own slaves. He said,

"In the treaty of Asiento made between their Britannic and Catholic Majesties on march 26, 1713, for carrying of Negroes to the Indies by the company of England, and for the term of thirty years, which were to commence from may 1, 1713, his Catholic Majesty was pleased to grant to the said Company the favor of finding to the Indies every year (during the said Asiento) a ship of 500 ton, as maintained in the said treaty."

In 1866 C.E., Pope Pius IX declared,

"Slavery itself, considered as such in its nature, is not at all contrary to the natural and divine law, and there can be several just titles to slavery, and these are referred to by approved theologians and commentators of the sacred canons. It is not contrary to the natural and divine law for a slave to be sold, bought, exchanged, or given."

The popes granted a series of "Asientos" to the Catholic Monarchs of Europe. The popes also gave "Asientos" to trading companies, merchant houses, and privateers. All "Asientos" provided political, economic, religious, moral, and legal instruments for the unencumbered capture, trade, sale, and transportation of African bodies to the Americas. The fact that the Papacy demanded and received a percentage of all profits derived from the trading of Africans leaves one with the impression that economics remained the overriding motivation throughout the long Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

The devaluation and transvaluation of "African" or "Black" minds and bodies have a very long and troubling past. The denial that "Black" bodies, and indeed, "Black Lives Matter," can be traced to centuries of Western European scholarship. Anthropology, ethnology, ethnography, philosophy, science, and even history became the battlegrounds for contesting African minds and bodies. The intellectual climate which started with Humanism pitted Europeans against the "others" they "discoveries" during the Age of Exploration. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Age, and the Age Enlightenment were distinct and European. European writers used the achievements recorded in Europe to justify their superiority over all the "others" they encountered in search of God, Gold, and glory.

Other Europeans used the general ideas surrounding eugenics in *The Republic* (Plato, Book V, 1992, pp. 145-146) to promote racism. Francis Galton's ideas on eugenic are similar to the one found in *The Republic*:

"it follows that the best of both sexes ought to be brought together as often as possible, the worst as seldom as possible, and that we should rear the offspring of the first, but not the offspring of the second, if our herd is to reach the highest perfection, and all these arrangements must be secret from all save the rulers if the herd of guardians is to be as free as possible from dissension".

Most of the volumes of journals in the nineteenth century gave eugenics a new meaning and sense of urgency. The publication of Darwin's *Origins of Species* generated a heated debate between scientists and orthodox Christians. The notion of the evolution of one race of humanity tended to contradict and assault the sensibilities of many Europeans raised with the belief that their "race" was inherently superior.

Galton's insidious form of human scrutiny that came to be known as eugenics, which means "well-born," or "good in stock," gave rise to racialized socialization. Eugenics also gave new meanings to the types of jobs that were appropriate and suitable for each race. Labor involving more brawn than brains became associated with the so-called lower classes. This view fitted with the experiences of those working in industrial factories in Europe. In the Americas, such roles were reserved for indigenous Americans and enslaved Africans. Such status eventually became solely associated with genetically inherited traits found in only Africans!

Galton's remarkably flawed and deeply racist science later morphed into an ideology of sorts. Galton's ideas found particular favor with the European public that was eager, willing, and ready to justify its supremacist policies aimed at those they owned as chattel.

The religious, political, social, and economic climate into which the eugenics doctrine inserted itself appealed to the racist fantasies of depraved minds. Eugenics led to several unintended consequences. Hitler's "Final Solution" against the Jews is traceable to eugenic. The idea of having "Better Babies" or "raising one's offspring," can also be traced to the bizarre nature of eugenics.

The transvaluation of African bodies started with the Arab merchants. Europeans simply replaced and complemented the Arabs in commoditizing African minds and bodies. Popes, monarchs, explorers, soldiers, traders, missionaries, conquerors, colonizers, African kings, and princes all regarded Africans as commodities. Africans were bought and sold in the open markets along with other goods and merchandise. Most of the "Wills and Deeds of Sales" found at the Belmopan Archives and Records have human beings listed along with chairs, tables, and dugout canoes!

The transvaluation of African minds and bodies in British Honduras

The Handbook of British Honduras for 1888-1889 (Bristowe and Wright, p. 23) claims that "In or about 1662, the first regular establishment of English Logwood cutters was made by adventurers from Jamaica, incited, no doubt, by the increasing demand for logwood."

The Handbook of British Honduras for 1888-1889 (p. 24) also noted how, before 1670,

"no negroes [sic] had been introduced, but the woodcutting operations had extended, and were expanding so rapidly that the settlers were reduced to the necessity of introducing, in the absence of native or other available labor, African slaves, to cut and prepare for market the logwood and mahogany, the cutting of which had developed into such a remunerative occupation."

A Brief Sketch (A. H. Anderson 1948, p. 28) contradicts the claim of 1662 as the probable date of European settlement in the Bay of Honduras. It states instead that,

"The first recorded settlement was made in 1638 by a party of shipwrecked British subjects, later augmented by settlers from Jamaica (captured from the Spanish by British forces under Admiral Penn and General Venables in 1655)."

The Honduras Almanack (1829, p. 9) observed further how Article VII gave England "Territorial Right ... Logwood Cutting Establishments were fast augmenting, and we find the population amounted to seventeen hundred Whites." The Honduras Almanack (1829, p. 17) went on to stress how,

"The entire trade in Logwood being confined to the present limits, the principal part of the Cutters were settled in the River Belize, Rio Hondo, and New River, where they had hitherto remained unmolested, until the year 1718, when Spanish a force was sent from Petén, with orders to dispossess the English from the Town and River."

The Honduras Almanack (1829, p. 18) also notes for the first time how

"About this period [1718], Negro Labourers were first introduced from the Islands of Jamaica [which was a major market and supplier of captive Africans in the West Indies and the North American colonies], and Bermuda before which, the Whites, notwithstanding the baneful influence of the climate upon Europeans, appear to have done just as much work."

A. H. Anderson (1948, p. 29) recorded that the "importation of the first group of Negro labourers [happened] in 1718. All things being equal, 1718 appears to be the most probable date when captive Africans as well as "seasoned" Negroes first arrived in the Bay Settlement. This view has received the additional support from the research of Mr. Salvador Lopez of the University of San Carlos, Santa Elena, Petén, Guatemala (9th April, 2010). According Salvador Lopez, in 1720, enslaved Africans "and probably free male Africans tried to escape from their British masters in Belize to settle in Petén. Mr. Lopez's research further revealed how "In 1727, the colonial authorities [in Petén, Guatemala], encountered a group of mixed black Africans and white Irish Catholic refugees from Belize in the Maya mountains. But they were followed by other escapees who stayed in Petén and settled in Nuestra Senora de Los Remedios (Our Lady of the Remedies) (Presently Flores)." Lawrence H. Feldman (1983) has also recorded how "... 6 fugitives travelled for three months from the Belize River to the Petén town of San Pedro Chinoja" in 1729.

L. H. Feldman (1983, p. 11) elaborates further that, "Beginning in 1727, these blacks [meaning enslaved Africans of the Bay of Honduras] fled and south and west seeking freedom under the Spanish crown. Thus (1728) a black fugitive from the Rio Belize was taken by a member of the San Felipe garrison on the Lago San Pedro Chinoja in 1729; there were more fugitives in 1733 and a massive escape in 1756. Eighteen black males, five black females, one English catholic and a male Indian [sic] 'infidel' fled west from the ranch of an 'Ingles called Yachibul' on the edge of Cohaa lagoon where they cut dyewood and from ranches on the New River like that of 'Captain Jones.'" All told, there were ten of these 'ranchos de ingleses [sic].' Fleeing 'in search of the Spaniards and Christianity' they were 'lost' in the forest for five months during which time they planted crops until 'one day they encountered a corral and followed the path into this province' of the Petén.

There is mounting evidence to justify 1718 as the probable date for the introduction of captive Africans in the Bay of Honduras for enslavement. This evidence contradicts the commonly accepted 1720s and 1724. According to Assad Shoman (1994, p. 38),

"The first British settlers cut their own logwood, but by the 1720s they had begun to import enslave [sic] Africans to work for them." Shoman (ibid., p. 38) also notes further that, "In 1724 a Spanish missionary reported that there were 'about three hundred English, besides Mosquito Indians and negro [sic] slaves, these latter having been introduced but a short time from Jamaica and Bermuda.'" Lawrence H. Feldman (1983) has also recorded how "18 Black males and 5 Black females, along with an English Catholic and an Indian" fled British Honduras to Petén in 1756.

