

WELCOME

—I AM INSIDE THIS STORY,¹ NOT AN OUTSIDE OBJECTIVE OBSERVER

Have you ever been haunted by a childhood traumatic memory or an adverse experience? I have, and detailed below are two that left scars on my heart, which, five decades later, launched my quest, across four continents, to “*break a spell*” that I never knew I was under. This was the **SLAVE* SPELL*. You probably have never heard of it. But it is a clandestine conversation among elites that goes back before the Bible was written.

I never intended or imagined writing a book on **slavery**. I never liked reading about it in elementary school because I vicariously identified with the people who looked like me being brutalized, and whose tormentors looked like my teacher, some students, and their parents. I never read books about **slavery** in my Dad’s library—I enjoyed science stuff. Yet, the skillful storytelling of the 1977 award-winning television series, *Roots*, forced me to confront the drama of America’s **slavery** trauma.

Decades later, in 2013, watching *another* award-winning movie, *12 Years A Slave*, retrIGGERED *Roots*’ trauma of despair, defeat, and desolation. Then, with a perspective pivot, instead of shame, came Nate Parker’s acclaimed 2016 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, about Rev. Nat Turner’s tragic **slave** rebellion. Despite the characters’ suffering, their quest for freedom evoked empathic resonance.

Then, in 2019, there was *Harriet*, a spirited story about abolitionist Harriet Tubman’s resistance to **slavery’s** subjection and her deep determination to rescue other plantation-prison captives to live free. The iconic Tubman is most famously known for saying, “*I could have saved thousands—if only I’d been able to convince them they were slaves.*” But were these Tubman’s actual words? With sparse, sketchy, and conflicting evidence, some historians divvy up doubt.² What this discussion misses, and matters more, is that the sentiment attributed to Harriet captures the internalization of anti-Black racialized oppression, or self-dehumanization,³ a

¹ I believe, following Quantum Mechanics Theory, samadhi mindfulness meditation, and psychedelic experience, there is *no* ultimate outside objective observer. We exist in a participatory universe, notes scientist-philosopher, John Archibald Wheeler (1911-2008) who introduced the concept of wormholes and coined the term “black hole.” <https://johnhorgan.org/cross-check/physicist-john-wheeler-and-the-it-from-bit>

² The Truths Behind the Myth of Harriet Tubman, 2008. <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/news/article/the-truths-behind-the-myth-of-harriet-tubman>.

³ Wenqi Yang, Shenghua Jin, Surina He, Qian Fan, and Yijie Zhu. 2015. *The Impact of Power on Humanity: Self-Dehumanization in Powerlessness*. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0125721>

psychological survival strategy previously known as the Stockholm Syndrome⁴ or trauma-bonding (Chapter 12).

So, I asked myself, *What's up with Black people's exploitation as entertainment?* Movie after movie, we arrive again and again at the narrative crossroads of historical propaganda, a mashup of myth, memory, and meaning. Like being on a pendulum, I would vacillate between wanting to know *The Truth*—what happened, when, where, and why— and, at the same time, the anxiety from learning how terrible *The Truth* is. I asked myself, who *really* wants to read another *slavery* story, another book that may retraumatize some readers or even spark guilt amongst others?

Then I remembered the 1993 revolutionary and redemptive *slavery* film, *Sankofa*, by filmmaker and Howard University Professor Haile Gerima, and my standpoint shifted. *Sankofa* is a Twi word from the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa, and concerns the continuous review of collective prior experiences (or history) to get the story straight. Its literal translation comes from the Akan proverb, “*Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyiri*,” meaning, “It is not taboo to go back for what you forgot (or left behind).”



Sankofa, Ghanaian *Adrinka* symbol,
as a heart



Sankofa, Ghanaian *Adrinka* symbol,
as a bird, by Adedayo Laoye

Embedded in the **Sankofa** idea are four interrelated concepts—(1) its meaning, (2) its visual shorthand of *Adinkra* symbols used for communicating deep philosophical truths [printed on cloth, or carved on furniture and sculptures]: a) the stylized heart shape, and b) the iconic bird looking backward, (3) mathematical significance: the double heart, a Fibonacci sequence—the Golden Ratio ($\Phi = 1.618$) and (4) the philosophical idea of cycles. Together, they represent the importance of learning from the past to inform the future.

