

Sowing the Seeds of Global Slavery Awareness

By Gordon Jackson
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HAMPTON, Va. - Book author and activist Venita Benitez wasn't born in Hamp-

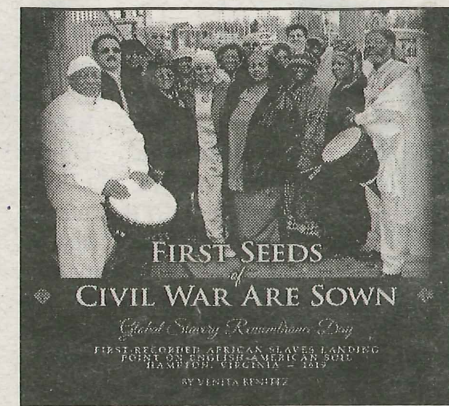
ton, Virginia, yet her spirit and the spirit of the city's history have definitely connected. For the second straight year, she traveled to the east coast city from her Dallas home to

observe one of the most critical and controversial phases of our nation's history, a slice of history that was recognized by President Obama earlier this year.

Benitez has already reflected her commitment to this cause through the publishing of a book and the founding of a human rights organization. She has been lauded by dignitaries such as Molly Ward, the Mayor of Hampton for her efforts.

In *First Seeds of Civil War Are Sown*, Benitez, founder of Global Slavery Remembrance Day, chronicles the history of the slave trade in America, since the first recorded African slaves were shipped to and landed in Hampton in 1619. The city of Hampton was founded and settled nine years earlier.

A memorial to recognize the start of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is held in Hampton every March 25, a ceremony Benitez has attended the last two years. In each memorial, officially recognized by the City of Hampton, a replica of a slave ship is cer-



(Left) Abolitionist Venita Benitez (l.) is honored by Hampton Virginia mayor Molly Ward. (Right) Benitez's book chronicles the beginning history of slavery in America.

emoniously docked from the Atlantic Ocean, not to glorify the slave trade, but to reflect on the inhumane pain it still brings generations later.

March 25 is observed by the United Nations and several other institutions as International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

"Slavery is a complex and difficult topic and yet it is important to learn of and understand the past to make

sense of the present," Benitez said in her book. "The many inherited crimes against humanity in this beginning tragedy included racism and discrimination, about which we continue to have no true answer or peace for reconciliation today."

Benitez, who traces her own lineage back to the Duchess of Norfolk and the first-elected president of Jamestown, Virginia, is a self-proclaimed modern-day abolitionist, inspired by past

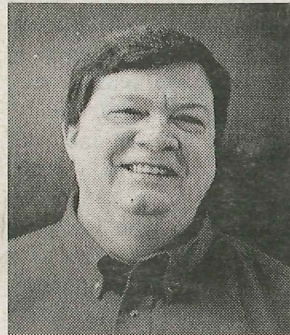
abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and John Brown. Yet, her work serves an additional purpose, to make the public aware of the underground modern-day slave trade that continues to exist in countries around the world, including the United

States.

The fact that slavery is still practiced in several forms today motivated President Obama on January 4 to issue a Presidential Proclamation, naming January 2010 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, to coincide with the annual celebration of National Freedom Day on February 1.

"I call upon the people of
See , on page 15

AARP partnering to address inequalities in African-American community



By Bob Jackson

AARP Texas would like to take a moment to reflect on the significant progress that has been made in our country. We salute all the civil rights pioneers of yesterday — African-Americans, Hispanics, women and others -- and the people who are still working to

make positive progress toward creating a more equal and just society.

Amazing strides have been made since the 1950s. The bus boycotts helped begin a movement that culminated in the Civil Rights Acts and the Voting Rights Act of the 1960s. Two generations of Americans have never known segregation. In the past two decades, the number of African-American college students has approximately doubled. Between 2004 and 2008 alone, more than 2 million more African Americans started voting.

Yet there is still work to be done. And AARP Texas wants to help do it.

See AARP, on page 15

August 22, 2011

Because I understand the importance of history being documented correctly, I cannot let these two misquotes in this article be entered without correction. Everything else is a fact.

