From The Interesting Narrative of the life of BaKaba, or The Princess Amid Slaves, Written by Herself

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*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*

*–Proverbs 31:30*

To all the different people around the globe, that have different cultures and different languages, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell my story.

My Lords and Gentleman,

Even though my story is filled with brutally, heartbreak, ungodliness, and was cataclysmic, I thank the most high for every second of every minute of every hour and of everyday for the journey. I am more than confident that it will open and broaden your worldview. To all my dear readers that get a hold of this story, I implore you to respect and not have any pity on me. Everybody has a story to tell and I am more than grateful to have the chance to tell mine. By the horrors of being taken away from all that I know, I am grateful for the journey. To all my family, friends and enemies that I shall never see again, I love you like the most high loves me. In The Book of the People[[1]](#footnote-1), the father lets his son die for humanities sake; for humanity to receive grace, mercy and love. In that same sense, even though I felt like my soul was slowly dying on the road of slavery; I have my culture to thank for embedding mercy, love, and compassion, in my frontal lobes. I ask for forgiveness in my saying the road of slavery, but in all due respect, it was a road that was very calamitous. The journey was filled with tremendous obstacles but my culture always reminded me of what obstacles symbolized – growth. My journey has taught me that everything, no matter how unpleasant it may be, has the opportunity to be something prepossessing, in other words, alluring. During my journey, I felt the weight and the downbeat, but never will I become the monster it made so many of the slaves.

 The small town of Jos[[2]](#footnote-2) in Plateau state, Nigeria, is where I come from. Coming from a place where my ancestors where skilled artisans gives my people and I a sense of joy and pride. The village of Geash[[3]](#footnote-3) is where my family ruled and ruled with dignity for many years. I recall exactly when Jos was established like it was yesterday. It was the year of 1619[[4]](#footnote-4) at the site of my village. Everybody gathered around and had a colossal evening feast. The atmosphere was filled with merriment and lightheartedness. Contentment and satisfaction emerged from every villager’s perception. My mother, KoLonGi known as queen DaWa of Geash, ruled under the authority of my father, king Nwabara. The people in the community called my father the highest griot[[5]](#footnote-5) in all the land. My father ruled a village that had all the tribes of Nigeria including the different tribes of Housa[[6]](#footnote-6), Igbo[[7]](#footnote-7), Urhobo[[8]](#footnote-8), and Yoruba[[9]](#footnote-9). The city of Jos was known as a cosmopolitan place. My father, as the griot of the land, taught the most valuable trait in our village, which was togetherness. He never failed to educate everybody in the village that using words was very powerful, powerful beyond comprehension. Jos comes from the word Jasad meaning body. My father named the city Jos because he believed the village to be one body. From that time, I recall the year I became a queen and also a slave in the same day.

 Leaving the motherland of living water, of fruit trees, of faith and liberty was petrifying and demoting. My story begins when my purple robe and golden ornaments were ripped away from my ebony skin. I recall colorless figures invading our village and taking everything the city of Jos had to offer, including the vast resources the land had, the ravishing ebony women and the strongest men the land possessed. The Fulbe[[10]](#footnote-10) people traded us in to the pale humans like my father had said they would.

 One early morning of that year, a handsome tribal prince gave my family a herd of cows for my hand in marriage and my father, the king, agreed. But in that same year, I went from being a royal princess who was to become queen, to becoming an ebony slave. The planation I was placed in was nothing like the home I remembered. I was, for the first time in my life, considered property. I was ordered to do things that were not directly related to the work of a slave. If I refused, the consequences were meted out. My master would throw me in buck[[11]](#footnote-11) and whip me to teach me the lesson of not obeying his commends. Than after whipping me, he would strip me naked and watch me with his green eyes and smirk, enjoying every ounce of my pain.

 While on the ground, naked, my mind would flash back to when I was once on board[[12]](#footnote-12). I would recall the time the pale men took me down the deck and chained me together in what they called the slave galley[[13]](#footnote-13). It was in that galley I was kept throughout the long voyage from mama Africa to the Americas. On the ground smelling the soil, I would remember others on board that took their lives rather than live as slaves. On days I got whipped, I felt the same urge to take my life, but that is not what my father taught me as princess of the land. My cultural values ringing in my eardrums brought back the thought of life as a gift. No matter how painful, life is still a gift from the most high.