Gerima's film, which he also wrote, exposes the terror and trauma of Euro-American Atlantic human trafficking and trade—the corporate *slavery* industry. The story focuses on the character Mona (Oyafunmike Ogunlano), who is swept away from her present life as a fashion model on a location shoot at a Ghanaian *slave*

⁴ Rebecca Bailey, 2023. Appeasement: replacing Stockholm syndrome as a definition of a survival strategy. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9858395/>

castle to life on a plantation-prison. Gerima nullifies the narrative that *slavery* days were not as bad as conservative commentators exclaim.

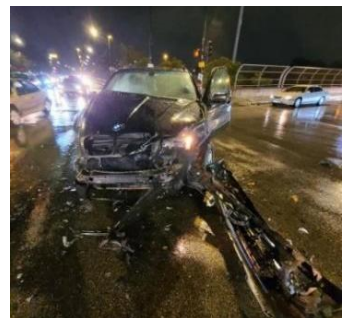
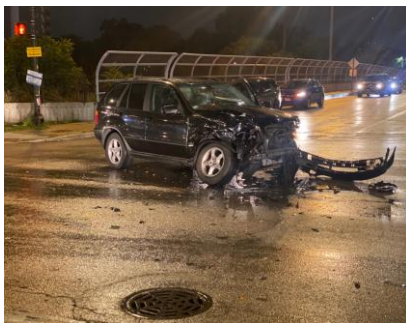
This book drew insights and inspiration from the film's cathartic, closing scene where a divine drummer choir calls into consciousness the Ancestors, juxtaposed with (a drone view) of the Sankofa bird soaring high in the sky towards the Southern Egypt temple complex, Abu Simbel, built by *Nehusi* (or Pharaoh, Greek) Rameses II, who reigned 1279–1300BCE. In this way, Gerima opened viewers' eyes to Sankofa's deeper meaning—there was a *before*; *there was life before the history we have learned*. *Slavery* is not African humanity's original and only experience.

For hundreds of thousands of viewers, *Sankofa* provoked a feeling of symbolic, ontological, and epistemological liberation; it was a call to advance the study of collective prior experiences to embolden a new narrative. And for me, from meditation, I garnered even more clarity, as I realized the drivers of these dynamics of truth avoidance and acceptance were perception and self-conception: identity. This is what the cover aims to capture: movement through a portal of possibility.

The book follows my sojourn of societal observations and conversations, employing transdisciplinary research, with intellectual twists and turns, of how a label became an ill-fated, ferocious fable. All the while, I was on an emotional roller coaster of losing my parents, a traumatic brain injury, PTSD caused by a car collision, and, at the same time, I was trying to mindfully mollify my perfectionist persona, with muddled results. My goal was to reveal the unknown backstory of relationships, racism, and xenophobia, which I call self-models.

—ABOUT THE SIMPLY STUNNING NEVER-*SLAVES* IDEA

In 2022, on an April afternoon, I was getting physical therapy at a South Side Chicago hospital, which still had COVID-19 protocols in place. It was my 13th treatment, but with a third therapist with advanced skills. I was continuing my recovery following a September 2021 car crash that totaled my BMW X5. I remember, in a flash, my right eye's gaze gleaned a large flatbed tow truck barreling down a one-way main street; I swerved left to avoid being hit, but the driver ran the red light entering the intersection, and then BLAM! BLANK: vision vanished! BLINK: witnessed whiteness! SILENCE: time froze!



Things happened fast. My head hit the steering wheel; the impact forced my car to smash into another in the adjacent lane, then my head hit the driver's door, deploying the airbag, thrusting the seat back, where it almost came off its tracks. Seeing what first appeared like smoke and fearing a fire, I hastily got out. I was relieved to discover it was only water vapor. Mercifully, the windshield didn't shatter; miraculously, no bones were broken, just sore shoulders, neck, and back. I was dazed, dizzy, and confused. It could have been worse: my car could have tumbled down onto the expressway. Missing my pizza dinner was better than being missing in life.

Later, in the ER, after a CT scan and other tests, doctors told me I had experienced a mild traumatic brain injury, post-concussion syndrome, and whiplash. Then came frightening flashbacks and trauma-induced insomnia: I was sleeping only three hours.

These were the circumstances that brought me to physical therapy, which my therapists needed to know to assess my injuries and pain and to develop a treatment plan. To establish rapport, they wanted to know a bit about my background. On this visit, my new therapist, Zach (a White guy), asked if I didn't mind a resident shadowing him. "No problem," I said, and he introduced Dr. Fatima (an African American woman, a millennial) and left us momentarily to get a device to measure the range of my head movement.

