**Ceremony of Bois Caiman or the Congress in the Forests: What relevance to today’s Afrikan situation?**

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**Ceremony of Bois Caiman or the Congress in the Forests: What is its relevance to today’s Afrikans situation the world over?**

Bayyinah Bello

In the name of and with permission from the Power who invented the word, name Ptah in Egypt; the one who initiated the opening of roads, name Legba in Ayiti, Esu-Elegba in Fon and Ganesha in India; the one who personifies organization, structure and measure name Ayizan in Ayiti and Sarasvati in India; the one who keeps human memory alive : Grann Ibolele (memory of humanity); in the names of all the Forces and powers who preceded us, in this ever going effort to remove, each day, one more veil over the opacity which covers the spiritual knowledge in the flesh, we salute you in terms dear to all who struggle for freedom through time/space, "freedom or death!"

First, let’s be clear on the environment in which our Ancestors existed then. Imagine, if you can’t see or feel it, you are under a system that says you are not a human being **but a thing that can be sold, bought, damaged, destroyed, humiliated**… without reason, for the fun of it. The same system says that any time three of your kind are speaking together without permission, it will be considered: **plotting against your ‘masters’ and can be put to death**. You can only do your personal needs if permission is given to you. A pregnant woman works the field till the baby comes. No maternity leave or break. Squat here and pee it out! Within this structure, our Ancestors decided that they would, against all odds, all laws, all known practices, organize a meeting among themselves to debate: “**What could we do so our children and grandchildren do not have to suffer this kind of atrocious ‘unlife’ that we are in today?”**

Fatimah is the daughter of an Afrikan woman married to a Corsican nobleman. They seemed to have lived in France at first. At some point, the husband sold his wife and children into slavery. No one seem to decipher the reasons for such behavior. From this point on, Fatimah never got any news as to what became of her mom and siblings.

There, in this living hell which is the slavery system of Saint-Domingue, one woman, dark skin, vivid green eyes, long thick dark hair, svelte, long neck and legs decided that something had to be done and assume the responsibility to do it. Within the slavery system, she has already been through it all. Servant in the so-called master’s house; tree cutter; field worker, having her boobs rented to nurse white babies on different plantations… Yes, Manbo Cecile Fatimah decided to take on the challenge. She had another ace up her sleeves, she was past sixty, an age at which no one notices your existence, almost as if you were no longer alive or nearly invisible, absolutely so when you are a woman.

She took four years going back and forth to different key Afrikans on the various plantations to convince them that they should take all the necessary risks in order for us to meet. She organized messengers in relay teams in order for her messages and instructions to go from one end to the other of the island. She also acquired tremendous knowledge of the geography of the land, specific know-how as to how to navigate through the caves. With a highly disciplined mind, she planed who would participate where and the various codes they would use for identification at different check points. Realized several meetings in a single night so that many more of us could participate. A simple question must be answered at all the gatherings. “What can we do so our children and grandchildren never have to suffer the misery that we know today?

No comfort, no chairs, no microphones, food, no per dium, no transportation facilities…, in fact much carefulness and whispering; constantly worried about being discovered, in which case, death shall surely follow. Yet, we dared to do it! Within a week, everyone was informed of the decision: “we must fight!”. Immediately, the plan, the strategies are put in place and the actions to materialize the decision. In less than a month, more than 1/3 of all plantations in the Northern area of Saint Domingue were no longer functioning. Fear, changed residence! Now, European colonists knew what fear meant.

One speech marked the participants, it travelled across the island. From this speech at the congress, Bookman Dutty became an evident leader. What did he say to the frightfully worried ones?

“**BOOKMAN DUTTY'S speech, spoken on the night of August 13TH, 1791**

**at the CONGRESS IN THE FORESTS (CEREMONIE DU BOIS CAIMAN)”**

*“THE GOD WHO CREATED THE SUN WHICH GIVES US LIGHT, WHO ROUSES THE WAVES AND RULES THE STORM THOUGH HIDDEN IN THE CLOUDS, IS OUR FATHER AND WATCHES OVER US.*

*HE SEES ALL THAT THE WHITE MEN IS DOING TO US. THE GOD OF THE WHITES INSPIRES THEM WITH CRIMES BUT OUR GOD CALLS UPON US TO DO GOOD WORKS. OUR GOD WHO IS GOOD TO US, ORDERS US TO AVENGE THE WRONGS DONE TO US. HE PROMESES TO DIRECT OUR ARMS AND AID US. HE COMMANDS US TO THROW AWAY THE SYMBOLS OF THE GOD OF THE WHITES WHO HAVE SO OFTEN CAUSED US TO WEEP (SNATCHED THE LIGHT OUT OF OUR LIFE), AND HE DEMANDS THAT WE LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF LIBERTY WHICH SPEAKS IN THE HEART OF EACH ONE OF US.”*

That is the speech that awakened the zombified slaves! Those are the words which brought declared legal things back to their humanity! This was the declaration that turned cowards into courageous heroines and heroes in Ayiti. They were pronounced one Saturday night, August 13th, 1791, enlightened and powered by the energy of a full moon! Let us pause, go profoundly within ourselves and attempt to awaken our own terribly damaged Afrikan soul by repeating slowly, this slightly adapted text together.