 One day, on the plantation, I saw the foremanslap a Negro for drinking at the pond for too long. The surprising thing was that the Negro actually picked up a hoe and slammed the foreman on the head and run. That was the last I saw of that Negro since. In my years of being a slave, I went through a lot of different masters. One master would sell me because I had more ebony skin then most and the new masters always named me a jewel. I had no way of knowing what sort of treatment I would receive with the different masters I had. I did not care to know them because I knew they would sell me and trade me. One of the many masters I had, was named old Judge Miller. He was the wealthiest slave owner in the county and the meanest one at that. He was so cruel that all the other slaves and many owners hated him. He saw me on the block for sale and he knew I was a good worker so when he bid for me, I spoke out and yelled I would kill him with a knife, but he bought me anyway.

 Once I was sold to him, I was chained together and he marched me away smirking. Sleeping in the woods and fields at night until we reached the destination, which was weeks later, was quite terrifying. Once we arrived, he rested all the slaves for a few days and gave us new clothing, and than sold us again to new masters who would march us to plantations. The plantations would become home until we were sold once again. Most of the slaves I was with never made it because they tried to escape and most of them died due to hard work and hard conditions. Coming from a background of togetherness, I taught the remaining slaves how to be a one body.

On the last planation I was on, I remember it was large and looked like a white mansion with fluted columns and a broad porch. The trees were massive and spread apart. The limbs of the trees were over a circular driveway, which led up to the house. From the carriages, which always rolled up the drive way stepped finely dressed men and beautiful women like back home in Jos. The master that I had, let me go inside the mansion ever so often depending on how well I picked the cotton. I was the best cotton picker he had ever bought for his planation. Once I was inside the mansion there were ladies and gentlemen that sat beneath chandeliers in high-ceilinged rooms and discussed on the topics of the day. All the while, they were attended to by unobtrusive, attentive, faithful Negro slaves. That day, I understood the meaning of being a princess amid slaves and not a princess among slaves.

After viewing the inside of the mansion, and seeing the faithful Negros, my thoughts of home came rushing through my frontal lobes. I had to do something about it. The plantation was like a country unto itself and within its confines, large and small life was generally equal amongst the slaves. There was a specific season for picking cotton and it was always the latter part of August. Each slave usually is presented with a sack, which is fastened over the neck and mostly uncomfortable. From the time the stars began to fade away from the sky in the morning time, until they reappeared in the evening, is how long we worked picking cotton. Each day ended as the previous one and began as the previous one and it also expended itself as the previous one. Having this knowledge in mind, I gathered all the slaves that listened and got a plan together.

It took until the year of 1863[[14]](#footnote-14) when my escape plan came to pass. Listening to the dressed up pale humans in the mansion every so often, I overheard that Lincoln was issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, which to my knowledge, would free slaves in areas of rebellion. Being the master at picking cotton, my master highly favored me over his own pale wife. On one night that year, I used my cultural stories that my master adored listening to while he was under the influence. I convinced him that Lincoln would find out that he had a princess on his planation and that he need let me go find who this princess was so he could lynch her. He agreed and fell asleep mumbling to him self. I gave him more to drink and went back to the slaves and tried to convince them to come with me but fear was in their eyes. I said my farewells and they wished me many blessings. In that year, I stole a map of America from my master and was off to a new journey; a new journey to the state of Maryland where slavery was abolished. I never looked back since and I will never forget the journey of being a princess amid slaves. My culture saved my life; my culture is my life.

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Slave Haven Museum. Went November 18, 2014.

1. The Bible [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Town, capital of plateau state, of the central Nigeria, on the Delimi River. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A villiage of the Birom people. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The first African Slaves arrive in Virginia [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Storytellers who maintain a tradition of oral history in parts of West Africa. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The largest ethnic group in West Africa [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. An ethnic group based in West Africa, chiefly in southeastern Nigeria [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The major ethnic group in Delta State. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The majority of the population in Nigeria. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In the singular, Pullo. These people are known as Fula or Fulani. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A stick between arms and knees while in a squat position [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Slave ship to the Americas [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A place slaves were packed on the slave ship [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation [↑](#footnote-ref-14)