Schwartz (1990) has also recorded how, "At other times, for example in 1729, 1737, 1757, 1767, 1774, 1795, and 1813, blacks sometimes with infants fled to Petén, were baptized as Catholics, and settled around the lake [not on the island]." Schwartz goes on to cite the Archivo General de Centro America (AGCA) (A1. 56 Leg. 1256, Exp. 1718), stating how "Some 32 armed blacks tried to reach what became San Benito as early as 1795." Schwartz also notes how,

"This past 30th day of April, according to the commissioner of the township of Dolores, 13 Negros arrived from Walix. Through signs only he understood that they sought refuge in this province. Thus, a directive has been given to assigning them to decent, Christian households so that they receive Christian instruction in our faith so that they be baptized. With these, the number of Negros has increased to 32. These [32] recently arrived and converted, and by their nature so inclined, I cannot trust them because, though they are given [to] work and forbidding their vices, an attempt to commit grievous damage in this vicinity since the houses are made of thatch and the troops are veterans. I consider the recently arrived Negros from Walix are not too trustworthy, and in my estimation, may cause problems to the settlement of San José which is on the other side of the lagoon, despite its narrowness an easy target for this Presidio as has been manifested in my letter. In addition to this, the Indios do not want them in their pueblos, and neither do the residents of this Presidio, as attested to by the attached information certified by Lt. Col. Don Guillermo [?], my predecessor, which your honor my will [consider is most] convenient for all in this province as well as for the Negros to reside in San Josef. I hope that you will accede to the petition by the Indios and residents and on my part I plea for the benefit of God, the King, and these vassals. God protect your honor for many more years ... Petén 10 April 1795 [To] LS Josef de Galvez, President Governor & Captain General [From] General Don Josef Domas y Valle [Secretary] Ignacio Guerra Real Palacio, 2 May 1795 Signed and sealed by Ignacio Guerra.

The Bay of Honduras authorities did not relent their requests for the safe return of those they considered as their property. The Bay of Honduras authorities often offered mouth-watering rewards for the recapture of the escapees. Schwartz (1990) and Bolland (1988, p. 78) have documented two major flights out of the Bay of Honduras to Petén between 1813 and 1825. The Census Records between 1816 and 1826 has provided further insights into the countless numbers of those classified as "runaways."

There is also evidence of treachery against the African population that had settled in San Jose de Los Negros. Oral traditional accounts detail how the new settlers fell into disfavor with their Itzá hosts in San Andres and San Jose. Schwartz (1990) has documented Cacique Raymundo Chatá's complaints against the Africans. Chatá accused the new settlers of seducing Itzá women and imposing repartimiento (forced labor) on their Itzá.

Even though the Spanish Monarchy had abolished repartimiento, the remoteness of Petén from the capital helped to perpetuate the practice. Apparently (Schwartz 1990), Chatá's request to the Audiencia of Guatemala to remove the freedom seekers from their villages for "moral corruption and lawlessness" was ignored. The Guatemalan authorities also ignored the offer of the Itzá of San Andres and San Jose to construct the road from Petén to Tabasco rather than "work for the mulattos."

There is also evidence that the vicars were complaining about the "Indian resistance" and reluctance to subject themselves to secular authority (Schwartz 1990, p. 48). The secular authorities remained ambivalent in the face of the "Indian resistance." The ambivalence may help to explain the latitude of freedom enjoyed by the aggressive Africans. The African settlers also set up independent villages in the more remote parts of Petén. According to Mr. Lopez, the independent African communities were called Cimarron. Schwartz (1990, p. 48) goes even further to identify San Antonio as a Cimarron established by the Blacks, independent of Spanish political, social, and economic control.

The Power of Indoctrination and Predictive Error

How would you react to a second-year secondary school black student who tells you that he is not interested in learning about Africa?

How would you react to a second-year secondary school black student who tells you that his ancestors did not come from Africa but Jamaica?

The second-year secondary school black student who cannot see the relevance of learning about his past and that of the continent of his ancestors is not entirely at fault. The society and the nation that taught him to be disrespectful to himself and his continent has the largest share of the blame. The miseducation which has messed up mind and those of children like him is to blame. The education system that denied him and his kinsfolk knowledge of his history share the bulk of the blame.

For the minds of children like the young man to become free, a new kind of education is necessary. Young men must learn how to unlearn what currently passes as the history of the black experience in Belize. The history of the African presence in Belize must be revised to go beyond the short period of enslavement. I remember asking a pupil in a primary school in the Orange Walk District why he is learning about Africa in Belize. The young child gave me an answer that had never crossed my mind. He said that even though he is Mestizo, some of his cousins are black. He also said that he wanted to learn more about the continent from which Black Belizeans come.

The children who have learned, internalized, and accepted the lies about their ancestors and themselves as believable canons have fared very poorly. For many, the facts of emancipation, and flag independence have not translated into any meaningful social and economic progress. Africans, "black," brown, red, yellow, and those in between, have been trapped in the vicious cycle of physical and mental trauma induced by benign neglect and by invisibility. The descendants of the enslaved have inherited the status of their ancestors. As inheritors of negativity, emancipation has continued to sound hollow. Even flag independence has not added much to their livelihoods. The color of their skin still determines how far they can hope to climb the political, social, and economic ladder.

