

Messages from the Mound



In 2007, I began my prison ministry where I facilitated my Relationship First Aid spiritual based personal development classes at Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit. After Mound closed in 2012, I continued to communicate with the inmates through newsletters, birthday cards and attending/speaking at events at various facilities. It is suspected that the facility got its name because of the many ancient mounds that were found all over Detroit, and I believe the most concentrated and/largest ones were along what is now known as Mound Rd.

"Messages from the Mound" is named after the newsletters that I send out to the inmates since that is where we all initially met. Because the classes that I was teaching them focused on spiritual elevation allowing the negativity within them to die, thus ultimately elevating their consciousness, I thought it an appropriate name because a "mound" is defined as: an "elevation" formed of earth overlying ruins, a grave etc., a heap or raised mass. The following articles are from men that are currently incarcerated or released and this serves as an opportunity for the voiceless to have a voice. If you have a loved one that is currently incarcerated and would like for me to send them newsletters, please forward their contact information with a MDOC number to: Relationshipfirstaid@yahoo.com or contact me at: Relationship First Aid, Attn: Ma'at Seba, P.O. Box 1934, Belleville, MI. 48112 cashapp Donations to: #moundministry

Is Juneteenth really for us?

By Deon Dawson
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

What to the Black carceral captive is Juneteenth? Abolitionist & orator Frederick Douglas asked this question relative to the Fourth of July in 1852, answering "a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham." These sentiments must not be lost on Blacks in America today, especially its applicability to Black prisoners caged within state and federal dungeons.

Nearly 3,500 convicts have been exonerated for crimes, predominantly murders, for which they have been proven actually innocent following wrongful convictions, serving on average 25 years in a cell. 72% of these wrongful convictions resulted from official misconduct at the hands of police officers and prosecutors sworn to uphold the constitution and do justice. Instead, they systematically deal injustice to innocent men and women in order to advance their selfish career goals in pursuit of recognition, higher salaries, and political ambitions. As Susan Rosenberg once said, our life means shit, and our freedom nothing at all to these people.

These intentional travesties of justice cannot be divorced from the roots which it springs, as its face resembles the seeds which birth it, the chattel slavery of Afrikans.

Afrikans were violently kidnapped and held captive for centuries for the sole purpose of subjecting us to forced labor so the white world could accumulate wealth from the extraction of massive surplus capital from slave labor. Since the ascension of their global dominance, the Black body has served a singular purpose for the white world: commoditization. Our object-subjectivity as commodities has historically manifested as hyper-exploitation, the survival of which produced hyper-surveillance and the control of the population by slave patrols, the origins of the modern police force.

Today the Black body is commoditized through perpetual patrol, surveillance and control by way of carceral captivity. Judges have received millions for imposing prison sentences at the behest of corporate capitalist private prison industries. Career politicians use tough on crime rhetoric in order to extort the state tax coffers for personal financial gain, and police departments propagandize law and order and the need for funding to disappear ever more Black

bodies after sensationalizing violent crime with the aid of news media. This has led to America becoming the incarceration nation, but its genes, its DNA is founded in productive-propertyed slavery.

Y'all's president, sleepy Joe Biden, in a stroke of statecraft genius, signed a January 17, 2021 bill establishing June 19th as Juneteenth National Independence Day. This holiday not only distorts the historical truth that Blacks have never been afforded independence of any kind in this country, nor did Juneteenth mark the freedom of the last slaves, as slavery was not only still practiced in the Confederate South after its outlaw in the 11 southern states that fought to secede from the Union, but slavery remained legal in all the Union states, most notably New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and yes, Washington D.C. So Juneteenth celebrations are as much as a sham as the Fourth of July was for slaves. And to add insult to injury, it was established as a holiday during the height of anti-police protest following the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, used by white power as a token that functioned to stem the tide of calls for abolition of the police. In addition, the commoditization of Blackness will be on full display as racialized surplus populations will target slave descendants across class for capitalist exploitation with the production of Juneteenth products, the sale of food for festivals, and the renting of venues for celebratory events. Yeap! Blacks' have again been had, bamboozled, hoodwinked.

