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This is an edited version of a keynote address by Professor Horace Campbell at the emancipation wreath laying at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park on 25 July 2018 under the theme “Our heritage our strength, Celebrating the African Resilience”.

Good afternoon everybody. I must thank the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Creative Arts, Catherine Afeku and the Government of Ghana for working together with the Emancipation Committee to ensure that we have such a large turnout of young people to celebrate and reflect on emancipation. The theme chosen by the Committee is: *Our Heritage our Strength, Celebrating the African Resilience*.

Greetings and salutations to all Members of the Diplomatic Corp, Heads of Departments and especially to the youths who are gathered here with us at this Kwame Nkrumah mausoleum. I can see that while for some diplomats it was perfunctory to turn up at the wreath laying ceremony at the Du Bois Centre some of our brothers and sisters from different embassies in Africa are still with us. The job of organising the celebration as a three part event of going to the Du Bois Centre, the Padmore Library and now the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park was a good idea because it showed that this work that brought us where we are today to stand in this place right where Kwame Nkrumah is interned and that this work has always been a collective work.

When I followed the Minister through the tomb of Du Bois in the wreath laying ceremony, I asked W.E.B Du Bois, what should be a central message. Du Bois said, *make sure that you carry a message that this is not just a formal occasion. Du Bois said to me this morning that remember where we are coming from*. Of the writings of W.E. B Du Bois that came to me at that moment was his pamphlet on the *African Roots of War*. This was a short pamphlet that Du Bois had written about how the first world was basically a continuation of the partitioning of Africa 1884-1885.

In her prepared remarks at the Du Bois Centre earlier this morning, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Creative Arts, Catherine Afeku asked us to get young people to understand what is meant to go through the Door of No Return. As many of you know, the door of no return is that last door that the captured passed through on their journey into enslavement. For the Ministry of Tourism, it will be important to continue to train the tour guides so that they explain the barbarity of what awaited the Africans after the barbarity of the slave dungeons at Cape Coast and El Mina. That experience was very much in the forefront of my consciousness as I prepared for this presentation. The title that I gave the presentation is *emancipation from enslavement yesterday, today and tomorrow*. The teaching of the meaning of emancipation is so important because so many young Africans do not fully understand what happened in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

This is not by accident because those who were accomplices in the trade yesterday have bequeathed their ideas to a generation that is acting very much like intermediaries for slavery today. The urgency of the education campaign on the meaning of Emancipation Day was driven home this morning when a young person came to me and inquired whether Du Bois is actually buried here – at the Du Bois Centre. We ought to use the educational system so that Emancipation Day is not just one event but that Emancipation Day is brought into the curriculum of all schools in Africa as it is done in the Caribbean.

What is emancipation?

On 1 January 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation, which declared, “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebel states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” The proclamation also called for the recruitment and establishment of black military units among the Union forces. An estimated 180,000 African Americans went on to serve in the army, while another 18,000 served in the navy. This war changed the history of the United States.

So when we talk about the theme of resilience and struggle we remember our brothers and sisters who fought in the United States of America to end slavery.

Twenty nine years earlier on 1 August 1834, there was the legal emancipation of all slaves in British colonies, but it was a case of freedom with conditions. The Emancipation Bill had been presented in the British Parliament by Thomas Buxton in 1833 and the Act came into effect on 1 August 1834.

Slavery was not abolished outright. Under the proclamation of 1834 there was to be a period of apprenticeship of six years 1834 to 1840. The tenets of “apprenticeship” stated that the ex-slaves would work without pay for their former masters for three-quarters of every week (40 hours) in exchange for lodging, food, clothing, medical attendance and provision grounds in which they could grow their own food during the remaining quarter of the week. They could also, if they chose, hire themselves out for more wages during that remaining quarter. With this money, an ex-slave-turned-apprentice could then buy his freedom. But those who had fought for their freedom rejected this apprenticeship and after their resistance the period was reduced from six to four years. Outright enslavement was abolished on 1 August 1838.

Every year Emancipation Day is celebrated in the Caribbean and I am pleased to share my reflections on the context of the celebrations of Emancipation Day in Ghana. Emancipation emerged out of protracted struggles yesterday.

