

Reflections

Bre Jour

(Writing the History of) Race in America

I took out
My pen to begin
Writing the history of race in America
And every line I wrote
In black ink
Was erased and replaced with
White letters
So, I started over
This time with my own blood
I carved my lineage into
My flesh and dipped the tip of a feathered stem through my veins
Slowly brushing the page with my pain and rage
And every curve of every calligraphed line
Was white washed and turned against me
I rose up from the ashes again and again
Carrying my stories and my ancestors with me
Calling out to them that ran, those who fought, and they that protested against the system that is this
Republic
Kidnapped and traded -counted as less than a man or woman or child
Shipped as live cargo across the Atlantic to the Americas
Separated and sold separately- culture and language not included
Renamed and whipped into submission
Born and bred into captivity creating a new collective identity - for survival
So- I took out my pen to begin writing the history of race in America
And the sweat from my brow dripped onto the sheets of paper that lay at my desk and burned my eyes
My vision blurred and all I could see was the shadows of strange fruit hanging from trees
My ears rang with the pounding of boots crushing the earth- the weight of the emancipation bending,
stretching, giving some way but never breaking
Evolving into the hydra that is racism

*Commissioned for Matthew Pigatt, Opa-Locka, FL

Out of Africa

Uncivilized?

We who began the age of man with mathematics and astrology

Mapped out a world for discovery

Every being who looks like (you and) me were the first to create human history

Out of Africa 200,000 years ago, the timeline of civilization began

And the small percentage of what we acknowledge

Is what those who sought out colonization, as a means of domination left behind

For us to compartmentalize through assimilation

And there exists the idea that the true founders were

Uncivilized?

We who erected pyramids on nearly every continent

Mastered the architecture, revered our gods with permanent temples

Every being who looked like (you and) me perfected our agriculture

Advanced our societal structures, built nations on civil and social order

Maintained our own histories and documented legacies in codices and murals

Oral traditions handed down from generation to generation

Written languages found on faded papyrus

And the idea persists that the true founders were

Uncivilized?

We who carry the gene of Eve

The matrilineal ancestor of all human beings

From every corner of this known earth it is from that strand our existence was birthed

Sumerians, Egyptians, Indus, and Chinese

Aegean, Roman, Nubian, and Mesoamerican- she is

Alive and living in us; as was in the founders of civilization

These were people who looked like (you and) me

So, on what basis do we believe that they were

Uncivilized?

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Maafa

There is a pattern of historical inaccuracy- which succumbs to the idea of discovery. Whereas, they, who encountered a nation of natives would come to destroy the empires that welcomed them- to trade and exchange resources for wealth.

The indigenous unknowingly compromised their freedom, their culture, their health. These explorers of the "New World" invaded and renamed lands and territories, claiming sovereignty under European crowns. And when they could not overcome dynasties long held,

they starved and drugged yellow and brown citizens under the guise of good will. Implementing a foreign education and religious system that capitalized on a theory of evolution. Leading them to believe that as conquerors they were supreme.

Yet, it seemed that even as they spread *that* disease through manipulation and greed, the people and tribes rebelled. The reward for noncompliance came in the form of violence- massacred, dehumanized, enslaved- brother turned against brother; bribed through false power structures and old rivalries.

The practice of free labor for profit became the global norm as black bodies were chained, sold, and deformed. Worked from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same. Disconnected from a homeland, a history, kinship. While the contest for freedom, then equality, then reparation became a game.

What's left is a continent that continues to be pillaged. Its history a combination of distortion and neglect. Its lineage erupting across the globe. Maafa was then and is now. And if we believe in Sankofa then what is left to be seen is between you and me.

To correct the historical inaccuracies. To recognize the generational beneficiaries whether what is inherited is prosperity or poverty. We remember and weep for the great the loss of one group. And our eyes hold dry in comparison to the others.

Why?

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