

# The Pain of History

BY CHARLES CHATMON

There is a statement made by our "modern" society that we should forget American slavery, that whatever happened in the past should remain there. It has no effect or impact on us today. If that is so, then my argument is why can't we learn from it—that "particular institution"—so that it may never emerge again in the form of a policy, a document or even a thought. What the naysayers fail to comprehend is that slavery in America did indeed happen in the past, yet the past is a part of history. The popular saying that "those who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it" goes without question. Therefore, this subject deserves the right as any part of history, to be analyzed, criticized, and, if the individual chooses to do so, internalized for his or her benefit.

American slavery needs to be discussed with calm voices of reason, not with those of fear and rage. We must look at it in its proper context as an evil financial institution that violated both the laws of God and man. The Creator has given us the right to enjoy life more abundantly whether we be bonded or free; it goes against our American creed of the pursuit of happiness and prosperity, the right to raise a good family. These are painful wrongdoings not bounded by law, for slavery allowed these moral laws to be violated. Yes, slavery was unpleasant, and most people would rather not talk about it or defer the conversation to their own ancestral injustices (i.e., individuals of another ethnic background not affected by slavery claim their ancestors suffered equal or worse treatment than the race of the slaves affected).

African Americans are passionate because it is a topic that hits close to home, but those who seek answers and positive solutions will just be as passionate in a constructive manner. If the truth be told, perhaps in discussing the suffering of one race, some good may come from our conversations, but only if we take that bold step of removing that cancer which has eaten at our core of consciousness for so long. If America is truly the land of the free and the home of the brave, then this part of history should never be avoided. It should be tackled head on by those individuals who really want to move on, not by those who sway the multitude into believing this part of history never occurred or was not as bad as it seems. Hopefully someday, America will find the answer and it will be convinced it is free of the pain of history before it's too late.

## Are You Better Off....?

BY CHARLES L. CHATMON

Now that we're entering the final weeks of the 2004 presidential election, no doubt you'll hear the candidates for the position lay out their agendas in the event they are chosen. One candidate will boast about his record in office, while the other will discuss his military background and Congress. No matter who you vote for—and you should vote—one basic question remains: Are you better off than four years ago?

The late President Reagan posed that very same question to the public back in 1980 and it got him elected. The Iran Hostage Crisis among other social issues was the albatross around then incumbent President Carter's neck. We have in the present day two Wars on Terrorism, yet domestically all seems well...for now.

As you go to the polls in November, let's recap the past four years. First we have the tragedy of

then we focus our attention on a country we fought more than a decade ago (Iraq) claiming this country had Weapons of Mass Destruction and start a war with them as well. All the while, jobs were lost, poverty rose and countless lives lost in battle fill coffins with American flags draped over them, with the body count rising weekly. All this at the cost of a war we're paying for with jobs that should be created here in the United States, going overseas to the country we're "liberating." The prime suspect of 9/11 still hasn't been found, nor has our military uncovered the Weapons of Mass Destruction, which was supposed to be the sole reason we warred with Iraq to begin with.

It would seem our incumbent president should pay attention to his actions of the past four years rather than him and those of his political party accusing his challenger of "waffling" on the issues, but I digress.

than before?" "Will I have a job to support my family?" "Can I afford health care?" and so on. More important questions you should ask are, "Will my child have a decent education or should I fear for their safety out in the streets?" "Will I feel safer from terrorism or will my liberties be suppressed due to the Patriot Act?" Now is the proper time to answer these questions for yourself by choosing the candidate best for you, because later on, he will answer them for you and you may not like the result. So this election year, it really does matter what the past four years have meant to you. Not just you personally, but what have they meant to your family, your children and your community. That's something to think about as you go to the polls. However, you should also ask yourself the best question of all, will you be better off four years from now?

That's a question we should think about often.

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