While he was gone, Dr. Fatima said, “I hear you are a writer.”
“Yes, among many things,” I replied.
She continued, “I also hear you are writing a book.”
“Yes,” I said.
“What is it about?”
“Umm, it’s just an anti-**race*(ism)* book,” I answered.
“What’s the title?” she asked.
Then, as Zach returned, I replied, “

WE WERE NEVER **SLAVES: The Neuropolitics of Being Human,
Solving the Impossible, Healing Our Mosaic Selves.”**

“What!” in unison, they gasped and grinned.
Intrigued, Dr. Fatma pressed me to disclose details.
“What do you mean by ‘*never*’ slaves? How so?”
“Look, for most folks, my premise — ***We Were Never **Slaves***** — is not only bizarre but blasphemous. At first glance, on the surface, it seems to deny historical reality. Yet, actually, it’s a deep deviation from our desiccated discourse of disinformation.

****Slave* is a Phony Political Paradigm of Subjection and Dehumanization.***

“First, the word **slave** is derived from *Slav*—the name (or ethnonym) of many Eastern Europeans. Because of their early non-Christian beliefs and centuries of oppression by other Europeans and Arabs, their bondage experience became branded with their name. This became their unfortunate, inescapable identity—until the 16th century, when some English speakers, by a rhetorical ruse, mispronounced Slav as *sláv*—*slav(e)*. Then by semantic sleight-of-hand, the spelling shifted, and the word **sláve**, seemingly separated from Slavic people, became synonymous with Africans. “Therefore, the word **slave** is a political paradigm; it is someone’s idea; it’s a script of subjection and dehumanization that people were forced to live through and socialized to believe.”

Astonished, they said, “We never knew this.”
“Well, few understand this conceit,” I commented. [Note: for these reasons, the text uses **slave**.]

He Put a Spell on Us

“Second, the word **slave** acts as a *spell*; it signifies something is wrong with you: you’re inferior, less human. It functions as a magician’s trick, but no rabbit is pulled out of a hat, just minds muddled in a vat of conjured ideas of inferiority and superiority.⁵ This “spell of inequality” evolved 2300 years ago, out of the Greek

⁵ A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. (1998). The Ten Precepts of Slavery Jurisprudence, Appendix. **Shades of Color: Racial Politics and Presumptions of the American Legal Process**. Oxford University Press.
https://books.google.fr/books/about/Shades_of_Freedom.html?id=NM_rf6TndMsC&redir_esc=y

philosopher Aristotle's⁶ patriarchal fantasies and rhetorical political ploys⁷ (Chapter 9). It has developed into a devious and dangerous brain-based science of oppression globally.⁸ Within a multi-media matrix of malinformation, public relations pronouncements, persuasion plots, and aggressive algorithms are used to hijack everyone's attention, and the Silicon Valley Tech Bros make \$Millions.

"Here's how. In medicine, you know of the *placebo phenomenon*, a sham substance, drug, or treatment given to a patient believing it helps them. *Placēbō* is Latin for 'I shall please', from *placeō*, 'I please'. Less well known is the *nocebō*, which is Latin for 'I shall harm', from *noceō*, 'I harm'. Beyond the clinical context, science is understanding how placebos and nocebos, such as expectations, suggestions, cultural cues, language, and images in everyday life, can heal or harm. Speech can function like *psychosomatic sorcery*; for example, the Latin phrase *IPSE DIXIT*, an assertion made, *but* not proved, just because someone said so. This is how the word *slave* acts as a *nocebō*, and harms. This book hacks this *slave* hex.⁹

The Self-Modeling Hypothesis

"Third, beyond semantics, the book's crucial construct is an intensely researched brain science idea: self-modeling hypothesis. You may not have heard of it. In a way it's like an architect *imagines* a building, then draws a blueprint, a plan, from which she later makes a scaled-down model so developers and investors can "see" what the completed structure and landscape would look like. Then builders construct it, right?

Mathematicians and physicists *imagine* equations — models — to understand how things work: why fireflies flash, how climate changes, how planets move, or why markets crash. Using computer simulations, they test their models' statistical precision to predict what might happen next, given certain conditions. Right?

"Music composers make models (sound paintings of air pressure variations of rhythm, form, harmony, and melody) that figure and foster our feelings. And, actors translate text, a script — a model — into emotions, gestures, and speech of the character they aim to embody, to convince us of their character's reality. Right?"

"Yes," they agreed.

"Check this out. Our brains make models too—of *REALITY*: the sensory world beyond the boundary of our body, our reference frame, and the world(s) within. The brain is an *inference, imagination, integration, and improvisation engine*, and makes statistical predictions about phenomena. This is how we learn. This is how memory is

⁶ Aristotle Inequality. <https://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-5/supproting-materials/aristotle-on-inequality>.

