

Buddha Dharma and a Timeline of Black History in America

Dukkha - a Buddhist term commonly translated as "suffering", "anxiety", "stress", or "un-satisfactoriness"

The beginning of dukkha is ignorance; cutting the fetter of ignorance allows us an exit out of this dukkha.

Human beings are historically SAVAGE toward one another. That said, I always feel an inner struggle about whether to speak up about the reality of the African American experience because it's either ignored outright or dismissed as me being overly sensitive. Please believe, there's plenty of growth to be had by everyone, myself included. That said, the GROSS IGNORANCE of our shared American past is bothering me enough to attempt to share some historical facts in an effort to hopefully start a more enlightened conversation.

Let's consider some facts along a timeline and free ourselves from this societal dukkha.

Quick Note:

This timeline is not comprehensive at all.

I'm only focusing on some aspects of African American history in this paper.

This is not to say there are no other problems.

To diminish this paper by responding "well it's all an illusion" (or Samsara, imperfect, etc.) is dismissive and offensive.

To diminish this paper by responding "we are all human and I'm colorblind" is indolent and ignorant.

Also, I'm specifically avoiding notable historic individuals on this list in an attempt to illustrate societal trends. I'm tired of African American history being 28 days in February of:

Slavery bad. Some dude made peanut butter. MLK Shot. It's all good now because Obama is President so we all lived happily ever after.

I'm also asking you pay close attention to the dates. Sometimes when we talk about Black history, [we imagine it as something old, long past, no longer relevant](#). Please consider the Buddha's words regarding [dependent origination](#) (Pratītyasamutpāda) and how our situation today just didn't come out of nowhere.

Simply stated, historically and according to our [founding constitutional law](#), Black lives didn't matter. There's over 600 years of [seeing black as something lesser](#), and maybe 50 years of a contrary societal opinion.

In an attempt to illustrate the origins of this suffering and the origins of the "Black Lives Matter" sentiment, I'm framing this timeline in the context of the [three unwholesome roots or three poisons](#), which are understood to be the root of [Dukkha](#).

Lastly, I'm attempting to avoid over interpreting any of these notable dates. Rather, I'd like you to investigate the links and read the history, the quotes, and documents yourself. By letting the sources speak for themselves, I hope you are empowered to draw your own conclusion, rather than take my word or assume another's viewpoint.

By Jeongjwa (Andrew Anders)

January 11, 2015

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Greed / Desire / Passion: Declaring men as property in order to [gain material wealth from the new world](#)

DATE

Societal Events

1441-1865

[Transatlantic Chattel Slavery Conditioning](#)

July 9, 1640

[First documented incident of racial legal bias](#)

1639-1712

[Slave codes](#) (Laws to establish dominance and justify the brutality of slavery)

July 4, 1776

[Declaration of Independence](#) (for the dominant caste)

September 17, 1787

[3/5 Compromise \(Slaves were Constitutionally 3/5ths of a person\)](#)

1861 - 1865

[The Civil War over westward expansion and States rights \(not freeing slaves\)](#)

January 1, 1863

[Emancipation Proclamation](#) (A war measure to help the Union, not Slaves)

December 6, 1865

[13th Amendment of US Constitution \(**ended slavery, except as punishment for a crime**\)](#)

Aggression / Hatred / Aversion: Laws of separation and caste dominance

1863 to 1877

[Reconstruction](#) (Legal gains and social losses)

1865 - 1866

[Black Codes](#) (Petty laws enacted to negating the gains from the 13th amendment)

1877 - 1965

[Jim Crow](#) (More widespread and systemic laws of discrimination)

1877-1944

[The Original Domestic Terrorists \(KKK\): Springfield, Omaha, Tulsa, Rosewood Massacre](#)

July 1914 - November 1955

[Serving the country and fighting for Respect](#) (WWI & WWII; divided military)

1954 - 1968

[The Second Civil Rights movement](#) and [police massacres](#)

1966 - 1982

[The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense](#) and [FBI involvement](#) / [police massacres](#)

Ignorance / Confusion / Bewilderment: Why are people marching and “being disruptive”?

1984 - 1994

[80s Crack Cocaine Epidemic](#), [Social Engineering](#), [Media Bias](#) and [More Biased Legislation](#)

June 18, 1971 - May 13, 2009

[War on Drugs](#) and [poor people](#)

1980-2010

[The Great Incarceration \(of mostly black men\)](#)

Sunday, March 03, 1991

[First modern media of example of police brutality against an unarmed black man](#)

Saturday, January 10, 2015

[Today's Problems \(Killing 12 year olds\)](#), and [Gross Ignorance](#)

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When unwholesome mental factors are related to the body, Geshe Tashi Tsering says:

“According to Buddhism, even physical health is linked to mental states. Thus the real threats to our well-being are attachment, anger, and ignorance—the three fundamental deluded minds (mental states) that lead to all other afflictions, both mental and physical. Only with thorough understanding of the mind and its functions can we hope to transcend the disturbing thoughts and emotions that plague us.”

It is my belief that when we have systemic societal issues such as discrimination (rooted in the same poisons) only with thorough understanding of our history and its impact today can we hope to transcend the disturbing issues that separate us.

Three antidotes to these three poisons?

1. Gratitude

- a. Antidote to greed. Modern examples of greed include [systemic poverty](#).
- b. How do we address this? By being mindful of the impermanence of all existence, people and possessions, big and small, and moving toward genuine appreciation (advocacy or speaking up for example) as much as possible.

2. Compassion

- a. Antidote to aggression. Modern examples of unreasonable aggression includes [notable law enforcement incidents](#) in today’s media.
- b. How do we address this? By being mindful (mental training for peace officers?) of the dissatisfaction (dukkha) inherent in aversion, hostility, ill-will and moving to share peace, equanimity, and true happiness with all

3. Education / Wisdom

- a. Antidote to ignorance. Modern examples of this includes the [misunderstanding](#) we have of [each other’s experience](#) and the resultant apathy and/or confusion.
- b. How do we address this? Being mindful of the ignorance inherent in conditioned existence (including conditioned thought patterns and attachment to the familiar viewpoints) and moving toward a deep understanding of the nature of reality through earnest and honest practice. This practice should include learning about others and empathy for the human condition.

The beginning of dukkha is ignorance; cutting the fetter of ignorance allows us an exit out of this dukkha.

I hope this paper and the sources wherein may help your understanding and allow you a bit of freedom from ignorance.

Metta and Gassho!

Jeongjwa

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