**The Case for Reparations**

**by Ta-Nehisi Coates**

[**http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/**](http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/)

**(Note: This article was very long. So rather than address everything in it, I have only responded to those parts where I have a strong disagreement)**

***"And if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today."***

***Deuteronomy 15: 12–15***

**Coates, I have a couple of problems with the way you chose to start this article.**

**1) Why would an African-American, like you, quote scripture**

**from a God who condoned slavery?**

**Slave-owners used scripture to justify their horrid, inhuman institution. Here is a quote from a speech by Jefferson Davis on the floor of the U.S. Senate in 1850:**

**“[slavery] was established by decree of almighty god ... it is sanctioned in the bible, in both testaments, from Genesis to Revelation ... it has existed in all ages, has been found among the people of the highest civilization, and in nations of the highest proficiency in the arts.”**

**Just makes you so proud to be an American, huh Coates?**

**As an African-American, your position is misguided at best.**

**2) The verse you chose to quote refers to Hebrew slaves in**

**Egypt. The only problem with that is that there is no record**

**(outside of the Bible) that there ever were Hebrew slaves in**

**Egypt.**

**3) You used this verse not to show how disgusting slavery was,**

**or how vile God's support of slavery is, or how inaccurate the**

**Bible is, but instead, you used it for your own agenda,**

**basically saying "give us the money because God says so."**

**So this slave-endorsing God is now your best friend because you think you can use these ancient apocryphal scriptures to coax Americans to give you money by playing on their religious beliefs?**

**You're really off to a great start Coates.**

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**His next 9 chapters give a detailed history of the horrors that African-Americans have endured. Despite its length, it is a must-read essay that should be required reading in high school history.**

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**In chapter 10, Coates states,**

***"An America that asks what it owes its most vulnerable citizens is improved and humane. An America that looks away is ignoring not just the sins of the past but the sins of the present and the certain sins of the future. More important than any single check cut to any African American, the payment of reparations would represent America’s maturation out of the childhood myth of its innocence into a wisdom worthy of its founders."***

**And here is where I have my biggest problem with Coates' position.**

**Regarding Slavery**

**You'll notice that Coates never displays even one ounce of gratitude for the hundreds of thousands of Union soldiers who died to liberate his ancestors and keep America united. Coates never once directs his request for reparations to those who were guilty of enslaving them, but at "America" - the country that freed them. That shows that he isn't thinking about what's right and wrong - he's only thinking about the money; and I find his lack of gratitude for the sacrifices of Americans ... puke-inducing.**

**Regarding Jim Crow**

**Coates makes powerful points regarding compensation for families of the victims. Again though, he needs to direct his attack at the appropriate villains, not the American Treasury: Which laws? Which states? Which individuals?**

**To produce Coates' essay obviously required a tremendous amount of research and effort on his part. I am indebted to him for what he has taught me. But he needs to realize that his job is not finished. He needs to restart the fire and dig deeper and find the villains. He needs to focus. His essay proves he is capable. Whether he does so or not, will show everyone whether his motivation is based on justice ... or greed.**