

The Death of Wakanda: The Impact of Chattel Slavery on the Advancement of the Descendants of the African Enslaved

by

Bennie W. Baker

The fictitious nation of Wakanda is pictured in the movie *Black Panther* as a geographic location somewhere in Africa. Its resources were vaster than any other geographic location on earth. Its people were smarter, stronger, and more progressive. Its technological capacity was second to none. Needless to say, Wakanda was a jewel. To protect their systems, education, political, sociological, economic, as well as their very manner of life, the source of their power and status, vibranium, was to be concealed from the outside world. Thus, the very existence of the nation itself was clandestine.

The secret land of Wakanda could be fantasized by the readers of the 1966 comic as what might have been, even as a way of escaping what was. Janken (Janken 2010) recalls the violence and turmoil of the 1960s, a time of vivid imagery capturing racial hostility, mob and police violence against blacks and worse. The creators may have used their talents for producing imaginary worlds as a method to provide an escape from the reality of their readers' present world through various Marvel Comic products. However, the relevance of Wakanda possibly spoke to one audience while the wonder of it entertained another. It spoke to those who were subject to racial discrimination, brutal race-based violence and intimidation, and the continued unjust enforcement of Jim Crow laws as a reminder that the dream of Wakanda had been stolen.

There was a time and a place where the concept of a Wakanda was alive in the dreams and ambitions of the people of Africa. It was not only alive in their dreams but was attainable since the land was so rich in resources. Pheko (Pheko 2016) rightly observed that Africa is the home of most minerals that could be found in any other area of the world such as chrome, gold, diamonds, iron, uranium, vanadium, cobalt, oil, platinum, and the list goes on. This was an opportunity that European countries seized. According to Davidson (Davidson, 1980) southern Africa was stable when Europe was beginning to thrive. They took advantage of this stability to seize upon Africa's resources to support their fast growth. This was the pre-colonized Africa.

Many nations around the world rely upon the riches of Africa to sustain their economies, including the United States. Schaefer (Schaefer, 2006) claims that the United States relies on the resources of Africa for both economic and security purposes, and that this reliance is projected to increase in the coming years. Maddox (Maddox, 2018) attributes the map of modern day Africa to the impact of colonialism.

He explains that its very societies were altered from every perspective, political, economic, as well as social, due to the forced integration into the world's economy. Hiribarren (Hiribarren 2015) outlined the dependence of much of the world on Africa's resources and stated that the plunder of South Africa began in the nineteenth century when outsiders came into the interior for its mineral resources. Martiniano et al. (Martiniano, et al. 2015) would disagree and state that the plunder started in the fifteenth century when Africa's greatest resource was taken and sold as slaves. This is when the land rich in tradition, resources and people was discovered, uncovered, deconstructed and pillaged. It was then that Wakanda began a slow death and its Black Panther was taken captive and sold time and time again.

Africa's education system, according to Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-JaJa (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-JaJa 2011), has made very little impact on its citizens. In fact, they (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-JaJa 2011) state that Africa has the highest illiteracy rate in the world. Thus, the system that educated kings and pharaohs is a shadow of the one in Wakanda that educated royalty. Yet even education is incapable of resuscitating it.

In conclusion, the *Black Panther* comic book was released in 1966 during one of the most racially volatile periods in the history of the US. The land the comic book created, Wakanda, was free, but typifies a subdued land that seemingly will never be released. Its resources are too vast; its people too beautiful; its contributions too necessary. Wakanda has died and its king has been sold a thousand times to bring beauty to the world beyond its shores. The denigration of education for the African in Africa prohibits the possibility of becoming Wakanda, the bastion of intellect and ingenuity. Africa could have been what Wakanda was created to be. It had all the pieces in place, unfortunately its power and promise were interrupted by the exportation of millions of its people. The dream, the hope, the concept of Wakanda, is dead.

Bibliography

Anderson, Reynaldo. 2012. "Molefi Kete Asante: The Afrocentric Idea and the Cultural Turn in Intercultural Communication Studies." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (6): 760-769. Accessed May 14, 2018. <https://sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147176712001010>.

Babaci-Wilhite, Zehlia, and Macleans A. Geo-JaJa. 2011. "A Critique and Rethink of 'Modern Education' in Africa's Development in the 21st Century." Accessed May 16, 2018. <http://africabib.org/rec.php?rid=357094611&db=p>.

Davidson, Basil. *The African Slave Trade*. Back Bay Books, 1980.

- Hiribarren, Vincent. 2015. "Tom Burgis, The Looting Machine: Warlords, Tycoons, Smugglers and the Systematic Theft of Africa's Wealth." *Afrique contemporaine* 255 (3): 145-147. Accessed May 15, 2018. https://cairn-int.info/article-e_afco_255_0153--tom-burgis-the-looting-machine.htm.
- Janken, Kenneth R. "The Civil Rights Movement: 1919-1960s." *Freedom's Story*, TeacherServe (2010).
- Lovejoy, Paul E. 2011. *Transformations in Slavery: Notes*. Accessed May 14, 2018. <http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ref/id/cbo9781139014946a024>.
- Maddox, Gregory. *Conquest and Resistance to Colonialism in Africa*. Routledge, 2018.
- Magubane, Bernard. 1973. "On Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa." *Ufahamu* 3 (3). Accessed May 14, 2018. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1w99x2h9>.
- Martiniano, Rui, Catarina Coelho, Maria Teresa Ferreira, Maria João Neves, Ron Pinhasi, and Daniel G. Bradley. 2015. "Genetic Evidence of African Slavery at the Beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." *Scientific Reports* 4 (1): 5994-5994. Accessed May 15, 2018. <http://nature.com/articles/srep05994>.
- Pheko, Motsoko. 2016. "Pan Africanism: The Road to Africa's Security." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 9 (4): 391. Accessed May 15, 2018. <https://questia.com/library/journal/1p3-4155416731/pan-africanism-the-road-to-africa-s-security>.
- Rodney, Walter. 1972. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. East African Publishers.
- Schaefer, Brett D. "America's Growing Reliance on African Energy Resources." *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* 1944 (2006): 8-9.

Bennie W. Baker, MA (Liberty University, MPA University of Texas-Arlington), has been an instructor of Criminal Justice, Forensics, American Government. He has given presentations across the United States, in addition to Meteti, Panama, and Bogata, Colombia.