

# Something Old, Something New

## The Criminal Enslavement of 500,000 Black Colonials and Afrofuturism in the 21st Century

Larry Kenneth Alexander, Founder and President  
Ida B. Wells Center on American Exceptionalism  
and Restorative Justice

Dr. Walter D. Greason, Dewitt Wallace Professor of History  
Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

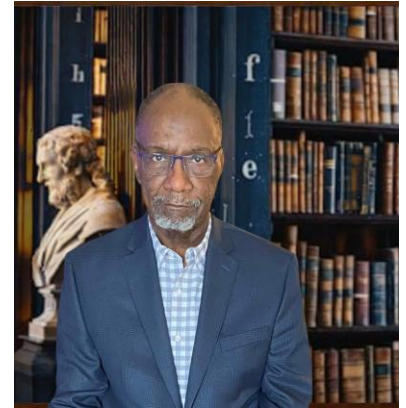
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# Afrofuturism, Law, and the Rediscovery of America's Origin Story

Larry Kenneth Alexander, Founder and President  
Ida B. Wells Center on American Exceptionalism and Restorative Justice

Larry Kenneth Alexander is a St. Paul, Minnesota-based author whose work focuses on cultural theory, history, and justice, particularly concerning the roots of racial inequality in America. He is a proponent of Afrofuturism, offering a "speculative and justice-driven reimagining of Black futures". His research explores how the enslavement of Black colonists after the Treaty of Paris formed a crucial part of the American economy and history, a concept he discusses in his books and presentations. He is an advocate against cultural amnesia and anti-intellectual elitism within America's social and political fabric. He founded the Ida B. Wells Center on American Exceptionalism and Restorative Justice, an organization dedicated to exploring and addressing systemic issues related to race and justice.



Dr. Walter D. Greason, Dewitt Wallace Professor of History  
Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

Dr. Walter Greason is the founding scholar and historian of Afrofuturist Design. He is an author, editor, and contributor to more than twenty books, mostly notably the award-winning books *Suburban Erasure*, *Ilmatic Consequences*, *The Black Reparations Project*, and *The Graphic History of Hip Hop*. His work on the Timothy Thomas Fortune Cultural Center has garnered international acclaim for the innovative use of digital technology, leading to multiple urban revitalization projects in Minnesota, Florida, New Jersey, and Louisiana. He appeared on dozens of mass media outlets in the United States and around the world.



# Roots and Legacy: Looking Backward to Move Forward

Grandmother's father was born enslaved in Tipton County, TN 1862



Family endured sharecropping and Jim Crow South



First in family to graduate from college



Tenth-generation Black American



'Looking backward to move forward' – personal, moral, historical imperative

# Setting the Record Straight

**Claim that U.S. inherited slavery from Britain is ahistorical**

**Parliament nullified colonial slave codes in 1766**

**Afro-English colonials legally free under English law**

Magna Carta 1215

English Bill of Rights 1689

American Colonies Act 1766

Somerset 1772

Treaty of Paris 1783

# Key English Legal Case Opinions



- **Rex v. Staphylton (1771):** 'Being black will not prove the property'
- **Presumption of liberty**
- **Jury found Staphylton guilty**

## SOMERSET V STEWART

In 1772, William Murray, Chief Justice and Earl of Mansfield, ruled it was unlawful to transport James Somerset, an enslaved African, forcibly out of England.



- **Somerset v. Stewart (1772):** slavery 'so odious' needs positive law



- **Mansfield:** freedom was presumption, slavery exception



# Parliamentary Sovereignty

- Rooted in the English Bill of Rights (1689); Habeas corpus & liberty for 'all subjects'
- A.V. Dicey: Parliament can make/unmake any law
- No substantive limits except public opinion
- Colonial assemblies were subordinate
- Parliamentary supremacy → colonial slave laws 'null & void'

# Colonial Slave Codes



Always extralegal: lacked lawful authority



Contravened English Bill of Rights (1689) protections



American Colonies Act (1766): repugnant laws 'null and void'



Slavery void ab initio

# Treaty of Paris (1783)

- **Article VII: all persons 'set at liberty'**
  - **General Carleton recognized Black colonials as free**
- 
- **Article IX: dispute resolution mechanism**
  - **Washington vowed to prevent removal**
- 
- **Congress refused to act, denying due process**
  - **Only 3,000 left for freedom; 500,000 remained enslaved**



**Sir Guy Carleton**




# Consciousness of Guilt

- Washington admitted treaty dispute existed
- Acknowledged Britain's lawful position
- Still vowed to block liberation; 'I stand ready, at all costs...'
- Meets evidentiary standard of *mens rea*: knowledge + intent to obstruct



# Carleton vs. Washington (1783)

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- **Carleton: prepared to repatriate Black colonials**
  - **Britain: compensation if treaty breach**
  - **Created registries: 'Book of Negroes'**
  - **Washington admitted knowledge and intent to obstruct**

# International Dispute

**Declaration of Independence (1776):** Internationalized colonial disputes; proclaimed universal liberty.

**Treaty of Paris (1783, Art. I):** Britain relinquished sovereignty → Jan. 14, 1784.

**Afro-English Colonials (≈500,000):** Their liberty was a personal right under Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.

**Colonial Slave Codes:** Legislatively abolished by Parliament's American Colonies Act (1766).

**U.S. Breach:** Enslavement at nation's founding was not inheritance, but a deliberate violation of English constitutional law.

**Legacy:** Independence commemorations must acknowledge that Blacks were included in English law's universal freedom.

# Policy-Level

Admit colonial slavery  
was illegal

Reframe 4<sup>th</sup> of July:  
Declaration meant  
equality for all colonials

Justice begins  
with legal and  
historical  
truths

Clarify accountability:  
slavery was not  
inherited

Educate: illegality over  
immorality

# Shifting the Debate

From immorality

To illegality

From regret

To  
accountability

From  
inheritance

To violation

# Afrofuturism & Reckoning



'Woke'  
=  
awakening to  
suppressed  
truths



U.S. built  
on theft of  
Black  
labor  
disguised  
as law



Looking  
backward  
=  
forward-  
looking  
act



Reimagine  
liberty as  
living  
reality



# Conclusion



Slavery  
never lawful  
under  
English law

America's  
founding =  
lawlessness,  
not liberty

Douglass: July  
4th =  
mourning for  
the excluded



To endure,  
U.S. must  
confront truth

Preserve memory,  
confront injustice,  
reimagine liberty



# Questions??



# Ida B. Wells Center on American Exceptionalism and Restorative Justice



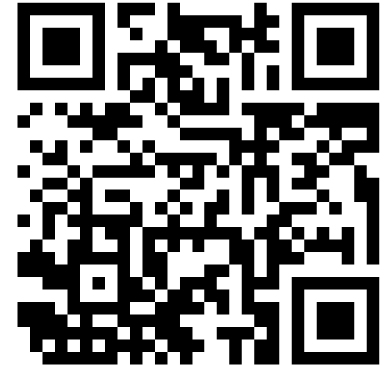
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2136 Ford Parkway, Suite 5371  
Saint Paul, MN 55116  
larry@idabwellscenter.net (651) 325-8436