⁷ Lisa Orkin (2000). Archaeologists Find Ancient Greeks Practiced That Old--Very Old--Black Magic. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-apr-22-mn-53984-story.html>.

⁸ How to Fix Economic Inequality? An Overview of Policies for the United States and Other High-Income Economies <https://www.pii.com/microsites/how-fix-economic-inequality>.

⁹ Therefore, from a cultural neuroscience perspective, I discuss in Chapters 2, 10, and 14, the reframing of harmful noceboic speech, misbeliefs, and mainstream narratives pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 47/21 for effecting transformative change for racial justice and equality to *break this inequality spell*.

made. This is how we move safely through space when awake, during dreaming, dancing, or playing sports. “*Reality*” is the ongoing relationship between the perceived and the perceiver.

“Right here, right now, *your* brains have made a model of ‘me,’ which includes my face, voice, emotional expressions, and gestures, to predict and understand my thinking and behavior. Likewise, *my* brain has made a model of both of you. We are engaging and interacting with each other through mosaic models of ourselves—*never* directly.

“Only when we physically touch do our models meld into realism. Otherwise, we are running simulations of worlds in other people’s minds. It’s like we are mind-reading. Australian cognitive scientist and philosopher at New York University, David Chalmers,¹⁰ who became famous in 1994 for saying the “hard problem” of science is explaining consciousness, calls our human experience *Reality*. The model of ourselves, on which our life is lived, must be highly adaptable, resilient, robust, viable, and virtuous to manage relationships, anticipate conflict with other people’s self-models, and imagine its future. Does this make sense?”

“This is fascinating. Where did you learn all this?” Dr. Fatima inquired.

“In the 1990s, I did graduate studies in neuroscience at the University College London Institute of Psychiatry and Neuroscience; a decade earlier, I did independent consciousness research—and still do.

“*Oh!*” they said, letting slip their learned social norm-based implicit bias—perceptions of people who look like me, a Black guy: uneducated, unwealthy, and unsophisticated South Side neighborhood. My response violated their expectations.

With their background bias bared, I said, “In every aspect of life, whether in science, religion, philosophy, finance, or even sports, we make models of things that tend to correspond with *reality* as best we perceive, and then test and engage with them. By means of multiple models, with caveats and errors, we make meaning of some specific aspect of the *absolute* (whatever that is), which contributes to a marvelous model of the relational relativity of everything.

“Harmonizing a myriad of models of *Existenz*, even with AI supercomputers, we miss a lot, as there are blind spots. Even so, we trust our models of reality to have high enough fidelity to allow us to survive successfully. However, prediction errors ensue, misbeliefs get manufactured, cognitive biases become bundled, and prejudices are parlayed, constraining the accuracy of our predictions of people’s motivations and intentions. There are mismatches. We get things wrong. This modeling process promotes communication conundrums and cultural conflict. The book reveals *race*(ism) and sexism as simulations, and knowing this, like actors, we can improvise and diminish antagonism and animosity.

“There has never been a book like this before. It is a personal story that encapsulates my journey and captures my passion to understand oppression and unlearn malevolent models, that is, systems and cultural practices of dehumanization,

¹⁰ David Chalmers (January 25, 2022). *Reality+: Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy*. W. W. Norton (US) and Allen Lane (UK). <https://consc.net/reality/>

exploitation, anti-Black *race*(ism), sexism, and xenophobia. Without blaming, shaming, or cultivating guilt, with ideologically neutral scientific language, it shows us how to counter models of malice and also gives us a new playbook for prosocial connectivity. How, you may wonder?

SEVEN STRATEGIES

"It's all about recognizing humanity is traumatized. It's about clearing the brain fog of momentous misbeliefs, power misconceptions, and stopping the brain rot. For healing our mosaic selves, I offer seven strategies to break the *2,300-year-old spell of inequity*. Spell, you say? What if I showed you receipts? What if I showed you how to test the hypothesis of our ability to edit our reality theory (by kindling neuroplasticity)? That is how we learn. We are all learning all the time, all at once—either curiosity-driven with goals, or without intention under someone else's direction. Imagine the implications in relationships, education, mentoring, psychotherapy, political campaigns, business leadership, and DEI initiatives.

Smiling, Dr. Fatima, wanting to know more, asked, "Is your book out?"
"Not yet: Fall 2026."

"Will you have a book signing in Hyde Park?" Zach hoped.

"Yes, but first, I will have a grand launch and later citywide signings."

Fatima yearned, "I can't wait!"

I wanted to share more on its overall objective of advancing a new humanity theory; however, sensing Zach's anxiousness in resuming my therapy, I didn't.