There can be no freedom for Blacks when, as Angela Davis wrote: "the punishment industry is the punitive solution for a whole range of social problems that are not being addressed by the social institutions put in place to help people live better lives." Instead, the state blames Black victims for poor communal conditions it has created through policies, and penalizes us by imprisoning the homeless, jobless and the hopeless under the logic that disproportionately disappearing Blacks would result in the disappearance of the social conditions we represent.

Notwithstanding, we are supposed to celebrate this contemporary brand of second-class citizenship under the guise of freedom and independence, when in reality we're terrorized by the white American structure, and driven deeper into poverty due to capitalist political-economy, engendering in the self-perpetuating inter-violence among us? Blacks must reject Juneteenth

How many seasons do you have left?

By Charles Sibert
SPECIAL TO THE SUN



During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic the question was posed to me by a friend and fellow prisoner, "Have you ever asked yourself how many seasons do you have left in this life?"

The question shook my foundation, I'd been living life somewhat carefree, concerned more about others than myself. No one has ever asked me a question of that magnitude. Sure I've been asked what kind of vehicle I want, what my queen will look

like, where I want to live, what field will I work in, do I want children, etc. But those questions posed to a dead man are fantasies. They are dreams that keep the condemned alive.

I've been conditioned to believe that I would die in prison since I entered it's 1988. Now the doorstep this feeling encing can't single word. come to fear, joy, anticipation. changed tre- the past 34 that I'm challenge, will tell.

Everyone see if I be a better man-sized when I entered world of the my friend would've asked me back then "How many seasons do I have left?" I probably would've said at least 50 years! You figure 50 years added to my then 19, would've put me at a preserved 69. Now I wonder if society has forgiven me for the pain, the hurt, what I've taken from it? It's only after years of incarceration, personal loss, pain and suffering does the average prisoner learn about all of the harm they've caused their victims, the community and their own loved ones.

For the family I have remaining, how do they truly feel about my return and remaining seasons? I'm sure some may be apprehensive towards my homecoming, while the rest may be expecting greatness. I say apprehensive because they've seen this picture before, I've had uncles and cousins on both sides of my family return from the belly of the beast. Hell, my father was once a resident of the state. For the ones expecting greatness, I'll make room for them in the endeavors I create.

Does anyone ever have enough seasons left? "He who gave thee life as a blessing, shortened it to make it more so." Two years ago, I told Jerome-X, "About 25 years!" That was my answer to his question. If someone was to pose that question to me today, I would tell them I don't know, but my remaining seasons won't be squandered away!



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is waiting to turned out to man than the boy I was tered the convicted. If

Heed positive lessons

By Toby R. Davis
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

My positive acronym for L-I-F-E is: Lessons Improve Future Experiences.

Through life we all encounter certain lessons as life consist of a series of decisions we make each and every day. Some of which are good and some of which are bad. The bad ones are ALWAYS attached to some of the BIGGEST LESSONS that we can learn and grow from as we continue to travel on this journey called life. When we take the time to analyze our bad experiences in life being ever mindful that lessons are there to take heed to, we begin to grow more prudently and gain insight. If you're not learning from your mistakes, then you're bound to repeat them.

Ideally, you should never pay twice for one mistake! !

A comrade of mine nicknamed Tiger once told me a story about his 2-year-old son who was

in the kitchen with him as he cooked dinner. His son who just learn to walk would always reach up at the top of the stove. Repeatedly he'd always hit his hand away and tell him "Don't touch...it's hot." So a while later, his son crept back over by the stove and while his father wasn't paying attention, he reached up and touched the stove. By the time he noticed him by the stove, his son was rubbing his little fingers and yelling the word "Hot! Hot! Hot!" We both laughed knowing very well that his son had learnt a valuable lesson about touching hot stoves!

Unfortunately, some of us have to learn the hard way, but experience is the best teacher. There's an old Chinese proverb that says: "What you learn in the presence of water is different than what you'll learn in the presence of fire." Learning hard lessons doesn't make you stupid; unless you refuse to grow from them.

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE, A VOICE, AND SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE.