

Black History: The Myths and Realities of Liberation in the US and Canada

Global Research News Hour episode 210

By [Michael Welch](#) and [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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Region: [Canada](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#),
[History](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State](#)
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“We must recognize that we can’t solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power... this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can’t really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, in a report to Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff (May 1967) [1]

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During his farewell address, outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama alluded to progress in his nation’s longstanding war with racial inequality, while acknowledging that “we’re not where we need to be.”

Yes, our progress has been uneven. The work of democracy has always been hard. It has been contentious. Sometimes it has been bloody. For every two steps forward, it often feels we take one step back. But the long sweep of America has been defined by forward motion, a constant widening of our founding creed to embrace all, and not just some.[2]

The historical narrative of ‘uneven progress’ in which America has taken one step back for every two steps forward masks the reality of an enduring Newtonian dynamic in which for every achievement in the struggle, there seems to be an equal and opposite racist reaction. Hence the rise of Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan following the Emancipation of slaves, the rise of mass incarceration and criminalization of Blacks following the civil rights victories of the 60s, and the rise of a white supremacy baiting presidential candidate following the administration of America’s first Black president. [3]

The depiction of an exceptionalist America stumbling toward a horizon, however distant, of equality and racial harmony serves to distract from the inequities already built into the economic and political system. The persistence of America’s racial divide is not fully explained by the ignorance and callousness of individuals. A full accounting of enduring

hostility toward people of colour must account for the idea that economic elites have long benefited from such repression. Systemic components within a system that exists “to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority,” as [Founding Father James Madison](#) put it, will therefore remain intact absent a fundamental restructuring of the balance of economic and political power in the country.

This week’s Global Research News Hour attempts to honour and respect the spirit of Black History Month by examining these more fundamental institutional factors impeding real change in race relations.

In the first half hour, past guest Abayomi Azikiwe returns to discuss today’s prison-industrial complex as slavery by other means, the rise of the NRA, and Trump-era domestic politics all within the context of America’s racist/capitalist paradigm. He also tackles the question of emancipation both from racism and capitalism as a joint project.

We then hear from Canadian historian and poet Professor Afua Cooper about some of the hidden history of Canada’s cruelty toward its Black population, and how institutional racism is expressing itself within the Canadian context today.

Finally, we hear from Suzanne Ross, one of the campaigners to free former death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia’s arrest and trial are seen by many as examples of institutional racism at work within the criminal justice system. In this short interview, Ross provides an update on Mumia’s plight and shares word of an international campaign in the lead up to a March 27th court date which provides a realistic hope that Mumia may ultimately be released from prison. More details at the site [freemumia.com](#).

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of [Pan-African News Wire](#), an international electronic press service designed to foster intelligent discussion on the affairs of African people throughout the continent and the world. A political analyst for Press TV and RT, Abayomi has appeared on numerous television and radio networks including Al Jazeera, CCTV, BBC, NPR, Radio Netherlands, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, South Africa Radio 786, Belgian Pirate Radio, TVC Nigeria and others. He is also a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Afua Cooper is Associate Professor at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. She holds the James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies and is a celebrated and award-winning poet, author, historian, curator, performer, cultural worker, and recording artist. Afua holds a Ph.D. in history with specialties in slavery, abolition and women’s studies, and is one of Canada’s premier experts and chroniclers of the country’s Black past.

Suzanne Ross is a clinical psychologist, a long-time anti-imperialist activist and representative of [International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal](#).

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Boston College Radio [WZBC 90.3FM NEWTONS](#) during the Truth and Justice Radio Programming slot - Sundays at 7am ET.

[Port Perry Radio](#) in Port Perry, Ontario –1 Thursdays at 1pm ET

[Burnaby Radio Station CJSF out of Simon Fraser University](#). 90.1FM to most of Greater Vancouver, from Langley to Point Grey and from the North Shore to the US Border.

It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia, Canada. – Tune in at its new time – Wednesdays at 4pm PT.

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Campus and community radio [CFMH 107.3fm](#) in Saint John, N.B. airs the Global Research News Hour Fridays at 10am.

Caper Radio CJBU 107.3FM in Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia airs the Global Research News Hour starting Wednesday Morning from 8:00 to 9:00am. Find more details at www.caperradio.ca

RIOT RADIO, the visual radio station based out of Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario has begun airing the Global Research News Hour on an occasional basis. Tune in at dcstudentsinc.ca/services/riot-radio/

Notes:

1. <https://kairoscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/King-quotes-2-page.pdf>
2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/us/politics/obama-farewell-address-speech.html>
3. Ibram X. Kendi (January 21, 2017), ‘Racial Progress Is Real. But So Is Racist Progress’, New York Times;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/opinion/sunday/racial-progress-is-real-but-so-is-racist-progress.html>

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Articles by: [Michael Welch](#)
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