Higher Ground

This book is partly a personal story that encapsulates my journey toward realizing that failing in some aspect of life—education, career, or relationships— is temporary, not necessarily permanent. I've learned that each failure seeds another opportunity for a course correction. I've learned that despite life cycles' repetitiveness and the daily grind, the future isn't fixed. Because you have agency, the capacity for active choice, you can restart where you are, though that takes consistent effort, sustained motivation, and persistence.

Recovering from this car collision, getting an acupuncture treatment for pain prompted recalling the chorus from the haunting hit song, "*Higher Ground*" by the iconic Stevie Wonder from his Grammy Award-winning best album, *Inner Visions*:

I'm so darn glad He (God) let me try it again
cause the last time on Earth I lived a whole world of sin.

I am so glad I know now more than I knew then,
I'm going to keep on trying 'til I reach my highest ground.

Don't you let no one bring you down. (They will sho' 'nuff try.)
—Stevie Wonder® (released August 3, 1973 on Tamla, a Motown subsidiary, now Sony

Then hearing became a feeling of Wonder's Clavinet keyboard's funky riffs. Then briefly, I pictured a decades-old breaking news headline: STEVIE WONDER IN NEAR-FATAL CAR ACCIDENT. He's in a coma. This happened on August 6, 1973, on a South Carolina highway. Several days later, he woke up with his sense of smell lost, but he regained it later. There is something few folks know about this album: Stevie was encouraged to write songs with political and metaphysical themes, and recorded "Higher Ground"¹¹ before the accident on May 12, 1973. Isn't that prophetic?

Now, from my accident, I didn't have anything like the classic near-death experience: I didn't see any angels, ancestors, or a white light at the end of a tunnel. Yet strangely, musing on its aftermath cued into my consciousness a crystal-clear message: *Be Grateful*. This was an ethical imperative: *be grateful* for another opportunity to deliver on your destiny's deal. Because the next day isn't promised. For *"It won't be too long; I am going to keep on trying to reach my highest ground."*



Understanding Oppression and Unlearning Malevolent Models

The larger part of this book captures my passion to understand oppression and unlearn malevolent models, that is, systems and cultural practices of dehumanization, exploitation, anti-Black *race*(ism), sexism, and xenophobia. Without blaming, shaming, or cultivating guilt, with ideologically neutral scientific language, it shows us how to counter models of malice and also gives us a new playbook for prospering.

Embedded in the research and production of this book are my life experiences, all my relations, and my *Imakhyu*¹² (Ancestors) spirit. From my thirty years of meditation practice, I have discovered "reality" is not 'out there' waiting to be discovered. We collectively co-create it, and are participant/observers in that ever-expanding process. Editing reality is something we already do, but mostly without intention and goals. Imagine living our story with this truth. This way towards solving the impossible, healing our mosaic societies.

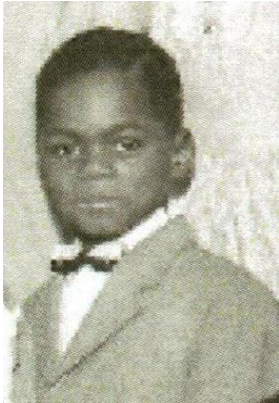
As a reader, consider all the anecdotes shared: they shadow my pursuit through a labyrinth of information, trying to find coherence and connectivity, to attain more clarity, while reaching dead ends, and then turning back to discover more nuances of the *slave* idea and how systems of subjugation and oppression work. This energized my journey enough to, as Curtis Mayfield sang, *"Keep on Pushing."*

¹¹ Chris Williams. Expanding Soul: the magic of working with Stevie Wonder. August 7, 2013 (July 14, 2021). <https://magazine.waxpoetics.com/article/the-technological-breakthroughs-of-stevie-wonder-and-tonto/>

¹² *Imakhyu*: a *Kemet*ic (a Pharaonic Egyptian, pre-Greek, and pre-Arab) term for ancestors.

—BACKSTORY REFLECTIONS ... HOW *RACE*(ISM)’S INVISIBLE VIOLENCE TRAUMATIZES

In the mid-1950s, I grew up on Chicago’s South Side, where my mom and dad bravely integrated the mainly white Chatham/Park Manor Neighborhood.¹³ Our family worshipped at Salem Lutheran Church, a century-old congregation with mostly Swedish and German immigrant descendants, with a smattering of Black members who, for all appearances, were welcomed.



