



**family talks**

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Because an anecdotal story—as a sample of the entire unit—is appealing for providing powerful mental images to promote understanding, let us return to the book/movie entitled “Roots” whereby Alex Haley chronicled the life of Kunta Kinte in Gambia, West Africa. The story starts one day in 1750 when Kunta, a free African going about his normal thriving daily activities, was suddenly encased in a fishnet dropped on him. Kunta fought wildly and courageously against his African captors but was overwhelmed by their strength in numbers and by being clubbed unconscious. He awakened naked, chained, shackled, and aware of being permanently enslaved. But

what I believe also happened, starting at the exact moment of the fishnet drop, was a series of very significant happenings to Kunta’s physical body and his Quintaine Brain (i.e. Cortex, Limbic, and the Ancient Brain’s Instinct, Omnibus, and Brute subdivisions). The instant switch from using his Thriving Brain (i.e. the Cerebral Cortex and the Limbic portions) for normal living over to his Instinct Brain (“fight, flight, or fight”) was a happening that forever trapped his mind inside a mental vault.

First, this immediate Brain Switch was destined to persist on a permanent basis throughout Kunta’s life of enslavement. Normally, resorting to ones Emergency Instinct Survival Brain is intended to be temporary. Problems result otherwise. Second, at the same fishnet moment a host of biochemical factors were

# The Slaves’ “Brain Switch”

hormone secretion disturbs the hippocampus’ ability in: storing information coming into the brain from the senses; memory activities; timing and spatial awareness; learning; and contextual thinking. There may be brain changes producing amnesia, emotional numbness (helping to cope with the hellishness of slavery), nightmares, memory problems; interference with the normal way one accepts, codes, and retrieves information; and impairs critical and rational thinking abilities. The assortment of these adjustments in any given Slave (as is true with struggling Black youth) ranged from “Here and Now” benefits to the “bad.”

Third, I propose, several months after capture, when Kunta had somewhat adapted to being enslaved, there was an automatic usage shift over to his Omnibus Brain + its partnering with the Emotional Brain (Limbic). In short, the

dominating Instinct Emergency Brain (for acute danger) converted to an Omnibus Brain/Right Brain combination to serve as the main source of thinking in ongoing dangers. Meanwhile, the Thriving Brain remained “on-hold”—similar to a telephone’s call-waiting. However, “forever” afterwards there was no situational opportunity for Kunta to return to using his Thriving Brain. Fourth, throughout his enslavement Kunta’s persistent desperate survival situation caused his overactive Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) and hormone excesses to permanently weaken his physical body. But suppose Kunta’s stress producing hormone glands had been so over-worked as to suppress the Temporal Lobe. Could this be the cause of what is called “Negro Apathy,” as seen in those lacking anger even when it is in their own best interest to do so?