Tomorrow the emancipation project is about whether you are going to be human beings and I want to direct my statement especially to young people who are here today because we want to say that from the global African family the most important resolution for us in terms of emancipation is to repair the damage that has been done by enslavement and to repair the damage that has been done by enslavement requires that we bring the concept of reparations to the forefront of the discussion on Emancipation Day.

Emancipation and freedom arose in the Americas as central components of the project of the humanisation of the African person. This was a project to recover the dignity of the peoples who had been treated like chattel by the system of slavery from the 16th century to the present. This emancipatory project assigned itself the tasks of restoring the humanity and dignity of the indigenous and African persons and indeed all humans.

Suffice to say, that in the Caribbean, and Latin America, the projects of slavery and colonialism were always clothed in the robes of white supremacy. In other words, a whole intellectual culture was developed to justify slavery. The words and writings of Aristotle were invoked, that Humanity is divided into two, masters and slaves. Important chapter in the book by Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade 1440-1870*.

In the 19th century the ideas that humanity was divided into two were reproduced as Social Darwinism. White supremacy was only one of the many contradictions of the relationships in this planet. The other glaring contradictions were the exploitation of the labour power of the majority of the citizens. There is the obscene situation where the world's eight richest billionaires control the same wealth between them as the poorest half of the globe's population. This contradiction is reinforced by the racist and sexist hierarchies of the international system. Today the emancipation project carries the same urgency as it did 170 years ago with the added responsibility of stopping the new slave trade from Agadez, Niger to Europe through Libya.

The search to resolve some of these contradictions has gone through many iterations from the period of enslavement to the current period of domination by transnational capitalism when corporations have given themselves the right to patent life forms. The biotech companies are threatening to introduce new slavery in this century. There are already pressures to repeal the 13th amendment of the US Constitution that rendered slavery illegal

The 13th Amendment of the US Constitution had stated,

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The thirteenth Amendment in the US abolished slavery. While the Emancipation Proclamation had been a statement by the President, the Amendment to the Constitution carried the force of law.

The 13th Amendment of the US constitution said that black people were full human beings and no longer 3/5ths of a person. Now in the 1980s the United States Patent Office gave the companies the right to patent life forms and to say that you can have life that can be created in a laboratory. That means that it is in the interests of the biotech companies to repeal the 13th amendment of the US Constitution. The long-term logic of the economic activities of Big Pharma is to repeal the 13th Amendment so that other people can own other people so that in the 21st century we must understand the struggle against bondage, enslavement and dehumanisation of human beings is not over.

This struggle over enslavement in the present and the future sets up the scene for the current emancipation struggles. This is against the struggles against the new slavery. If you go to Niger, there is a town called Agadez, which is the headquarters of the current slave trade where thousands and thousands of Africans are shepherded as human bondage persons to Europe. The trade in Niger and Libya is today a multi million-dollar industry and there are reports from journalists how the traffickers are protected by police and soldiers as the traffickers travel from Agadez in Niger to Sabha in Libya. As an article in *The Washington Post* had noted,

"Perhaps the most glaring sign of the complicity comes each Monday, when the smugglers and their migrant cargoes leave Agadez in a loose convoy led by a military escort," *The Washington Post*, 20 July 2015.

“On the road in Agadez: desperation and death along a Saharan smuggling route, [[i]]”the military escort from western countries who are supposed to be in Niger in the war against terror are complicit in this current slave trade.

Why is it that on Emancipation Day, we are not raising our voices against this new slave trade when there are hundreds of people who are dying in the Mediterranean Sea on Emancipation Day 2018? According to numerous reports, in 2015 there were more than 5,000 persons who died in the Mediterranean Sea.

Why is there no massive outcry in Africa against this new enslavement?

How could Africans sell their own into slavery? These questions are not entertained because some leaders in Africa still celebrate their 500-year relationship with the enslavers such as the British or the Dutch. Walter Rodney in identifying the class distinctions in Africa before enslavement and colonialism pointed to a class of African rulers who considered profit over the fate of their brothers and sisters.

Today, I am so tormented when decent persons refer to other Africans as their slaves. Class distinctions are so entrenched that the African ruling classes today have no hesitation in referring to the working classes in language that is so disparaging.

