

Solomon, in his autobiography *Twelve Years a Slave*, repeatedly mentions his longing and love of family. Enslaved Africans, experienced extreme hardship and sacrifice attempting to locate their loved ones – names changed, wives, husbands, children didn't know which direction their significant others went. Babies were named by Master or re-sold and re-named by their *new* master **yet** one of the first things individuals did for decades after slavery in the ear of Jim Crow, was look for their relatives, family, and children slaves and free Africans alike continued to search for their families desperately trying to reconnect.

For instance Solomon's name was changed to **Platt Hamilton** as exhibited on the brig Orleans Manifest which now rests at the National Archives. The value of one (1) slave by today's standard is approximately \$47,000. Imagine what that means in human capital when there were approximately 4 million enslaved Africans in the States alone not including Central and South America. Most of you know that many of the foods we enjoy today were brought here from African. In Fact, the wealth of an entire nation we enjoy today was built on the blood, labor, tears, and prayers of a people removed.

Black men, not being considered suitable for combat, risked their lives in every war this country has ever fought beginning with the **Revolutionary War** – they enlisted always trying to prove themselves worthy of citizenship. Always on the cusp of full inclusion.

We celebrate Solomon Northup's struggle and triumph and those of many other ancestors but how relevant is this '*knowing*' if we fail to use it to advance our democracy? [pause] to move beyond asking for equality, complaining and begging for acceptance and constantly defending ourselves to those who already know better. With few exceptions, everyone in this country and the world now knows the legacy of American slavery and still racism persists today more than 100 years later.

We volunteer endlessly in our communities, care for our families under the most severe circumstances, vote in elections, educate ourselves like no other time in history, but still we haven't learned what that means – what that sacrifice was made for -- how we may use it to our advantage?

This year in particular, thanks to video and a vigorous media culture, we watched people in our community picked off one by one. If you are Black and walk by yourself you are **a target** plain and simple regardless of whether or not you live in an affluent neighborhood. Clergy, politicians, community leaders – we've got to do better than this [pause] because if we don't a troubled impressionable young man, who is able to get his hands on a weapon, might just be brainwashed into thinking Black folks are his problem and people will die while worshipping in church one morning.

In the black community we have become consumers, actors and reactors – we consume with a vengeance in a system that holds us with disdain and fail to act when we should. There remain many unanswered questions: **But how do we assure our safety? How should we display the self-esteem so necessary to impart to the next generation?**

Do we **react** when others within our community have pressing needs?

Are we available for that ride to the store, that trip to the doctor, pick up that child from daycare for a working mother, vouch for each other when it counts, give a ride to someone who's walking, shovel the walkway for someone who can't, speak proud about them to someone else when they aren't within ear shot, take initiative to alert someone to an employment opportunity in a timely manner, pay for summer camp for a deserving youth whose family can't afford it, tutor someone who can't read because they slipped through the cracks in a dysfunctional educational system, apprentice someone? What is our connectedness today 150 years after Ann Hampton's sacrifice and the sacrifice of all those who fought the battle for freedom?

Drowned in a sea of superficiality, the cost of star gazing, keeping up with the Kardashians, shopping sprees for the latest designer outfit, another weave and getting lost in the abyss of mainstream news obsession with Hollywood and the availability of hate websites – have cost us the minds of our children. And for those 'successful' negroes – well -- we're moving on up – and out of the neighborhood, leaving behind those 'others' to fend for themselves; *throwaways* that look just like us. Take Washington, DC for instance, -- if you move from the 'hood' – just wait a minute – it will become prime property and you will pay an ever increasing subway fare and gas to come back into the neighborhood you left.

Yet we continue the age old dialogue on race ad-nauseam – when the time for talk has come and gone and in America we continue to use **Cognitive Dissonance to justify what we already know to be a lie.**

Do we understand what it's going to take to turn around what is a rapidly spiraling descent to the bottom? -- a bottom that our ancestors already worked too hard to move us up from.

Voting is a tool for change in America, but is voting the total answer? – What about the policies of insurance companies, banks, lending institutions and other agents of institutional racism that persist and dominate? What are we to do about those things?

Newly freed people searched and sought out one another just to survive in the **Jim Crow era**, but do we still have that collective memory, do we honor that collective memory today through our actions?

A segment of the community feels they've "*arrived*" and now class has entered into the equation -- so it's every man for themselves. **Some** Black folk look down their nose at the people in the community who continue to struggle and it is that attitude that inhibits our movement forward as a whole. Many seem to equate "*having arrived*" with getting as far away from other Black people as they can get.

Others are lifting boulders to try to find a reason to criticize the first Black President of the United States in order to prove that they've become so far removed from their former "Blackness" that they feel comfortable attacking he and his wife – *his wife being in some ways the most significant part of the equation. Today having a Black First Lady at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave –when historically she was 'mammie' feeding master's babies at her breast just over a century ago ---- a woman still not considered on par with white women in too many ways – is historic and immeasurable.*

But the question remains, have we done all that we can for each other?

What of neighborhood gardens, health and legal centers, grocery stores, banks, What about lobbying for quality neighborhood police that interact with and know the people they are policing, with requirements

for re-training, re-education and stringent psychological testing? Can our churches use some of those tithes to stimulate entrepreneurship within their communities and make sure our young people have constructive engagement and work.

It is time for **the foot soldiers of God**, to do more than become occupied obtaining a new jet for their pastor but to become politically engaged and immersed in their neighborhoods, constructive engagement for youth, day care for working mothers, and other critical needs -- inter-denominationally on a national scale. But these are not novel ideas.

Let's consider this for a moment, the Black community controls **\$1.1 Trillion** - equal to Germany, the third richest nation in the world, and yet only 2 cents of every dollar an African American spends in this country goes to black owned businesses. I believe we can show our strength not by marching and begging but by controlling how we spend that \$1.1 Trillion dollars -- thereby, affecting necessary systemic and institutional change.

At what point are we going to change the paradigm from marching and begging to one that builds upon a foundation of strength and resilience, [pause] one that is in **full** support of one another?

It states in **John 8:39**, "***They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham"***"

A global society has responsibilities and today in America we are in need of a moral movement built on courage, a revival of dissent on all sides by all races and all denominations, putting our bodies on the line. What we show our children -- the values we set for them - is where our future is headed. [stop] *Speech for 7/18/2015, R. Moore.. www.solomonnorthupday.com*