George Orwell narrates how "if all others accept a lie imposed; if all records told the same tale, then the lie [passes] into history [as] the truth." Orwell's alter ego, Winston, expounds further how the person

"Who controls the past, [also] controls the future; [he] who controls the present controls [also controls] the past. And yet the past, though of its nature [is] alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting" (Orwell 1984, p. 44).

There you have it. The image of Africans in Belize has peculated from the few European sources that have survived. The compilers were aware of the importance of history. Even though the early accounts painted a romantic picture of the enslaved living in harmony with their masters in Belize, the amount of evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. The problem is not that the truth is elusive. The problem is with the gatekeepers of that version of history. As powerful politicians and educators, these gatekeepers have been very protective of the sanitized versions of Belizean history.

The actions of the gatekeepers remind me of George Orwell's (1984) aphorisms: "WAR IS PEAC," "FREEDOM IS SLAVERY," and "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH." Orwell's transvaluations of immorality are what the gatekeepers are doing. The punishment for "thought crimes" is evident in how children learn very early to "doublespeak." Du Bois (1903 & 1989) has examined black minds and found "double consciousness" to be prevalent. Ralph Ellison believes that black bodies are invisible in the eyes of white people. I may add that the institutions left behind by colonialism mostly regard black and poor bodies as invisible. The police and the justice systems are the worst culprits. Erasure, invisibility, and double consciousness have made it impossible for black minds to be free. The "Black Lives Matter" campaign illustrates how black people have continued to combat the hegemonic structures that privilege whites only.

The popularity of the intellectual contributions of the likes of Kant, Hume, Hegel, Trevor-Roper, and others regarding Africa and its peoples is partly responsible for the continued devaluations of African minds and bodies. It is impossible to separate black lives from the long 400 years of European domination.

The struggle between the Europeans and the Africans for the control of black minds and bodies has been relentless. Europeans have always sought and found support from black people. Europeans have also found outright rejection from black people. Many rejected and escaped to find freedom in Petén, Guatemala. The majority capitulated. Either way, many struggled to hang on to their African cultural bearings.

European use of brutality and humiliation sent clear signals to those who stayed. The assimilation of European cultures was sometimes the most attractive option. With time, assimilations became internalized as self-hatred. Many black people eventually accepted the assumed superiority of European cultures and the assumed inferiority of African cultures. Many struggled to leave behind their African culture. The methods listed above were initially coping mechanisms. These methods were practical solutions. But for the new Africans, the "seasoning" process must have been agonizingly traumatizing. First-generation Africans would have struggled with learning the dominant language of communication. Many would have struggled with cultural assimilation (otherwise known as creolization).

The Creolization process aimed to remake Africans in the image of Europeans. Through guile and brute force, the aim was to recast Africans and render them compliant to the wishes and aspirations of the European slave masters succeeded. Any perception of threat or signs of open defiance to European hopes and aspiration of recasting and remaking enslaved Africans in their image and likeness often resulted in brutal and humiliating beatings. The beatings were mostly carried out in the open as a deterrence to anyone harboring similar intentions. The display of naked bodies, especially for the enslaved females, served three purposes.

The first purpose aimed to instill in the enslaved African women the notion that their bodies were the property of the masters.

The second was to send a clear signal to the enslaved African women that the European masters were entitled to their bodies.

The third was to send a clear message to the enslaved African men that they were not in any position to protect their women! The acts of humiliation and brutalization eventually destroyed the African family.

By shaming the women and emasculating the men, the African family, or what passed as the family, was built on a very shaky foundation. It is little wonder that the "black family" has remained the most maligned institution in the Americas.

The black family was negatively affected by the slave-based economy. As the men spent more time in the forest than with their family, the phenomenon known as absentee husbands and fathers started innocuously. Colonial education dealt devastating blows to the traditional system of knowledge transfer in 1816. The Christian churches which took over the education system also made sure to remake African minds in their image and likeness. There were three options for the majority of the enslaved: active resistance by either running away to the neighboring Spanish territories or taking arms against the system of injustice and brutality and passively resisting through aping the master (yesa masa), mimicry (acting white), feigning illness or sickness, acting stupid and lazy.