Slavery yesterday and Black lives today

Today when we celebrate Emancipation Day and we talk about resilience, heritage and strength, we must remind the young people that in North America, in the Caribbean and in South America Black people are fighting for their lives and they have a movement called *Black Lives Matter*. Black Lives Matter is saying that black people should not be shot down in the streets. Today I am pleased to be the Kwame Nkrumah Chair at the Institute of African Studies and as my sister Professor Jessie Sutherland has always said, we cannot go forward without understanding the culture of resistance and how there was a fight against slavery.

As a young boy, I grew up in Jamaica and as I was preparing this lecture for today I was listening to the lyrics of Bob Marley, *Slave Driver* on the album, *Catch a Fire*:

“Every time I hear the crack of a whip

My blood runs cold

I remember on the slave ship

How they brutalize our very souls

Today they say that we are free

Only to be chained in poverty

Good God, I think it's illiteracy

It's only a machine that make money.”

Our consciousness continues to be refurbished by these cultural leaders such as Bob Marley so every Caribbean leader and intellectual must reject the ideas that underwrote the enslavement of Africans. We just came from the George Padmore Library and in an unusual presentation we had the General Manager of the Republic Bank speaking. That is not usual because bankers do not get to speak at Emancipation Day celebrations, but there is a reason for that. The reason is that in Trinidad and Tobago, the history of the fight against slavery is very strong. The former Prime Minister of Trinidad, Eric Williams, wrote the important book entitled, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

Every major Caribbean intellectual grew up with the images and knowledge of the meaning of enslavement. That generation of Caribbean intellectuals exposed the full workings of international capitalism with Eric Williams, C.L.R. James Richard Hart, Walter Rodney, Elsa Goveia, Bridget Brereton, Hilary Beckles, and Verne Shepherd among scores of others doing world class scholarship to reject the idea that Africans were being civilised by enslavement. My own scholarship had been inspired by the energies from the grassroots as manifest in the movement called the Rastafari. The study, published as a book, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, chronicled the resistance to enslavement then, and the implications for the continued struggles for the dignity of the African person.

C.L.R. James in his book on the *History of Negro Revolts* wrote about the struggles of black people for freedom and that tells us that the end of slavery did not come about as a proclamation by Abraham Lincoln or by acts of the British Parliament. The end of slavery came because people fought for the freedom and in Trinidad and Tobago they only had 17,000 enslaved people as compared to a country like Jamaica that had 300,000 but in Trinidad the people have been recently coming from Africa so they understood what freedom and independence meant. The consciousness of emancipation and struggles for freedom remains very high and as the representative of the Republic Bank stated, the independent government of Trinidad was among the first to declare Emancipation Day a public holiday.

So the question for the Caribbean everywhere was that people do not accept the idea that Africans are second-class citizens; that Africans are human beings like everyone else. So that whether it is Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser on all levels, we know the struggle for emancipation came from our people.

The first fighters for emancipation were opposed to the robotics of yesterday when the forms of enslavement on the plantations in the Americas treated Africans like “machines to make money”. The book by Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, has documented this phase of the dehumanisation of the African person. This book elaborated on how Africans were treated like machines to enable American society to accumulate immense amounts of wealth to become the preeminent industrial power that it is today. The availability of cheap land and the shortage of labour led to a ruthless system of exploitation called the “pushing system” that enslaved people and which Baptist aptly describes as “innovation in violence”. It was the vibrant emancipation movement of the grassroots of stalwarts such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, and Gabriel Prosser at the grassroots that precipitated the rebellions against that form of robotisation.

Abraham Lincoln had been pressured by war. The enslaved that ran away had precipitated a break in the US military and it was the hundreds of thousands of African soldiers in the federal army that decided the fate of the US Civil War 1861-1865.

Today, the fate of the USA is being decided by the new freedom fighters and by the Blacks and Latinos in the US military.

I want to tell the young people that one of the reasons they want us to think that Abraham Lincoln freed the people is because they do not want us to teach you about Harriet Tubman, Toussaint L'Ouverture and the other freedom fighters who made emancipation possible, C.L.R. James in the book, *The Black Jacobins* had written about the victory of the people of Haiti for freedom. Haiti remains the most important symbol in the struggle of African people for freedom because people of Haiti in one blow struck against slavery, colonialism and white supremacy.