Salem Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois.²

One Palm Sunday, in Sunday school, a white boy screeched, “*You* (black) people are just like the Hebrews in Egypt. *You, a SLAVE.*”

“That’s not true!” with teary eyes, I sobbed. As acolytes, I thought we were friends. Betrayed. I felt his sordid speech breached the belief that the sacred space included the parish hall. Somehow, I vicariously had identified with people — utterly unrelated to me — over two thousand years ago.

Seeing the sadness on my face, and wondering what that boy said, our grandmotherly African-American Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Ester Dixon, said, “God loves you, and I love you.” Yet, she could see that her comforting words hadn’t suspended the shame he triggered. So she invited me to her nearby home for lunch and said to bring a photo of myself.

Several Sundays after Easter, over a light meal, she asked for it, then placed it in *her* Bible, at the beginning of Psalm 23¹⁴ as a gesture of assurance.

¹³ Due to senior members moving and dying, and repercussions of COVID-19 in Winter 2023, sadly, Salem closed.

¹⁴ <http://psalmsstudy.com/psalms-chapter-23/praisesong-twenty-translation-song/>

Psalms Chapter 23 תהלים

א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד : יְהוָה רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחָסֵר.
 ב בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא, יִרְבִּיצֵנִי ; עַל-מֵי מִנְחֹת יִגְהַלֵּנִי.
 ג נַפְשִׁי יִשְׁוֹבֵב ; יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צֶדֶק, לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.
 ד גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת, לֹא-אִיֶּרָא רָע-- כִּי-אֶתְּהַ
 עֲמִדִּי ;
 שְׁבָטְךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ, הֵמָּה יִנְחֵמֵנִי.
 ה תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי, שְׁלֹחַן-- נֶגֶד צָרָי ;
 דֹּשְׁנֶת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רִיחַ.
 ו אֵד, טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי-- כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי ;
 וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה, לְאֶרְךָ יָמִים.

1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
 2 *He* makes me lie down in green pastures; *He* leads me beside the still waters.
 3 *He* restores my soul; *He* guides me in straight paths for *His* name's sake.
 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *You* are with me; {N}Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
 5 *You* prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; {N} You have anointed my head with oil; my cup runs over.
 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; {N}and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Still, I remember wearily wondering what prompted his remarks. Maybe his sentiment was inspired by watching Cecil B. DeMille's movie, *The Ten Commandments*. Maybe he had read Joseph's story of being sold into* slavery*, Genesis 37-50. Maybe he was raised to believe Black folks were naturally subservient, being cursed, mythical descendants of Ham: Genesis 9:20–27. I will never know why, but it troubled me.

Vividly, viscerally, I still remember how humiliated I felt. I never thought of my great-great-great grandparents... or any of my ancestors, as *SLAVES*. His words were like a splinter in my mind that I could not remove. Only with every service's closing with a finale of European classical music played with vigor and verve on a massive pipe organ, as I imagined hearing accompanying drums, did my embarrassment ease.

Now, here is an interesting observation: Before that boy spoke, I had seen that movie and read the story, *but* I didn't identify with those persecuted Hebrews. Therefore, I was not traumatized, and, apparently, neither was my classmate. Now, I can explain why: it was the *nocebo* effect. This is how it began: my discovery and dealings with *race*(ism)'s invisible violence.

—TEACHING RACIAL HOSTILITIES

With my childhood homies, I watched television shows like *The Little Rascals* and the *Three Stooges*. On Saturday mornings, we walked to the neighborhood Rhodes Theater (now demolished) to see cartoons like *Looney Tunes* and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*. We laughed, not knowing they were minstrel shows mocking our blackness with racist caricatures. Beyond popular culture, we saw scenes of subjection screened everywhere; such haunting hostilities had a haven in books and institutions.

For example, literature like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Huckleberry Finn*, also exposed me to such sublime sentiments. My elementary school class textbooks on

United States history reinforced them. I remember a book similar to the illustrated *How the Negroes Lived under Slavery*¹⁵ used in Virginia schools that sanitized subservience while glorifying delusions of grandeur. A lifetime later, I realized that, as pre-teenage students, we were tricked into trusting the textbooks' *truth* claims. I had no idea I was subconsciously learning to 'hate myself.'

—“LOOK A NEGRO”: ON WHY THIS BOOK IS PERSONAL

During the early 1970s, at Chicago's Communiversity, in Clinical Psychologist Dr. Bobby E. Wright's class I was introduced to Caribbean Psychiatrist Franz Fanon. In his brilliant book, *Black Skin: White Masks*, Fanon wrote of his adverse childhood experiences going to an elite school in France, and later serving in World War II. He details working in the early 1950s in Algeria (a North African French colony) at the Blida-Joinville psychiatric hospital (see the 2024 movie, *Fanon*).