“In each memorial, officially recognized by the City of Hampton, a replica of a slave ship is ceremoniously docked from the Atlantic Ocean,” ...This never happened and I don't know where the reporter got it from, not from my interview for sure. –Venita Benitez

AND

“(Left) Abolitionist Venita Benitez (l.) honored by Hampton Virginia mayor Molly Ward” ...This is not a fact. I was honored the previous year in 2009 with a City of Hampton proclamation from Mayor Molly Ward on March 25, 2009 but on March 25, 2010, I was honoring Mayor Molly Ward with two letters recognizing her humanitarian efforts acknowledgment of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery from Mayor Pro Tem Dwaine R. Caraway of Dallas, Texas and Reginald Gates, President of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce. –Venita Benitez

"I am here because you are here. I am glad that you are here, because so much is said negative about the Black family and about our Black men. We know that one out of every four may be in the correctional system or may be in some

HALL, continued from page 4

Jesse Jackson Jr. did an outstanding job of temporarily presiding over the House and disarming GOP challenges to its rules. But it was obvious that Republicans lawmakers have realized how much value and valor they earn with their constituents with vein arguments and tomfoolery.

And what's all the fuss about anyway? Our present health care plan is broken and we pay dearly in local and federal taxes. Countless County hospitals throughout the nation have gone bankrupt. HB 3962 is an effort to centralize health costs and insert some cost controls. The bill will ensure that almost every American has access to preventive and continuing care.

Marcelas got the kind of education that I wish for all

and time, show some love for our Queen. Go out and vote, take care of your family, volunteer in your community, support worthy causes and do for others without expecting something back! That's the Height way!

black children. Now Marcelas can understand W.E.B. Dubois and the "divided soul and twoness" he described as a result of being black in America. You're always encouraged to be part of the team, but the issue of your race always comes into play.

And if for no other reason, I'm glad that Marcelas was truant because he got a major photo op. In fact, the picture of him looking on as PrezO signed HB3962 reminded me of the picture of Bill Clinton at age 17 at the White House with then President John F. Kennedy. If nothing else Marcelas, like President Clinton, began to understand that he too can be President.

There is an education in everything, even in an occasional truancy!

rent, mortgage payments, utility bills and food is double that of whites. One in four African Americans lives in poverty.

It's not just financial security that is unequal. It's

MFUME, continued from page 7

Congressional Black Caucus, and co-founded the Congressional Task Force on Sarcoidosis Disease Awareness. Mfume also served on the Baltimore City Council for seven years, where he chaired

the Committee on Health.

Mfume went on to serve as NAACP chief for nine years until 2004. Mfume left the NAACP, announcing that he would take a break. At that time it was widely known

HOPE, continued from page 12

tire life building our house and the whole home collapsed," Jean-Louis continued. "It is very difficult coping with the situation."

Ambassador Joseph said that one of the most hopeful signs of the relief effort is the return of Haitians who live abroad

SLAVERY, continued from page 13

the United States to recognize the vital role we can play in ending modern slavery, and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities," Obama said in the proclamation. "Fighting modern slavery and human trafficking is a shared responsibility. This month, I

urge all Americans to educate themselves about all forms of modern slavery and the signs and consequences of human trafficking. Together, we can and must end this most serious, ongoing criminal civil rights violation."

Back in Dallas, Benitez feverously continues here

Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches to talk to about how individuals can help make a difference in their own community and beyond. We have built valuable

aces. We don't plan to stop anytime soon.

Bob Jackson is executive director of AARP Texas.

that his relationship with NAACP board Chairman Julian Bond had experienced significant friction. He later ran unsuccessfully for a U. S. Senate seat in Maryland.

A native of Baltimore,

Mfume received his B.S. from Morgan State University and his Master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. His former bestselling autobiography is entitled "No Free Ride."

to their native soil to lend their support. Joseph said, "The people who have been gone for almost five decades are rushing back.

Hopefully, some of these individuals will eventually return to Haiti permanently to continue the rebuilding process."

work, making aware of the historical connection between the past and current practice of slavery. She is closely working with other modern-day abolitionists in preparation for the year 2019, when the 400th anniversary of the American

Transatlantic Slave Trade will be observed.

For more information about the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and facts about modern day slavery, visit www.globalslaveryremembranceday.com.