We cannot talk about Emancipation Day today without opposing all forms of colonialism and in the Caribbean and in Africa we still have colonies. France holds on to colonies in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Cayenne and in the Comoros; so we cannot talk about fighting against slavery yesterday, without fighting against colonialism today. Rebellions against enslavement had been the most constant aspect of the period of enslavement. The first black republic had named their country Haiti after the name that had been the name given by the original peoples, the Taino.

The physical destruction of the lives of the original peoples of the Caribbean along with the destruction of the peoples of Africa ensured that the transatlantic slave trade was an unparalleled crime in human history. There was the destruction of the productive capacities of the environment and of whole societies. This destruction and unconcern for human lives continue.

Hilary Beckles in Chapter four of the book *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* noted the complete dehumanisation of the African body occurred by the 17th century when as the British state and private industries realised the potential to profit from slavery and by the end of the century, "enchained African bodies became the national policy of England, an initiative that was considered in national interest" (40-3). This Chapter is entitled, "Not Human: Britain's Black Property," Africans never accepted the dehumanisation that had been inscribed in practice and in law.

Beckles starts by saying, "The British legally defined Africans as 'nonhuman,'" which helped them to be identified as property (56). Slaves were often seared on the chest or shoulder with the same hot iron brands used to brand cattle, which set them apart from white slaves, who were typically working off a debt and still considered human. Laws were created giving British slave owners absolute ownership and authority over their slaves, which legalised the wholesale slaughter of a slave owner's slaves if the slave owner so desired. These laws also set in motion a series of punitive punishments for slaves who were found to be threatening in any way, or who broke laws.

While all of these punishments were exorbitant, the favoured form of punishment, castration, was particularly crippling as it left the slave population even more incapable of reproducing and replenishing (61). That castration was such a popular form of punishment and speaks to the level of fear that slave holders had towards their

enslaved men, both as men who could possess their wives and daughters (even though they were not usually on the islands), and as strong and therefore capable of overpowering the slave owners themselves. Beckles writes, "It was not until 1805 in Barbados that the murder of an enslaved person by a white person became a capital felony" (62). In the USA, blacks could not be full citizens and were designated as three fifths of a person. This was overturned by the Amendments to the constitution after the Civil War.

The form of barbarity outlined by Beckles had been practiced by all of the enslavers whether they were British, Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Danes, Swedes or Portuguese. For a long time there had been the mistaken ideas represented in European textbooks that the enslaved in the Portuguese, Spanish and French territories were not as harshly treated as the enslaved in territories under the British.

C.L.R. James in his book *The Black Jacobins* demolished these arguments and spelt out how enslavement as a form of coercion and bonded labour reinforced labour coercion and social control in all territories. The level of capital of the slaveholders had an impact on the nature of their economic activities, but the dehumanisation was clear whether it was Brazil, Trinidad, Cuba, Colombia or Barbados.

What was clear in all the territories was the resistance to enslavement.

Resistance to enslavement

The title of my book, *Rasta and Resistance* took its inspiration from the resistance to slavery that had been part of the culture of the Caribbean and the Americas. This culture of resistance was manifest in every sphere of life. Richard Hart in the book, *Slaves who Abolished Slavery* noted that the rebellions of the great leaders such as Tacky, Cudjoe and Nanny along with the Maroon communities of freed persons were not the only form of rebellions.

There were rebellious every day, everywhere and in every way. Beckles wrote about the Natural Rebels, about the role of the enslaved women who opposed enslavement with every fibre of her being. The emphasis on the centrality of African women in the rebellions against enslavement emanated from the fact that the women knew that it was from their very bodies that the system of capitalism was sustained. These women reared their children to see themselves as humans and sung lullabies to their children, you were not always enslaved, and one day you will be free. This inspiration for freedom supported the morality of the emancipatory ideas that were translated into everyday acts of rebellion against an unjust system.