In Chapter Five, Fanon depicts his disconcerting engagement with a white woman and her child, while riding on a train. Sitting across from him, they appear frightened at the sight of a Black man, “a *Negro*”—Fanon himself. He remembers and writes what the child exclaimed emphatically,

“Look, a Negro.” [It was an external impetus that flicked me in passing. I smiled slightly.]

“Look, a Negro.” [It was true. I laughed.]

“Look, a Negro.” [The circle was gradually getting smaller. I laughed openly.]

“Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened! Frightened! Frightened!” [Now they were beginning to be frightened of me. I want to laugh till I burst, but that has become impossible.]

Reading Fanon's description of his encounter with that child, attempting to assuage his anger, helped me realize that I wasn't crazy or hypersensitive to anti-Blackness' cultural aggression, both micro and macro. I, too, have experienced Fanon's “*Look, a Negro*” encounter with “innocent” white children on downtown buses. They are unforgettable moments of the invisible, violent imposition of another's socialization that embodies racialized superiority and my subjectivity.

Time does not temper trauma when compounded by add-on adversity, which rushes the rise of unconscious currents of unexpressed emotional rage. Have you had similar experiences? Pause. Write a paragraph. Release it.



In this book, I offer insights into an ever-evolving complex sociopathic stratified system, with its massive power asymmetry, within which everyone is embedded and complicit—no one is frankly free. I've wondered who the real adversary is. Are we our own worst enemy? Or is it the government, corporations, institutions, corrupt leaders, or an unelected, opaque oligarch network? Or, making it plain, as Democrat

¹⁵ Francis Simkins, Sidman Poole, and Spotswood Hunnicutt. “How the Negroes Lived under Slavery” 1957. (See illustration) <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/how-the-negroes-lived-under-slavery/>

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries¹⁶ said, it is “*the wealthy, well-off, and the well-connected*” (and protected).

It is hoped that mixing academics and aspiration, with theory and praxis, will stimulate scholars and interested others to bravely ask uncomfortable and inconvenient questions, to inspire better arguments for positive policies. To break through the stained-glass ceiling of systemic corruption, conceit, and contempt, I believe it takes villages of interconnected communities of praxis who have a unique cultural understanding of what a human means legally, metaphysically, and philosophically. Certain readers may be irritated and unsettled; others may delight in discovering fuzzy ways of knowing.

This book is provocative. It hits a nerve. It is disruptive. It fractures falsehood. It ferrets out under-examined ideas and issues needing clarity. It uncovers malicious motivations. It makes connections at nodes of disparate disciplines and hostile discourses. And it rejuvenates hope. No victim card is being played here. Nor is it about generating guilt. As a *Star Trek Deep Space-9* and *Discovery* fan, this book intends to be aspirational, yet cautiously optimistic as it confronts complex challenges.

—SOLVING THE IMPOSSIBLE: HEALING OUR MOSAIC SELVES

The writing challenge I had grappled with, which many friends observed, was that this project's grand vision amounted to at least three books. I was worried that splitting it up would compromise its conceptual continuity, but I finally accepted that this project was too big for a single book. Therefore, this writing forms Book One of a trilogy. Now to maintain the vision's integrity, I offer a synopsis in Chapter 15: **Solving the Impossible: Healing Our Mosaic Selves** of the book's core cardinal idea: *Self-Models*. This is a novel understanding of our relationship with our complex individuality and the worlds of others' minds through intersecting and interacting 'models' which brain activity generates.

You probably have never heard of the term 'self-model' because it is a concept not widely known outside of cognitive science, consciousness studies, psychology, and philosophy of mind. It is an uncommon conception of the *self* as a complex, dynamic modeling process. It is sort of a simulation, that was rendered in the *Matrix* movies.

Over a decade, the author, with Transcultural Forensic Psychiatrist Patricia Ann Newton, developed the MOSAIC SELF-MODEL Theory (MOSEM); it's a novel science-based, clinical, and transpersonal idea of identity. It is the crucial concept to which the entire project responds. I believe that it can help us solve the impossible, to better get along by “healing *our mosaic selves*.” Not only that, it can deepen the discernment of unconscious dehumanizing attitudes and biases. Not only that, it can distance us from duress and distress, and stupidity and suffering, to better understand how “othering” others works. Not only that, it can be used to disarm and *de-integrate*

¹⁶ Hakeem Jeffries 19 December 2024. TRANSCRIPT: LEADER JEFFRIES FLOOR REMARKS ON A RECKLESS REPUBLICAN SHUTDOWN democratic leader. house.gov/media/press-releases/transcript-leader-jeffries-floor-remarks-reckless-republican-shutdown

domineering (mono)cultural fantasy frameworks.

