



**BlackEconomics.org®**

### **“We Have Always Had to Purchase Our Liberties”**

The Cable News Network (CNN) and its parent company, Time Warner, are patting themselves on the back these days for hosting the first ever “Juneteenth: A Global Celebration for Freedom,” from the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, California on Sunday, June 19, 2022.<sup>1</sup>

During the celebration, there were innumerable mentions of “freedom,” but the term was never defined.<sup>2</sup>

We submit the following definition:

Freedom [liberty] is to possess power to be the ultimate decider/determiner and doer. Being permitted poetic license for individual, creative expression within selected components of life’s games and subgames is not freedom. Rather freedom is the power to determine the structure and rules of the components of life’s games and subgames—indeed, of the game of life itself as it is known in an established society.<sup>3</sup>

Considered in this context, Black Americans have never been, and are not, free in the American society. Why not? Because, even in “the land of the free,” Black Americans, and everyone else for that matter, must purchase the right to be the “ultimate decider/determiner and doer” of any act. A key difference for Black Americans is that, given our meager wealth, we are generally unable to purchase freedom rights. Also, there are certain goods, services, and access that we cannot purchase even if we have the wherewithal to do so—mainly due to racial discrimination.

Let us consider two seemingly fundamental rights as examples:

- Healthcare should be a fundamental right. However, we know that unless one has insurance and cash, one cannot obtain healthcare from the best hospitals or healthcare institutions.
- Access to a high-quality education should be a fundamental right at least at the elementary and secondary school levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Please correct us if we are wrong. We venture that performers during the celebration likely did so free of charge, while CNN raked in the advertising dollars. That is free giving of our artistic and cultural services, but it does not constitute freedom.

<sup>2</sup> It is very important to note that the US Constitution and its Amendments only reflect the word “liberty” (freedom) twice: (1) In the preamble; and (2) in

Article I of the XIV Amendment. The idea that the XIII Amendment brought “freedom” or “liberty” as typically comprehended is misguided. The XIII Amendment essentially states the conditions under which labor can or should be performed.

<sup>3</sup> From [\*Exodus: A Book for Black Americans Suggesting a Way Out and Up\*](#), p. 7.

It is billed as being “free” because it is often offered by “public schools.” However, we know that if one’s family does not have the financial resources to reside in neighborhoods or districts that are associated with high-quality schools, then, in most cases, one cannot obtain access to education in those schools—even if one qualifies academically. It is a foregone conclusion that one cannot gain access to the highest-quality elementary and secondary education if it is offered by private schools. This says nothing about access to the highest quality tertiary education.

If one cannot obtain access to healthcare and education freely (liberally), then what are prospects for achieving one’s maximum life potential without these two essential human assets: A healthy body and well-tuned mind?

Also consider that if one is poor and if one wants to create a vision for one’s offspring by simply exposing them to “better/higher-quality” real-life environments, then one is not free to do this. For example, you cannot show them how the one percent live in their gated communities because you cannot enter the gate. Try entering a private elementary or secondary school or college or university campus, and you will find yourselves accosted by security forces immediately. If one wants to expose one’s child to various careers that may lead to a higher-quality future life, then one is not free to do this either. One will risk one’s well-being by attempting to enter the premises of a private financial institution, medical facility, research laboratory, law firm, or an

architectural and engineering firm as examples. And if one has certain knowledges, skills, and abilities, but desires to hone those attributes further by studying in the highest-quality libraries one will find that one is often blocked from doing so without special permission or by paying a substantial fee.

In fact, many Black Americans do not even have the freedom to meander through our own areas of influence (communities) without being checked by an outside police force.

So, we can celebrate “freedom” (liberty) vociferously. The truth is: We are not free! Let us not be delusional and forget about “Driving while Black,” “Being Arrested while Black,” “Shopping while Black,” “Dying while Black,” “Banking while Black,” etc.

**If we are not free, then how do we realize Black Liberty?** We must plan for, secure, and then operationalize independent and self-determined territories where we can really “possess power to be the ultimate decider/determiner and doer.” Until we achieve this outcome, then real freedom (liberty) will be a pipe dream.

But have we not known from the outset of our sojourn in America that we have had to always purchase our freedoms (liberties): Freedoms to perform constrained and selected acts, or to exit America to locations where freedoms (liberties) are more abundant?

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