

# SARA

*by* Ken Karu

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Sarah Baartman

Around 1619 the Portuguese and the Dutch discovered the Khoi people whom the Dutch later referred to as the Hottentot. The Europeans established took away the African land and introduced slavery in the continent. Many Khoi people worked for the whites in farms and homes. Sarah Baartman was a Khoi woman from Cape Town in Africa who worked as a house cleaner in Cape Town before she was lured to sign a contract to travel to Europe. There is a debate on whether Sarah did comply to move to Europe or she was forced. Some academics believe Sarah did not know the contents of the contract she was signing and her fellow house cleaner tricked her into signing it. Some believe that she made the decision based on her own convictions. The English surgeon who took her from Good Hope to London did not keep his promise; instead, he paraded Sarah naked as a sales commodity in Piccadilly where she was finally purchased by a French circus 'husband'. She was exploited and dehumanized in the freak shows where she was paraded naked. The travel of the sweet young woman from Africa to Europe turned to be her worst nightmare that led to Sarah drinking herself to death due to the unfriendly environment. Her treatment exposed the rotten practices in European society. (In Cannon & In Pinn, 2018)

The curse of Sarah Baartman had a detrimental effect onto the treatment of the African American people. The blacks were considered as an inferior race to the white, which led to the racial segregations, dehumanized treatment and cruelty toward African America in America. Black men and women are considered inferior beings to the white person for a long period. This can be easily derived from the comparison of the practices during Sarah's period and today's America. There is no difference between the French scientist who dissected the body of Sarah after her death to find a connection between the Africans and the apes and the today's America where a white police officer killed a black innocent George Floyd by kneeling on his neck till he

suffocates and the government did so little to ensure that such an act will never happen. This shows that the White man perceives the black man as a sub-human until to date. There is the unfair treatment of African Americans. The institutions in America since the slavery period are established to protect the white man instead of all the races. The police institution is on record of killing the blacks unlawfully and no recourse is provided in almost all the cases. The former president Trump is on record degrading the black community. The police in the US would rather attack, criticize and harm unarmed African Americans demonstrating for their rights rather than confronting armed white supremacists demonstrations. This shows the inequalities that still exist.

The white people use insulting, degrading and disgusting nomenclature to refer Africans. They referred to an African as a Negro, bushman, Hottentot etcetera. These names degrade Africans to sub-humans that did not have the rights of a human being. This was a way to show that the Africans are inferior. These nomenclatures affect how European society perceived the black man. The names are a clear indication that the black community was an inferior race that did not have the same rights and freedoms as the Europeans. We can observe that this nomenclature has a bad effect on society for there are people who still refer the black Americans as a Negro. These names are an insult to the African American since they did not choose to be referred to as such. These names are supposed to show the black people are inferior. This curse has lived with the African Americans for a long period. (In Cannon & In Pinn, 2018)

The effect of the curse brought about the inhumane and unfair treatment of black women in the society. Sarah was a casualty of the European society sexism that existed at the time. From the study, it is clear that Sarah was diminished through the parading of her naked in front of the crowds. This exposed the rotten European sexism that existed during the time. Large crowds would come out to see her due to her physical attributes most likely her sexual organs that the

Europeans described as grotesque since she was paraded naked. The brutality of the European society destroyed the black woman's innocence and boldness to making her delusional, afraid, and non-person. The African American women who were raped by their masters experienced this kind of treatment. The rights of the black women have not been achieved for there are instances where they are mistreated with no recourse. Some people still perceive the black American women as sex objects available to satisfy their needs.

The migration of African Americans from Africa to unknown European countries has an impact on their cultures. Whether the migration was involuntary or voluntary it had a great impact on the cultures of the Africa people. The African American people had to adopt new cultures to practice in order to fit in the European societies. They had to adopt new ways of worship and a lot of change in their African traditions. This is observed where Sarah had to leave behind her Khoi traditions and practice both the English and French traditions. The curse of Sarah still exists for the majority of the African Americans have adopted new ways of life since they could not practice their culture in the open. Most of the blacks were assimilated into the new European culture and abandoned their own cultures, which were rich in morals. The African Americans of today do not know about their culture and roots. They are left to speculate their roots, which as time flies is difficult to establish. This is a total destabilization of people. (HOLMES, 2020)

It is evident that the curse of Sarah Baartman is true. This can be derived from the discrimination towards the African Americans by whites in Europe. The blacks are treated as an inferior race to the whites who consider themselves as the superior race. (HOLMES, 2020)

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