*“THE GOD WHO CREATED THE SUN WHICH GIVES US LIGHT, WHO ROUSES THE WAVES AND RULES THE STORM, THOUGH, HIDDEN ~~IN THE CLOUDS~~, WITHIN OUR DEEPER SELF, IS OUR MOTHER/FATHER AND WATCHES OVER US.*

*SHE/HE SEES ALL THAT THE WHITE ~~MEN~~ FOLKS ARE DOING TO US. THE GOD OF THE WHITES INSPIRES THEM WITH CRIMES, BUT OUR GOD, CALLS UPON US TO DO GOOD WORKS. OUR GOD WHO IS GOOD TO US, ORDERS US, TO AVENGE THE WRONGS DONE TO US. SHE/HE PROMESES TO DIRECT OUR ARMS, AND AID US. SHE/HE COMMANDS US, TO THROW AWAY THE SYMBOLS OF THE GOD OF THE WHITES, WHO HAS SO OFTEN ~~CAUSED US TO WEEP~~ (SNATCHED THE LIGHT OUT OF OUR LIFE), AND SHE/HE DEMANDS THAT WE LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF ~~LIBERTY~~ FREEDOM WHICH SPEAKS IN THE HEART OF EACH AND EVERYONE OF US.”*

We Afrikan people, the world over, are in an almost identical situation today as our Ancestors were in the time of the Congress in the Forests, if not worst. Looking at world events in the past ten years, how could any clear headed sane person not see that? What is the relevance to our situation today? Whether on the Afrikan continent, in the islands, in the usa or Europe, our people are powerless frightful folks waiting for a miracle to save them. We are unaware that only US can save US. Our Ancestors were more advanced than us, since people like aunt Cecile Fatimah understood that no matter what any body’s law said, we had a divine duty to gather, to unite our forces and establish a single objective: **save the next generation at any cost to this present one**. Today, we are unconscious commanders on the man’s plantation, speaking words planned by him, world views learned in his schools and medias; dressed in outfit designed by him even if totally inappropriate for our climate and body types; posing actions organized by him; striving to reach objectives set by him though totally unfitting our realities. There, programmed poverty; here, temporary peace; over there raging wars, all according to his established plans. Yesterday’s strong man is arrested and hanged without trial by him, in the name of democracy. Yesterday’s president is handcuffed, laid on a floor in underwear; today’s tourists’ hotspots turned into a dismantled war zone by him at will. Where are our independences? Where is our freedom? What is all this talk about democracy? What is it they call it, human rights? Wake up folks! What happened to afrikan presidents Khadafi, Laurent Gbagbo, Sadam Hussein is human rights? Which European presidents assassinated them? Are they on trial? Where are the victims’s human rights? Let’s call on Grann Ibolele so we would strengthen our memory in order to go back further, and remember: after Ayiti managed to regain its freedom after 312 years of atrocious euro Christians slavery, the French demanded that Ayiti paid them 150 million gold francs which represented five times, the French national budget. After the british government decided to make slavery illegal in Jamaica in 1834, the white planters received compensation for their lost equal to 40% of the british budget at that time. Unsatisfied they also demanded and got 4 more years of free hard work from the so-called freed Blacks; which represents in fact a four-year extension of slavery. What did the Afrikans victims of several centuries of the euro Christian slavery got? No land, no money, no work, no compensation. Wake up folks!

Each one of us desperately need to call on a Cecile Fatimah to arrive from within, wherever we are living. The fact is that none of our countries are neither free nor independent, indeed not one is sovereign today. The euro Christian barbarians who landed on the shores of the so-called American continent, are neither less racists, nor less inhuman today; they have simply developed more subtle techniques to continue their rampage. Better yet, our parents struggled to pay for us to attend schools that turned us into arrogant commanders ready to slaughter any number of our own People in multiple forms: psychologically, financially, spiritually, militarily… Each situation is in a desperate need to hold a Congress in the Forest, except that we are unaware of it. We need to sit and talk among ourselves. Yet, our mind set, as it stands now, can’t conceive of such a gathering unless strangers are part of the financing and presence of it. If the enemy isn’t present, then it’s not important. We need to make plans to protect the coming generations otherwise our species will disappear from the face of this Earth. In fact, the planet itself is at risk of explosion when one takes into consideration the abundance of weapons of massive destruction stored in various countries. When will we stop the talking for talking and begin to talk to plan, to organize, to arrange auto financing of our projects of self-help and advancement? When will we begin supporting each other’s efforts?

Instead of a conclusion, let us shout out loud the names of Ancestors who understood this situation better than us and knew how to deal and get us out of it. Perhaps, some of them might come closer and inspire us the way out of this plantation that we are in, wherever we are on this planet Earth today!

Aunt Cecile Fatimah! Bookman Dutty! Aunt Tòya! Sojourner Truth! Marcus Garvey! Dandara of Brazil! Sebastián Francisco de Miranda! Grann Pélagie! Toussaint Louverture! Capois Lamort! Marie-Jeanne! Nana from Jamaica! Queen Mary of St Croix! Anakaona of Ayiti! Jean-Jacques Dessalines! Impress Félicité of Ayiti! Princess Améthyste!

Ayibobo!

In my humble opinion, the last round of question should be modeled after the question ask in the Congress in the Forests: What can we do to protect the next generation or to insure our survival and existence into the next century? Thank you.