There are loosely two African "tribes" in Belize. One calls itself Creole, and the other calls itself Garifuna. Both share a passion for rejecting their Africanity based on "we are all mixed up." The Creole insist that they are the children or great-grandchildren of their European slave masters. They are not aware that the numbers have never been helpful to this theory. Africans always outnumbered Europeans by a wide margin. Until the arrival of the different churches in the 1820s, most of the names of the enslaved Africans in the census registers comprised tribally and ethnically derived African names. The European Masters' names only began to appear in large numbers when they started paying for the baptism of their enslaved Africans. The arguments for the Creole and the Garifuna being "all mixed up" and no longer Africans are in line with "anything but black" and "if it ain't white, it ain't right." As for the preference of Arawak and Carib over African, this is in line with the logic that indigenous origins imply non-slavery experience and hence a higher status than those whose ancestors experienced enslavement. I am well aware that most of you are unaware that the majority of the members of the 6th West India Regiment recruited from West Africa. John L. Stephens (1969, p. 19) visited their "barracks, situated on the opposite side of a small bay" and commented about them as follows:

"The soldiers are all black and are a part of an old Jamaica regiment, most of them having been enlisted at the English recruiting stations in Africa. Tall and athletic, with red coats, and, on a line, bristling with steel, their ebony faces gave them a peculiarly warlike appearance. They carry themselves proudly, call themselves the "Queen's Gentlemen," and look down with contempt upon the "niggers"[sic].

The fact that most people are unaware of this historical fact is a testament to the success of creolization in Belize. The stigma of their African origin must have weighed heavily on the minds. The fact that their descendants have downplayed this historical fact is a testament to the success of creolization in Belize.

Carter Woodson's *The Miseducation of the Negro* more than sums up the processes by which the continental African was reborn and recast as a Negro, and a "Nigger" in the New World. Considered to be less than human, the Negro's lifetime ambition has been how to become human.

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952 & 1967) has explored how colonial education taught black minds to hate their black minds and bodies and to wear the white masks of their oppressors. Fanon found evidence of black internalization of self-hate and inferiority complex. He noted how black minds were nurtured, fertilized, and made to adopt colonial mindsets as a means of surviving the brutality of colonialism. Fanon also observed how the black bodies that were employed by the white aristocracy to control the rest of the black bodies learned the processes and mechanisms of reverse racism. The victims of colonialism and enslavement have learned how to become very sympathetic to the cause of their European masters. I recently witnessed a ghastly exchange between one of the most revered black politicians in Belize. He was gleefully pulling a black woman towards the richest white man in Belize! He exhorted the woman for not being excited about shaking the white man's hand!

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) is a work that has provided insights into the dynamics of colonial education on the minds of its victims, black peoples.

John Lloyd Stephens' documentation of a blatant act of racism and colorism at the Free Honduras School in 1839 may appear as an isolated case, but it is not. According to Stephens,

"... in this school, I was told, the brightest boys and those who had improved most were those who had in them the most white [sic] blood" (p.16). The Inspector of Schools wrote in "The British Honduras Report on Elementary Education in 1899 (p. 11) that,

"The peculiar race of children ... showed very little intelligence when questioned on the subject matter of the lesson ... As they are all of the Carib race and speak their language on ordinary occasions, their lack of intelligence when questioned in English is easily accounted for."

The privileging of racial, ethnic, and color differences in Belize was most evident in the education system. The introduction of a realistic curriculum for Maya children in 1949 is one example.

Emory King of blessed memory has tried to convince us all how "Slavery in Belize [was] a Family Affair." He used the Machiavellian inverse principle of the "end justifies the means" to explain away the blatant acts of inhumane brutality young African girls. As sex slaves, and as nannies, the enslaved African women experienced more trauma than the men:

1. They served as wet nurses and nannies to white children.
2. As property, their children were bought and sold at the whims and caprices of their white owners.

Emory King's sympathy for white slave owners is so blatantly crass that he is unable to mask them in his book. Emory King's racial, ethnic, and color distinctions between the "Free People of Color" who owned "Nearly two-thirds of the whole property at Honduras in Land, Slaves, and personality," a group Mr. King described as "Belize Creoles," and "Free Blacks" are very unclear. According to Mr. King, "the Creole population of Belize was entirely made up of former slaves" (1999, p. 13). Whatever their racial, ethnic, and color distinction, most occupied the lower rungs of the social, economic, and political ladder in the Bay Settlement. Emory King has admitted this by stating that despite the wealth and higher-than-normal status of the Colored population, they still experienced "prejudices on account of colour" (1999, p. 14). What is evident is that the classifications and distinctions of the "Free Blacks," the "Free People of Color," the "People of Color," the "Colored Class," the "Belize Creole," and "Slaves" appear to be situational, racial, political, and economic. This is similar to the anomalous status of Honduras as "a sort of dependency on Jamaica."

The Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser (1826) states that,

"The Colored Population has arisen from the intercourse of Europeans with Africans or Indians." They, therefore, partake more or less, of the qualities of black and white—directly as their distance from either. From the black to the white, by law, are seven or eight legalized ranks, through which the descent must be proved to have passed before privileges of the Europeans must be open to them."

The superficial differences between the different shades of Africans have continued to determine how much love or hate is possible towards one another.

Governor Eyre Hutson was sanguine about the UNIA's ability to attract a mass following in Belize. Hutson observed that "It is true the educated blacks like Samuel Haynes and Hubert Hill Cain looked "on New Orleans and New York as the great centers of civilization." The Governor perceived the weakness of the UNIA arising from the local Creoles' rejection of being labeled as Negroes. He viewed the Creoles' rejection of being labeled as Negroes "as pathetic as it was amusing." He believed the UNIA would die a natural death if unmolested. According to him, the Creole is "apparently still incapable of general cooperation ... they impose little trust in each other."

Jean-Paul Sartre has explained how the Europeans were able to achieve divisions and opposing groups based on race, ethnicity, color, and class prejudices. Have you ever wondered why the Creole use "bushy" as a form of insult? Have you ever wondered why the rich and wealthy black folks do not always see themselves in the young black kids who are constantly killing each other over little shiny objects? It is clear from the works of Fanon that the Europeans who handed over political power to the petite bourgeoisie made sure that this group did not see their struggle the same as the lumpen-proletariat and the rural peasants.

Conclusion

The central question for this talk is why things appear to change and yet remain the same. The philosophy of stasis tries to explain this phenomenon. Learned behavior, social conditioning, inherited traditions, and mimicry are all products of miseducation. Stasis is only one of many ways of problematizing and disrupting the discourses on issues of "otherness."

When people say that "if you want to hide something that is important from a Negro, hide it in a book," they are not paying black people compliments. They are implying that black people are intellectually lazy.

Black people must use their 'minds' to 'reason' as the Jamaicans are wont to say. Jamaicans do not say "mek we tak" as Belizeans are wont to say.

Positive mindsets will always lead to great acts and actions. Positive mindsets allow learners to stay open to new possibilities where those with negative mindsets see only barriers. How one mentally frames setbacks can be keys to the building blocks of grit, resilience, and ultimate success. Bad, irrational, and negative thoughts will always lead to negative actions. A famous study at Columbia University using brain scans found out that our internal mindset triggers physical changes in our brains. William James, the philosopher psychologist, once said, "the greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude." Socrates believed that whatever a child learns, or is taught, at an early age is apt or bound to become permanent and indelible in the child's mind (Plato 1992, p. 58).

"Free Yu Mind" means critically analyzing the true nature of the history of Belize, not the manufactured lies that pass as history. "Free Yu Mind" entails seeking to know the mistakes your ancestors made so as not to repeat the same mistakes. The acceptance of the horrendous experiences of black people in the past is one way of diagnosing the problems of today. In a way, the past can be a window to the present.

"Free Yu Mind" means unearthing the vulgar violence of conquest, colonialism, and enslavement as social facts as well as defining moments.

The fact that you are here today means that someone or some people made sacrifices. Emancipation is neither a date on a calendar nor the singular event that happened over a hundred years ago. Real emancipation must start with the transvaluation of the dominant consumer value system. Productivity must be at the center of real emancipation. "Free Yu Mind" means knowing that many of your compatriots fled enslavement to freedom in San Benito, Peten, Guatemala, Bacalar, and other destinations in Mexico, and Amoa, Trujillo, and other destinations in Honduras.

"Free Yu Mind" means questioning some of the negative legacies of colonialism, enslavement, and white supremacist policies that have survived in independent Belize. "Free Yu mind" means stopping the mindless and objectiveless violence and slaughter. "Free Yu mind" means demanding a high-quality education that is capable of leading you to question all the nonsense you have learned in history.

Slavery is a state of mind and not the physical state. Emancipation is a state of mind and not a physical state. The Jews are a people 'born of slavery' in Egypt. They have never allowed their experience with slavery to define them. They have rewritten their history to emphasize how 'they are the chosen people among the nations of the world.' The Jews say this about themselves and believe this to be the only truth. The Jews have performed the miracle of the inverse transvaluation of values.

