

Askia At-Large *Darfur and the Sudan 'Hustle'*

Askia Muhammad
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I confess that at first I was a little embarrassed that I did not join the pack with my own full-throated condemnation of Sudan over Darfur.

So now, here comes President George W. (For “worst in history”) Bush, slapping more sanctions on Sudan, and the chorus screaming “genocide” getting louder still. Uh-oh.



Recently I talked to several Black folks who visited Sudan, including Darfur this spring. More than one of them defended Sudan citing Paul Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda during the Nazi regime, and his “Big Lie Technique.”

To wit: “never allow the public to cool off; never admit a fault or wrong; never concede that there may be some good in your enemy; never leave room for alternatives; never accept blame; concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong; people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it.” They said someone is practicing “The Big Lie” against Sudan.

Hmmm, I thought.

That certainly was the case in the story of so-called “slavery” in Sudan five or six years ago, when people—even well-meaning Black Civil Rights leaders—insisted that the Arab-Muslim government in the North of Sudan was practicing slavery against the Black-African-Christians in the South of the country.

Some of my friends went to the region and even claimed to have “bought” slaves and set them free. That was all a hoax. There never was any “slavery” where people were bought and sold as chattel. There was a decades-old civil war raging in Southern Sudan, and often the various warring parties engaged in kidnapping and ransoming captured members of opposing tribal groups, but people weren’t being bought and sold into slavery.

Someone was using The Big Lie Technique to influence Blacks in America, knowing how sensitive we are to and unforgiving we would be of anyone practicing “slavery.” After all, if Black folks turn against an African government, that government can’t count on any friends in the U.S. public opinion.

But Darfur is no “slavery hoax,” although there are many similarities to be found. There is a huge humanitarian crisis, compounded by years of drought, and an old-fashioned “range war” where nomadic camel herdsman are competing for arable land and water to graze their animals, with farmers trying to grow crops. It’s a bloody fight, a fight which neither side can win outright.

So that’s the pretext and the context. A fight with the Arab-Muslim government on one side, and Black Africans on the other.

And then, a “smoking gun” was revealed. The Save Darfur Coalition, started to unravel from within. Questions were raised about whether or not the now deposed executive director of the organization—David Rubenstein—had wisely used a huge influx of cash from a few anonymous donors, in an advertising blitz, which included full page ads in metropolitan newspapers and in Black media. After Rubenstein walked the plank, Save Darfur board member Ruth Messinger, whose day-job is as president of the American Jewish World Service, said of him: “we wish him the best in his search for new opportunities for public service,” according to a report in the June 2, 2007 edition of *The New York Times*.

The Save Darfur Coalition, with its \$15 million annual budget, wasn't sending a dime to the refugee camps in Darfur or in neighboring Chad. They were spending big bucks, waging war against Sudan's “radical Islamic regime,” composed of Arabs, obviously bent on “ethnic cleansing” of Black Africans.

The only thing is, 99.9 percent of all the people of Darfur, are Islamic. And as far as the Arab-government-business goes: they're all Black! There's not one person in the Sudanese government, who looks anything like your typical “Arab.” Not President Omar al Bashir, nor any of his cabinet, nor most of his country's ambassadors, could pass the fabled “paper bag test.” They're all too dark-skinned!

But we have heard, thanks to the Save Darfur “Big Lie Technique” ads, that the Arab-Muslims have been practicing “genocide” against the Black-Christian-Africans.

More sanctions they insist. Send in U.N. peace-keeping troops. Impose a “no-fly zone” over Darfur. Why that's just what the U.S. did before invading Iraq, in what is now a luckless war of aggression, which the U.S. can never win.

Why is all of this going on? You might wonder. Oil. Huge un-developed oil reserves.

That Islamic government in Khartoum just happens to preside over the largest, and one of the most mineral rich countries on the African continent. Did I say they have lots of oil?

That Islamic government has ports on the Red Sea, and includes the head waters of the Nile River which can provide electricity all over the country. It has rich agricultural potential, and it borders on nine—count them—nine other African nations.

Sudan has the potential of being a bridge between Islamic Arab North Africa and Bantu Black Sub-Saharan Africa. In my book, that makes Sudan, an “enemy” of Western Imperialism, by simple definition.

I am not embarrassed any more to openly question the Save Darfur movement, because it is just the same old anti-Sudan movement, just dressed up in a different coat, a coat of many colors, including well-meaning conservatives, liberals, and even Blacks, all of whom have been duped by someone's anti-Sudan “Big Lie” which has also proven to be a very profitable hustle.

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