It was a consciousness of rebellion. The Haitian revolution had taken these rebellious of everyday life to a formal attack on the social system and birthed freedom for the entire American continent. Not much is known in Africa how the enslaved in Haiti contributed to the independence of the entire South American continent. This freedom and militant opposition to enslavement was episodic and every person in Africa ought to study the heroism of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian revolutionaries. Caribbean youth and African youth will need to study Zumbi of Palmares in Brazil and the courageous alliances made with the indigenous peoples

Full scale rebellions broke out everywhere in the world of slavery, with—Tobago 1802, The Bussa rebellion in Barbados 1816, Demerara (Guyana) 1823, and the Sam Sharpe rebellion in Jamaica 1831. These great rebellions, and the terrible reprisals which followed, helped to convince the authorities in Britain that it was simply

too dangerous to maintain slavery in the colonies. This is what we are celebrating today, the victory of the Bussa rebellion, the Demarara rebellion, the Sam Sharpe rebellion and the rebellions that occurred in every island territory of enslavement.

Economic arguments on emancipation

For a long time there had been the economic arguments about the end of slavery by pointing out that the transition from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism meant that Britain wanted the enslaved to earn a wage so that they could buy the products coming out of the industrial heartland of Britain. However much it may be true that there had been economic motives for the end of slavery, the main point that should be borne in mind was that the end of slavery came from the actions and rebellions of the enslaved.

The other cogent point was that those who fought for freedom in the English speaking Caribbean were well ahead of those in other territories. Slavery was abolished permanently in the French Empire in 1848, in the Spanish Empire in 1880, and in Brazil in 1888. Opposition to slavery in Africa and Asia was not as strong as it was in the Caribbean, Europe and the United States.

The Emancipation Proclamation, 1834

As a boy, when I passed through Spanish Town, which was the capital of Jamaica in 1834, we were always reminded of how the people gathered on the steps of the governors house to hear the Emancipation Proclamation. We knew then that the slave masters were compensated and the enslaved were not compensated.

Richard Hart in the book *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery* provided the specific figures of how much was spent in each island [[ii]].

The figures about the numbers of enslaved in each island became important in the context of the payment to the slave masters. The names and figures are important for the current reparations claim. It is from these claims where we know that the family of David Cameron, the former Prime Minister of Britain was a recipient of money after emancipation.

Religion and the fight against enslavement

Let me move to conclude by talking about what kind of prayers we pray. In Chapter 1 of the book, *Rasta and Resistance*, I dealt at great length Spiritual World and the Material world. In order to dehumanise a human being, it is first necessary to chip away at their spiritual essence. During the fight against slavery we had two kinds of religion. We had the religion of the masters and the religion of the people who wanted to be free. The masters prayed to their god so that their god could give them the strength to keep some people in slavery. The African people prayed to their god, the god of freedom and the goddess of liberty and the goddess of love and the goddess of joy. These two different religions existed side by side and it was the religion of freedom that triumphed.

The history of the Baptists in Jamaica is replete with the struggle to convert the slaves while maintaining some sense of dignity in being African. In Jamaica there is a church called East Queen Street Baptist Church. This church was started by George Lisle and Africans from Savannah Georgia who came to Jamaica to support the fight against enslavement so the religion of freedom among Africans was a religion of yesterday, a religion of today and a religion of tomorrow. That religion says that god is a just god and god does not support those who want to be prosperous while keeping others in slavery.

Emancipation and reparations

It is because the Caribbean people and the black people support that god and that goddess for whom the Caribbean people say that religion of resistance means that not only should we resist, but also we should repair. So the reparations movement today from Africans everywhere are saying that slavery constituted a crime against humanity and that we should oppose all forms of denigration.

In the Black Lives Matter in the United States of America in 2016 they came with a six-point program:

1. End the war on black lives
2. Reparations
3. Invest and divest. Invest in the black community and divest from the military
4. Economic justice
5. Community Control
6. Political power

Everywhere black people live in the world they can identify with these points of the Black Lives Matter. In the Caribbean all Caribbean governments have agreed to the Caribbean Reparations Commission.

The Caribbean Reparations Commission is a direct result of the work of the emancipation committees in Barbados, in Trinidad, in Jamaica and in all of the territories of the English speaking Caribbean. One of the good things about the British is that they kept very good records so when the slaves were freed they paid the slave masters £20 million, which today is equivalent to £200 billion dollars and the point was for every one of those slave masters to know how much money they got. So when we call for reparations we know exactly which families in Europe were benefitting from the enslavement of African people.