Why can't we go beyond the history of slavery in Belize? Why are we trapped in the romantic embrace of slavery? Why have we disinherited our glorious African past? Why have we adopted the heritage of our European masters? Why do we proudly proclaim that we are all sons and daughters of the Baymen clan? Why did we reject the UNIA? Why did we reject UBAD? Why did we reject the African and Maya History Project? Why do we prefer to study the history of our masters? Why do we celebrate the Battle of St. George's Cay even though the success of the Battle did not lead to their ancestors' freedom? Why do the members of the Loyal and Patriotic Order of the Baymen celebrate their British heritage? Why is it that no one celebrates anything African in Belize?

Why are we celebrating the emancipation jubilee day? Is it because the slave masters allowed us to celebrate it in the name of the Queen and MacDonald? Why does our education system teach us not to use our minds to question why we do certain things one way and not another? Why can't our education system teach us to question the things that are no longer relevant? Our education system knows how to teach us to smell trouble and fear miles away.

Human beings are creatures of habit. They are deeply unwilling to change their minds even when new facts or evidence clashes with preexisting convictions. The reluctance to accept new information or to admit that we are wrong is natural. The discomfort between two cognitions is real. When we feel that one cognitive behavior contradicts another, we normally try to resign ourselves to dissonance; we either try to quit or justify the behavior. Cognitive dissonance is about how people strive to make sense of contradictory ideas. Dissonance is most painful when the evidence strikes at the heart of whom we perceive ourselves to be. Humans always seek ways to justify the wisdom of our choices based on tradition. How many of us have wondered why we venerate traditions? Traditions are the handiwork of human beings. Humans tend to dismiss any information that contradicts what has been handed to them by their ancestors.

How many of us have asked why emancipation was allowed to happen at the time it did? The economic gains of the first Industrial Revolution were mainly in the new machines that were replacing manual labor. Machines are capable of producing more and faster than hundreds of enslaved African laborers. Machines are far superior to the high-maintenance, riot-prone, rebellious-prone enslaved Africans. Machines are the magic that released the "genie" from the bottle!

Emancipation was never intended to be a spiritual awakening. I am sure that most of you are grateful for the tireless efforts of William Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists. But without the machines producing things more efficiently and cheaper, the abolition of slavery would not have stood a chance. Thanks to the machines and the intense lobbying by interest groups, the British Government was forced to pass the law to end slavery in 1834. The apprenticeship system was established under the "Act for the General Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions" commenced on August 1st, 1834. It was supposed to last for five years, ending August 1839. The period was, however, cut short by one year. And thus, on August 1st, 1838, the apprenticeship was officially discontinued in Belize. The "Truck and Advance" system and the vagrancy laws were responsible for continued flights Guatemala.

The questions that deserve urgent answers from the apologists of slavery are:

Why did the British Government pay compensations to those who had benefitted from the enslavement of Africans?

Why did those who suffer intergenerational physical and mental abuse and economic exploitation not receive any compensation?

Despite the volumes of academic theses and books arguing that the slave trade and the institution it supported did not benefit Britain economically, the evidence is conclusive that the institution was partly responsible for the emergence of the modern world economic system called capitalism.

Regarding the issue of reparations, I support it for the simple fact that the precedence that was set by the British Government when it paid compensations to the former owners of the enslaved Africans. I don't think that the amount of 20,000 pounds sterling that the British Government voted "to provide schools and teachers for the apprentices and recommended colonel Cockburn enlist the help of the churches in Belize to carry out the work" was carried out. I am also conflicted in supporting reparations for Belize because the majority of the descendants still believe in the heresy that "Slavery in Belize [was] a Family Affair," that "Slavery only existed in name," and that they are the sons of the Baymen clan. As was the tradition during slavery, the deserve sons of the Baymen clan deserve their inheritance!

For Belize, the evidence from archival records suggests that the Negroes who trekked for more than 200 miles to assemble at the Court House and the church accompanied by bands of music and displayed a variety of gay banners bearing "the sons of Ham respect the memory of Wilberforce." Three very troubling issues arise from Mr. Nelson Shaw's address on the lawn of the Government House on the occasion of the Emancipation Day.

First, it is clear that the Negroes were well acquainted with the biblical account of Ham, the cursed one, as their putative ancestor and the sole reason for their life of eternal hardship and servitude. Second, through the underground network established by "House Negroes," most were always well-informed on current world affairs. Third, the evidence of mental enslavement and reverse racism contained in Schaw's speech still weigh heavily on the shoulders of the generations of the descendants of those who gathered at the lawn of the Government House that day.

