

Barack, Tiger and Me is free! Hallelujah

The wasting of human potential is the ultimate crime against humanity. Suppose there was a child that had the potential to cure cancer or solve the energy crisis but the baby was born in a time and place where his/her intellect was not valued. Regardless of this child's capacity to learn, he or she was denied access to education because of the color of its skin. What a waste!

How many extraordinary individuals has the world overlooked and misjudged by adhering to social conventions and prejudices of race and sex? How would the world be different if we had abolished slavery in 1776 when America was born? These ruminations of my mind have little consequence in the real world, so I keep my thoughts to myself. But recently, I've grown wary of the current political climate especially when Governor Robert F. McDonnell of Virginia proclaimed April 2010 as Confederate History Month. Incredibly, he



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omitted the prime reason why Virginia seceded from the Union, slavery.

Slavery represents a shameful chapter in American History. It is understandable why someone would want to redact the history books and white-wash the South's motivation for sustaining an economy based on slave labor. The defense of slavery as a "State's Rights" issue has become indefensible. Most Confederate soldiers did not own slaves, but they fought and gave their lives for the right to own slaves. They fought for the antebellum South's way of life. They fought for something that was morally wrong and ultimately unsustainable.

It is hard to imagine what life was like back then. Today

we live comfortably with our cell phones and computers yet; we question the morals of people long dead. Is that fair? Our ancestors lived in a time before the power of electricity was harnessed. Almost everything produced and manufactured required strenuous manual labor. Life was hard, very hard.

But life was harder on the slave. He could not own anything, he had no rights in a court of law, he was not allowed to read or write, and he was not allowed to marry outside his race. He was considered to be sub-human and not equal to White men. Sadly, millions of slaves died believing the nightmare of slavery would never end. For most Blacks on the North American continent from the 1600s to 1860, the only relief from the cruelties of the American Slavery system was the grave.

Today, America has a Black President! How incredible is that? When Barack Obama was sworn in as 44th President of the United States, African-Americans openly wept. His

victory was a game changer. America and the world would never be the same. His presidency signaled to Blacks that the long nightmare was over. Dr. King's dream had been realized.

I am fortunate to live in this time. But what if I had been born 150 years ago?

Better yet, what if Tiger Woods had been born 150 years ago? Arguably, he is the greatest golfer that has ever lived. Sports commentators say that the 34-year old wunderkind has already become a billionaire! He too, is fortunate to be born during this time, but what if Tiger had been born into slavery? Despite his innate skills, he probably would not have played golf. It is more likely that because of his dark skin he would have been a slave, or at best, a freeman laboring as a servant or tradesman. I doubt that he would have been rich. His supposed cocky attitude would have been beaten out of him. I doubt he would have been allowed to marry his wife. In fact, considering his alleged

predilections for White women, he probably would have been tortured and lynched. And regardless of his self-defined racial identity "Cablinasian", he would have been labeled as a (n-word).

Yes, Barack, Tiger and I are blessed. We are free. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who fought to end slavery. We must remember the sacrifices of the slaves who never experienced freedom but still kept the faith. We must continue to honor the voices that spoke against powerful agents of oppression and exploitation. It is because of these legions of unnamed heroes that African-Americans can reach unimaginable goals today, unfettered.

Let the South be proud of its history. But let's not travel backwards, else we'll trip and fall.

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