**Obama Devalues the Legacy of Slavery**

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There is nothing more disturbing and frustrating than to see the legacy of blacks and slavery evoked incorrectly or to see someone using it for cheap PR point and demean its importance. But when it is the president of the US doing it against people of an African nation on a global stage it is outright shameful.

In a speech at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), President Barack Obama raised the issue of human trafficking as a scourge that needs serious global attention. In his speech, President Obama likened the current global human trafficking situation to slavery. President Obama said that he does not evoke the word slavery lightly but to underscore the importance his administration places on human trafficking he is compelled to do so.

Human trafficking presents great challenges to humanity and is a subject that requires urgent attention. However, President Obama’s attention to it is dubious, ill hearted and misleading designed to evoke actions against targeted nations. President Obama said,

“I recently renewed sanctions on some of the worst abusers, including North Korea and Eritrea. We’re partnering with groups that help women and children escape from the grip of their abusers. We’re helping other countries step up their own efforts.”

President Obama is a legal scholar that understands the laws. Moreover, President Obama took his family to the coasts of Ghana on a tour to understand the legacy of slavery. As an Eritrean African American, it offended my sensibilities for American president to throw a statement of this magnitude and sally the image of people and nation for political expediency. It is outright blasphemy and wrong.

President Obama has used democracy, terrorism and humanitarian causes to further his interventionist agendas in many parts around the globe particularly Africa. This is the first time he evoked slavery.

It is outrageous to demean good humanitarian causes by using it pursuit of geopolitical agendas unrelated to the causes. It is also bad for the US long term because it keeps stripping away any moral high ground on related causes thus strip its leadership role.

President Obama’s mention of Eritrea has nothing to do with human trafficking. The sanction he mentioned are based on fabricated grounds. The US has targeted Eritrea for a long time. The Bush administration tried very hard to place Eritrea on the List of Countries that Support Terrorism and the late Congressman Donald Payne stopped them for it was groundless. In 2009, on Christmas Eve US ambassador to the UN Ambassador Susan Rice pressured a sanction measure against Eritrea and placed an arms embargo and denied Eritrea the right to self-defense based on fabrication and by creating unfounded connection between Eritrea and a militant group in Somalia. Tens of thousands of Eritreans came out to express their outrage against Obama’s decisions. In 2011, they fabricated yet another story this time relating it to Djibouti based on fabrication in the most lopsided process making a mockery of the UN.

There is no government-sanctioned slave trade in Eritrea. There is no slavery in Eritrea. Furthermore, President Obama has never been to Eritrea. But, if he is to take his family to Massawa the port city of Eritrea, he will not find Cape Coast Castle; he will see beautiful pristine beaches populated by Eritreans from every corner around the globe. President Obama will not see the legacy of slavery as he saw in Ghana. Instead, he will see a legacy of Eritrean gallantry unmatched by any. He will see a country reeling from colonialism, World War II and, Cold War legacies that debilitated the country. He will see Eritreans rebuilding their infrastructures and rehabilitating communities that were devastated by decades of US sponsored hardships. He will see Africans that have taken ownership of their destiny.

The human trafficking President Obama is referring to is not unique to Eritrea. To single out Eritrea is wrong because it diminishes the cause and overlooks the millions displaced and seeking refugee escaping from brutality by regimes the Obama Administration props up. If the Obama Administration truly wants to address human trafficking all he has to do is encourage the people of Africa to build their countries and, encourage the youth to remain in their countries by educational exchange programs, economic and cultural cooperation and bring the people close to Americans genuinely. If President Obama wants to curb on human trafficking genuinely he needs to stop his hyper-aggressive Africa policy that is terrorizing Africans and work for justice, stability and economic stability of the region.

It is wrong for President Obama to use slavery as a cause celebre to further his aggressive Africa agenda. When one talks of slavery, the thoughts that come up are the hundreds of thousands traded in the Port of Alexandria, the men, women and children torn apart from their families hunted by White slave traders. What President Obama is doing should outrage Black Historians and Blacks all over. President Obama would not dare compare anything to the Holocaust but he concluded that the Eritrean American communities in the US will not be a threat to his election bid so decided to brazenly mention in passing and incriminated a nation and people brazenly.

Human rights, freedom and democracy are not values espoused by the West only and should not be exploited for political expediency.

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