MacDonald King Aston

Fire Eater! Editor

Slaves in the Family

(Originally published on Southernrights.tk, 2004.)

> "Slave. Etymology: Middle English sclave, from Old French or Medieval Latin; Old French esclave, from Medieval Latin sclavus, from Sclavus Slavic; from the frequent enslavement of Slavs in central Europe."

Recently, a local paper ran a cover article on me and my role in the League of the South ("Southern Man", which you can read at). One of the more interesting parts of the experience was the realisation that I was spending quite a bit of energy defending myself from charges of racism.

Racism? Moi? As I pointed out to the reporter, I am a tribal member of the Choctaw Nation. Exactly why would I be a white supremacist, now?

It may not surprise my friends in Europe that the English word "slave" comes from "Slav". Why should it surprise you? Unlike the majority of ill eductated Americans, you are probably aware that your part of the world has known slavery for thousands of years. White slavery, as in Caucasian slavery. Ancient Greece and Rome, not to mention the Persian Empire and a slew of other empires, used white slaves as a central part of their economy and social life.

".. in any discussion of slavery and the South, it is imperative to ask: Are you talking about the landed aristocracy? Or are you talking about the majority of Southerners, who did not own slaves?"

Then there were the so-called "indentured servants" who were, despite the name, slaves in Colonial America, Barbados, Australia, and other places.

And then there is the Cruel Slave Master of the South, the Simon Legree with his sinister whip and sneer. In America we are taught that this caricature is the only type of slave holder: the Southern Devil Incarnate.

But is it true?

There are many excellent books on slavery in the South (and North) of America, so I wont bother boring you with details. Suffice to point out that if Southern slave owners were such intolerable monsters, the image that our current mis-educational system foists upon us, why then did the slaves in the South not rise up during the War for Southern Independence and overthrow the ruling whites (and black and Indian slave owners as well) while their masters were away at war? The answer is simple: Blacks had lived in the South for a long time. It was their home. Ande their home was being invaded by Northerners who weren't interested in "fighting for niggers".

Abraham Lincoln, in that sadistically clever way of his, even offered the South the original 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the united States of America, guaranteeing perpetual and irrevocable slavery to the South. The South refused, since the War was not about slavery, and most Southerners knew that slavery was on its way out anyway. Knowing all this information, and having an article run on me that insinuated I was a white supremacist, I decided to take a look at slavery in my own family.

Now, my family hailed from the oldest part of Virgina, and, almost without exception, the majority of my ancestors from there owned slaves. Even my Choctaw kin owned slaves. My Great-Uncle, Col. Sampson Folsom, CSA, was one of the biggest slave holders in the Choctaw Nation. Minko Moshulatubbe, my fifth Great-Grandfather, lost several of his slaves on the Trail of Tears and filed for recompense with the united States government. I doubt he had much success.

On the European side, my white ancestors were major slave holders. I have actual slave listings, and even know the names of some of the slaves held by my family.

Here is an one excerpt from a cousin of mine, Jonathan Lee Aston, whose father, John Richard Aston, traveled from Virgina to Grayson County, Texas, in 1856:

> "May I be indulged to tell an incident that happened just before he left Virginia. It was about as follows: Father owned a negro woman by the name of Mandy White. Mandy's husband, Collie White was owned by another farmer in the neighborhood. Father said it was wrong to separate them, so he offered to sell Mandy to the neighbor he refused to buy. Then father offered to buy Collie. The man put a price on Collie that almost doubled the price of an average man slave. Father did not need Collie, but rather than separate man and wife, he paid $1000,00 in gold for him. Collie and Mandy were faithful servants until the emancipation."

Jonathan Lee continues:

> "At the end of the war, Father owned thirty-one slaves. Most of them were children. They were all devoted to "Moss Dick"; that is what they called him. He was very kind to them. He provided them will all the comforts of home life and when they were ill, he saw to it that they had proper attention. They were not required to labor overtime. An average day's work was all that was required. They did the farm work on the plantation, under the supervision of Collie White, one of their own number, who had been appointed overseer by father. They were all very happy when they were set free, but there was a note of sadness in their hearts at the thought of leaving their old home, where their every need had been so well provided. Before they left, Mother made a new linsey dress for each of the women and girls and a new jeans suit for each of the men and boys. When they came to bid "Moss Dick" good-bye, he placed in the hand of each man who was at the head of a family $100.00 in cash. They went out with his blessings, and he looked after them for sometime. The new found freedom was not as great a blessing as they had anticipated. They soon found out that they had to work harder to earn a living than they had to work for "Moss Dick". In less than one year, every one of them, except one, came back and offered their services just as they were before emancipation. That offer could not be accepted. For many years they made it a practice to come back home two or three times each year and stay one or two nights each time. They enjoyed these visits very much. So did father and mother. You may be assured that they never went away empty handed."

Hardly the Simon Legree type, was my Great-Uncle?

Now, as someone with a family that owned a large number of slaves, do I feel guilty? Remorseful? Tormented?

No. Why should I? I wasn't there. Didn't do it. And even if I had been there, it would have simply been the case that the majority of Americans in both the South and the North were, from upbringing, racist. To be an American in the 19th century was to be a racist, plain and simple. On the other hand, to be a racist did not imply that one was brutally cruel, as the narrative above shows.

It is important to bear in mind that slave holders in the South were mainly aristocratic and upper-class. It was the aristocrats who "made the news" and, to a great extent, history as well. Thus, in any discussion of slavery and the South, it is imperative to ask: Are you talking about the landed aristocracy? Or are you talking about the majority of Southerners, who did not own slaves?

As was apparent from the Southern Man article, just mentioning one's Southern roots seems justification enough to cover that person with the suspicion of "racism". Is it only I, or does anyone else see a double standard at work here