The Caribbean Reparation Commission has a ten-point programme. Namely:

- A full formal apology from all the European powers that kept Africans in slavery. The British government have refused to apologise and instead they say we regret enslavement because this was an unfortunate part of European history. We do not accept regrets; we want the British and all governments in Europe to say they carried out crimes against Africans.
- Repatriation, pointing out the legal right of the descendants of more than ten million Africans, who were stolen from their homes.

- An Indigenous Peoples Development Programme. We do not only talk about enslavement we talk about genocide against the indigenous people.
- Cultural Institutions
- Attention to be paid to the “Public Health Crisis” in the Caribbean.
- Eradicating illiteracy
- An African Knowledge Programme to teach people of African descent.

(So yes Minister we agree with you that we should be bringing young people from the Caribbean to teach them of going through *The Door of No Return*.)

- Psychological Rehabilitation
- Technology Transfer
- Debt Cancellation

The Caribbean Emancipation Committees and the Caribbean government are calling on African governments to support them in the call for reparations. To support them in saying crimes against humanity were carried out. We support the resilience of the people of Ghana. This resilience comes from long struggles to uphold the dignity and the unification of Africa. We believe that the struggle to be humans in the 21st century is the most important of the struggle for emancipation and we want all the young people to grow up and remember that Abraham Lincoln did not free the slaves but rather it was the people who fought for their own freedom.

Thank you very much.

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* This is an edited version of his keynote address at emancipation wreath laying at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park on 25 July 2018

[i] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/on-the-road-in-agadez-desperation-and-death-along-a-saharan-smuggling-route> (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/on-the-road-in-agadez-desperation-and-death-along-a-saharan-smuggling-route>) accessed 9 August 2018

[ii] <https://www.brh.org.uk/site/articles/slaves-who-abolished-slavery/> (<https://www.brh.org.uk/site/articles/slaves-who-abolished-slavery/>) accessed 9 August 2018

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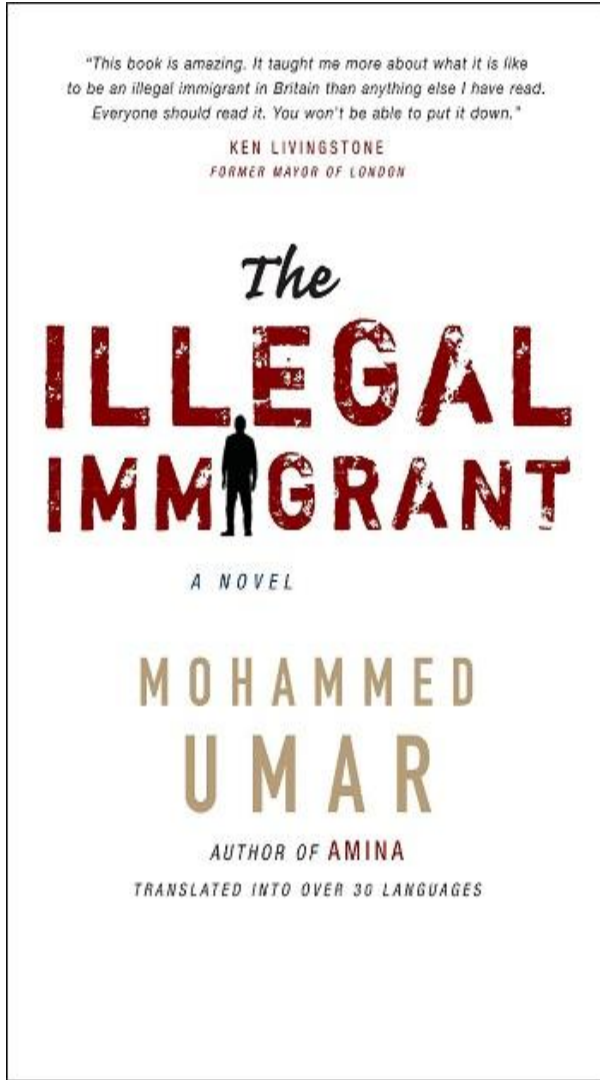
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