I envision the Adams-Newton MOSAIC SELF-MODEL as a concept that inspires people and evolves into a “cultural contagion,” an idea elaborated by Marcus Collins, a University of Michigan marketing professor and influencer, in his book, *For the Culture*. I hope you will discover “contagious” insights and invent real-world applications. We can learn how diversity becomes the means of social solidarity rather than a demon some despise.

I argue that the MOSEM Theory has the depth and dimension to radically reinvent our understanding of the relationships between perception, prejudice, privilege, prestige, poverty, power, and money at individual and societal levels. MOSEM fosters a “bounce back” to a rediscovery of wholeness in a mosaic of connectedness from generational identity discontinuity. It’s a new way, as author Toni Morrison said, to be “freer *in our imagination*” to redefine the terms and trajectory of the discourse about the self, society, and the soul.

Conclusion

I don’t have any illusions that my endeavors, or *any* book, speech, policy, or program, will— once and for all — eliminate this existential threat to human *Existenz*. Real change only happens through ceaseless sacrifice and struggle by individuals and communities, across generations, amidst wavering social currents, with a coherent and cohesive social memory and a compelling story. We need a new story that breathes life, a story bigger than any individual, or institutional dogma, a story that provokes and promotes the society’s collective good, including justice and joy. Frederick Douglass, the 19th-century abolitionist and activist, reminds us that elites’ power concedes nothing without demand.

I am only one person and can’t save our world from *Izfet*.¹⁷ I hope any insights you acquire will linger, perhaps for three weeks, three months, three years, or even thirty years. History may show my efforts to make a difference. Whatever the case, I am at peace with it.

In 2011, while browsing in a Stockholm¹⁸ bookstore, fate found favor and gifted me with a small, disturbing book, *The Captive Mind*, by Nobel Prize-winning author Czesław Miłosz. It felt prophetic. I was resonating with his sentiments as he described how Eastern European intellectuals lived precariously under post-World War II Soviet Union domination. His declaration captures the spirit of this writing, where he says,

¹⁷ *Izfet* is a Kemetic (Ancient Egyptian) term for disorder, deceit, disease, destruction at personal, social, governmental, and commercial levels, and entropy at ecological and cosmic. *Izfet* is the antithesis of Maât: order, truth, law, and goodness.

¹⁸ I was a speaker at the University of Arizona, Science of Consciousness Conference, at Sweden’s University of Stockholm.

“This book is a battlefield, in which I have given shape to my combats
with the doctrine (and dubious dogma) I have rejected.
This then, explains my method of writing.”

Therefore, I warn you that entering my classroom is like enrolling for the first time in a class of a professor known to be difficult and may activate anxiety or angst. For some, this information may be troubling. For others, it may be tantalizing. Either way, think of it as “good trouble,” as U.S. Congressman John Lewis’ legacy conveys.

Ideally, regardless of your ethnicity or ancestral legacy, I hope that reading this book will prompt a convergence into a cathartic and constructive experience, and you may see a new way of viewing history, the world, *and* yourself. I trust my manuscript will satisfy you intellectually and be emotionally rewarding for you as it was for me, researching, writing, and rewriting it, *without* institutional support or financial subsidy from corporate or non-profit sectors, but with *A Love Supreme*.

After you’ve read it, I trust you learned something new about how your brain works. Not only that, you might apply that knowledge in your life. Not only that, you might see something you didn’t see before. Not only that, you might gain clarity you didn’t have before. I have had such experiences many times, and I share one.

This writing process has been a journey that ultimately bestowed upon me strategies to share to model our future mosaic humanity and reaffirm our indomitable spirit. This project became a life-defining mission called “*Serudj-Ta*,” a Kemeti (Pharaonic Egyptian, pre-Greek, and Arab) word that constituted a common core ethical/moral ideal and political and transgenerational justice imperative, or *Nefer-Maâti* (Beautiful Truth/Wisdom). For over 3000 years, it was expressed in individual autobiographies, art, architecture, and wisdom literature.

***Serudj-Ta* *(circa ~ 3400 BCE):**

*“To restore that which is damaged and destroyed,
To raise that which is in ruins,
To set right that which is wrong,
To replenish that which is lacking,
To strengthen that which is weak,
To make flourish that which is lifeless,
building it better, and more beautiful than it was*