“HOWEVER LONG THE JOURNEY, OUR DESTINATION IS SET: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL”: DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis Submitted to the
Department of Law
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in International Human Rights Law

By

Felicia Janelle Lindsey

May 2006
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Professor Tanya Monforte
Thesis Supervisor
Affiliation
Date

Dr. Enid Hill
Department Chair
Date

Dr. Ann Lesch
Dean HUSS
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to acknowledge all of those who have been instrumental in my life over the past years. Primarily, I must thank my family and close friends particularly for supporting me and engaging in interesting conversations through the years.

Second, I must thank my mother Professor and PhD candidate Viola Lindsey and Professor Monforte for reading the subsequent drafts and the indispensable recommendations you both offered in my improvement with this thesis. I must also express my gratitude for the valuable input I had from several people along the way.

Third, I must thank all of my professors and acquaintances I met in the five years I spent at Historical Black Colleges in Atlanta, Georgia, Morris Brown College, Atlanta Metropolitan College and Clark Atlanta University. The people, experiences, cries and conversations I made and my subsequent first trip to Africa, Senegal and The Gambia, with Dr. Peoples and my classmates from Atlanta Metropolitan College have all contributed to this writing.

Fourth, I would like to thank my close friends from Peace Corps Mali. The experiences we had in those 2 years in Mali are memorable. The long conversations, unexpected misunderstandings, re-discovering who, where and what we can be together have all contributed to this paper.

Finally, I must dedicate this paper to all of those who continue with the struggle:

We reduce them from their natural state in nature; whereas nature provides them with the natural capacity to take care of their needs and the needs of their offspring, we break that natural string of independence from them and thereby create a dependency state so that we maybe able to get from them useful production for our business and pleasure.¹


William Lynch, a White slave owner, who reportedly made the speech on the banks of the James River in 1712.
ABSTRACT

American University in Cairo

“HOWEVER LONG THE JOURNEY, OUR DESTINATION IS SET: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL”: DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE IN THE UNITED STATES

Presented by
Felicia J. Lindsey

Supervised by
Tanya Montforte

A country who forgets its history is condemned to repeat it.²

The focus of this paper is to determine how Americans are to achieve justice for the descendents of slavery and survivors of involuntary servitude. Some of the concepts and models that will be used to make such a determination include transitional justice, pertinent United States documents that have rooted the ideals of justice in American society, and truth and reconciliation commissions. In addition to discussing why truth and reconciliation commissions are used today, two examples will be cited that highlight

the reasons these processes will not work in an American social political context. Finally, a truth and reconciliation model that seems to be an appropriate fit within the American social political context is discussed, and contained herein. This paper further addresses some of the problems that have occurred in the United States because of the disregard for transitional justice, in the past and presently. One such problem that is prevalent in the United States is the pattern of race relations, separating large portions of society into Black and White. For example, in a study done by Bonetta and Blaine Hudson, they recognized that American society is not completely separated. However, they did notice two issues concerning the division of American society. One, there is a large White nation that has little or no contact across racial and class lines, or have little knowledge about people of color, except to fear and denigrate them. Two, there is a small African American nation that also has little contact across racial and class lines. They know little about, and often denigrate themselves.\textsuperscript{3} The self-denigration of a large portion of African American society is a direct result of slavery, which has left many African Americans with an indefinite identity and an inferiority complex. Slavery in American society has supported maintenance of these complexes in present day society. By holding a truth commission on slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States, it will allow African Americans to gain some justice by legitimizing themselves with a history beyond that of slavery. In order to unite Americans, examples from other countries that have successfully utilized transitional justice methods may be adapted for use to aid America in reconciling with its legacy of the past. A commission must deal with these issues once and for all in order to start the process of uniting American society. Consequently, the

method of transitional justice that should be used in the United States is an important issue in making sure justice is given to the survivors of injustice, while uniting American society at the same time.
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In the Name of God the Beneficent the Merciful