

Exacting Social Justice From the United States of America

Velva Boles, MD, PhD

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966 and entered into force 23 March 1976 commits parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals: the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and the right to due process with a fair trial. This document is seminal in the history of international law and human rights, yet social justice has not been *instituted* in the United States of America with regard to the 42.3 million black Americans citizens residing in the USA. There has not been congressional hearings addressing the continued “Jim Crow” tactics steeped with eugenics philosophies overtly perpetrated against black Americans who have served to make America rich (*unpaid servitude for over three hundred years*) and to make America “the land of the free” (*made up 15% of the military in 1812, more than 50% during the VietNam War and currently black Americans make up 16.8 percent of the military but only 12.4 percent of the U.S. population*).

People of the world have asked me how black Americans (descendants of slaves) cope with the stereotypes and negative press put forth by the media within the United States of America and I have no immediate response. America has fallen from its pedestal in the eyes of the world. The ugly underbelly of American politics has been flashed to the world and it is impossible to maintain the allegorical “Wizard of Oz” mightiness while elected high officials spew contempt for leaders of African countries and aspiring leaders contribute to internet sites expressing racial bigotries and personal prejudices. Acts to gain power demonstratively incite a predatory aggressive mentality that becomes dominant and uncontrollable without fear of consequences highlighting that men cannot be made good by the laws of a state or nation.

Social justice must address historical injustices and demand fair and equitable division of economic resources, opportunities for advancement and privileges within society where human rights are respected and discrimination is not allowed to flourish. All facets of social justice must be implemented: distributive (*determining who gets what*), procedural (*asserting fair treatment of people*), retributive (*punishment for wrong-doing*), and restorative (*rehabilitating relationships to "rightness"*). Apologies tendered by elected officials ring hollow without restitution. The responsibility of citizens of all nations is to hold executive leaders to higher standards avoiding hypocrisy and capable of projecting themselves onto the receiving end of their decisions thus ensuring civil co-existence. To date, the U.S. federal government has failed to take action to eradicate the legacy of enslavement. Rather, the violent insurrection at the U.S. capitol on January 6, 2021 has liberated networks of white supremacists and broadened their public presence. Entrenched unequal power structures rooted in racism, tenets of white supremacy, and economic inequality are barriers to meaningful change.

In rectification of anti-literacy laws enacted between 1740 and 1834, by southern states of the United States of America which made it illegal for enslaved and free people-of-color to be taught to read or write, a “good faith effort” to be shown to the descendants of enslaved Africans should begin with the elimination of all student loan debt and “free” tuition for matriculating at all higher learning institutions. Furthermore, descendants of enslaved Africans should not be obliged to pay individual income tax as specified by the internal revenue service in the United States since enslaved Africans were “managed” as economic commodities for wealth growth of the nation. In 1860, the economic value of the 4 million enslaved Africans, as traded on the stock market, was \$4 billion which was greater than the value of all the banks, railroads and factories in the United States at the time making the slave market a major wealth generator. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln created a Commissioner of Internal Revenue and the nation's first income tax as a revenue-raising measure to help pay for Civil War expenses. Individual income tax was initialized when Congress passed the 16th Amendment ratified February 3, 1913.

In March 2023, during the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a call to advance the global anti-racial discrimination agenda through the implementation of the the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), the UN's blueprint to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance globally was sounded. This ideology must confess that “race” is a social tool with which broad brush strokes label persons of color as perpetrators of crime, inhabitants of poverty and reservoirs of illiteracy forcing black descendents of enslaved people to struggle over stumbling blocks that were put in place to impede meaningful progress so that the ambitious black person accumulates failures without known cause and disappointments without explanations until zealous enthusiasm becomes wasted talent and collected apathy.

How can the United States proclaim freedom for others around the world and oppress and persecute black Americans daily? Why does the world stand idle when the United States judges other nations and silence the voices of the maligned and persecuted within its own borders?