

Reading both passages, discuss one of Martin Luther King’s final statements in the essay. "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice."

What did King mean by the white moderate and how could that have hindered Civil Rights?

## **The South's Shocking Hidden History: Thousands of Blacks Forced Into Slavery Until WW2**

by Douglas A. Blackmon.

Copyright 2013, Washington Monthly LLC. Reproduced with permission.

On July 31, 1903, a letter addressed to President Theodore Roosevelt arrived at the White House. It had been mailed from the town of Bainbridge, Georgia, the prosperous seat of a cotton county perched on the Florida state line.

The sender was a barely literate African American woman named Carrie Kinsey. With little punctuation and few capital letters, she penned the bare facts of the abduction of her fourteen-year-old brother, James Robinson, who a year earlier had been sold into involuntary servitude. Kinsey had already asked for help from the powerful white people in her world. She knew where her brother had been taken—a vast plantation not far away called Kinderloun. There, hundreds of black men and boys were held in chains and forced to labor in the fields or in one of several factories owned by the McRee family, one of the wealthiest and most powerful in Georgia. No white official in this corner of the state would take an interest in the abduction and enslavement of a black teenager. Confronted with a world of indifferent white people, Mrs. Kinsey did the only remaining thing she could think of. Newspapers across the country had recently reported on a speech by Roosevelt promising a “square deal” for black Americans. Mrs. Kinsey decided that her only remaining hope was to beg the president of the United States to help her brother. “Mr. Prassident,” she wrote. “They wont let me have him.... He hase not don nothing for them to have him in chanes so I rite to you for your help.” Considered more than a century later, her letter courses with desperation and submerged outrage. Yet when received at the White House, it was slipped into a small rectangular folder and forwarded to the Department of Justice. There, it was tagged with a reference number, 12007, and filed away. Teddy Roosevelt never saw it. No action was taken. Her words lie still at the National Archives just outside Washington, D.C. As dumbfounding as the story told by the Carrie Kinsey letter is, far more remarkable is what surrounds that letter at the National Archives. In the same box that holds her grief-stricken missive are at least half a dozen other pieces of correspondence recounting other stories of kidnapping, perversion of the courts, or human trafficking—as horrifying as, or worse than, Carrie Kinsey’s tale. It is the same in the next box on the shelf. And the one before. And the ones on either side of those. And the next and the next. And on and on. Thousands and thousands of plaintive letters and grimly bureaucratic responses—altogether at least 30,000 pages of original material—chronicle cases of forced labor and involuntary servitude in the South decades after the end of the Civil War. “i have a little girl that has been kidnapped from me ... and i cant get her out,” wrote Reverend L. R. Farmer, pastor of a black Baptist church in Morganton, North Carolina. “i want ask you is it law for people to whip (col) people and keep them and not allow them to leave without a pass.” A farmer near Pine Apple, Alabama, named J. R. Adams, writing of terrible abuses by the dominant landowning family in the county, was one of the astonishingly few white southerners who also complained to the Department of Justice. “They have held negroes ... for years,” Adams wrote. “It is a very rare thing that a negro escapes.” A similar body of material rests in the files of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the one institution that undertook any sustained effort to address at least the most terrible cases. Dwarfing everything at those repositories are the still largely unexamined collections of local records in courthouses across the South. In dank basements,

abandoned buildings, and local archives, seemingly endless numbers of files contain hundreds of thousands of handwritten entries documenting in monotonous granularity the details of an immense, metastasizing horror that stretched well into the twentieth century.

Martin Luther King wrote the letter below while in prison for defying a state court order against demonstrating in Birmingham, Alabama. He was responding to white clergy who had published a statement in the Birmingham News, criticizing King and other civil rights activists for their impatience. King wrote that the African Americans of Birmingham were left with no choice but to demonstrate against the injustices they were suffering.

### **Excerpts from: Letter from a Birmingham Jail-Martin Luther King, Jr. April 16, 1963**

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms. You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal. Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes

constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?