The fact that we are doing the same thing on this villainous day saddens me to the core. But again, I am a different species of the human race, of the Negro tribe. I do not celebrate anything that is 'given' to me: no birthdays, no funerals, no festivals, no flag independence. I have learned to unlearn everything the "man" has taught me to honor and to celebrate! I have learned to disrupt, subvert, critique, and dissect contradictions. I am not afraid of eclecticism. I have learned to deploy Marxism and literary criticism as analytic and tools and methods.

Frederick Crowe's comments about the celebration of Emancipation Day is a mixture of sympathy and pain for the Negroes. He observed how "While the ungodly Negroes were celebrating the day in riotous mirth ... the late Slave-holder was probably solacing himself with thoughts of compensation." Among those who received compensations for their loss of the enslaved Africans were the priests of the various churches. It all about money! The institution, which many have argued, was aimed primarily as a civilizing mission was nothing but for the making of maximum profits. The institution which all the popes supported helped to sustain the Mightiest Empire.

The romantic notion that slavery was a family affair in Belize does serious harm to the descendants of the system. The system that was famous in its use of the race card should never get a free pass. Racism and colorism are still actively used as weapons of choice to divide, terrorize, and suppress genuine political movements. Self-hatred based on the color of one's skin is a learned behavior. This inherited tradition is partly responsible for the "black-on-black" violence. The young men who believe that their "race," ethnicity, and color do not matter are suffering from benign neglect. The pseudo-scientific racism, which was engineered by sick-minded people should no longer be allowed in history curriculums. The immoral claims of slavery being a family affair must be destroyed and replaced by a new kind of history that teaches young people the lessons of making bad decisions.

Fanon (1961, 1963, & 1965) examined the nature and character of the twin-evils of colonialism and racism, declared that the descendants of enslaved Africans should have undergone clinical psychoanalysis. Fanon believed the administration of group therapy would have treated the "Negroes" from their disease of self-hatred.

Fanon believed that the "Negro" minds were still suffering from "slave mentalité" and "colonial mentalité." Fanon (1963, p. 178) illustrated by drawing upon the new roles of the native petit bourgeois:

"[The] native bourgeoisie, which has adopted unreservedly and with enthusiasm the ways of thinking characteristic of the mother country [sic], which has become wonderfully detached from its own thought and has based its consciousness upon foundations which are typically foreign, will realize, with its mouth watering [sic], that it lacks something essential to a bourgeois: money."

Fanon's insights and assessment may help illustrate the enormity of "Free Yu Mind" as the theme of this Community Talk.

The tin-pot bourgeois political class has continued to disinherit the underclass that is at the bottom of society. The petit-bourgeois political class has continued to perform the role of gatekeepers and guardians of the neocolonial state. The petit-bourgeois political class has continued to perform the role of agents of imperialism. They have refused to create new institutions and systems based on equity. The petit-bourgeois political class has continued to alienate itself from the underclasses suffering the brunt of exploitation, expropriation, and the extraction of surplus-value.

The redemptive spirits of those who fought with their feet and ran away to find freedom and the fighting spirit of the Bembe women who were in the vanguard of the political movement for political independence should serve as life-sources, as symbols of resistance, and struggle against injustice and inequity.

As a pacifist-humanist, I abhor violence of any kind. I believe that "Free Yu Mind" must be achieved through high-quality education. As is currently practiced, the education system that Belize inherited from the British cannot lead to "Free Yu Mind." The colonial system of education helped to alienate the educated from the uneducated. The colonial education system helped to instill fear of fear, fear of the unknown, fear of the white man, fear of constituted authority, and fear of the responsibility of freedom.

We must not forget that black bodies were stripped of their clothing and sold on the auction block at the Court House in Belize City. The Baymen rented out black bodies to provide income for themselves and their families in Belize and London. The Baymen sold the children they had with black women. Their main aim was to make money and to improve the financial fortunes of white families in Belize and London.

The black bodies that walk half-naked with their pants sagging or falling are the products of centuries of being stripped naked and sold like cattle.

Black bodies are empty shells, empty vases, and empty garbage cans that are filled with safe-hate, self-loathing, negativity, reverse racism, inferiority complex, and invisibility. Black invisibility is not a matter of biochemical accidents to their epidermis. It is the system that has made them invisible!

Black minds are doing what the slave owners and the colonizers designed them to do – self-destruct! Black bodies are empty shells, decorated vases! Black bodies suffer from paralysis. They believe that they are alone and that no one cares. Black minds cannot become productive without the active intervene of the state. Black minds need Free Education. Such intervention will benefit everyone and add value to Belize's economy.

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