

**A TALL TALE : IN WHICH BRER RABBIT HAS TO CONFRONT THE “BAD GUYS”**  
– As Told by Ol’ Gramps to the Kids

(This is my introduction to *The Chronicles of Obama’s Relatively Equivalent Exceptionalisms* – installments will start soon.)

Stephen L. Bakke – June 1, 2010

“Hey little ones, why are you so sad this fine afternoon?” asked Ol’ Gramps from the rocking chair on his porch. “You look like someone just kicked you out of the house.” “Not really” said the Kid from next door. “It’s just that some bums from Block South have been real creeps to me and my friend here, and we just can’t have fun anymore. They been pushin’, and hollerin’, and bullyin’, and punchin’ all the time. We kids from Block North don’t know what to do!” The Other Kid emphatically nodded agreement.

“Well now, comon’ up here. Let’s talk and maybe I can help,” Ol’ Gramps started. “Do you remember the time we talked about how pleasant and wonderful it is way out in the countryside? Well, it wasn’t always that way .....

A long time ago (some say even more) there were lots of creatures of the forest and fields living far out in the countryside. As it turned out there was a briar patch and a pond which divided two kingdoms. The South Kingdom was led by King Lion, while the North Kingdom creatures elected Brer Bear as their leader.

It seemed that as long as the creatures could remember, Brer Rabbit’s North Kingdom neighborhood next to the briar patch had been terrorized and plundered by the likes of Brer Fox and his brethren from South Kingdom. King Lion, while quite a plundering warrior in his own right, was now quite old and could no longer control his mischievous subjects. Besides, he would rather loaf and roar while soaking in the cool pond that the two kingdoms shared.



Since they now had a leader, Brer Rabbit went to Brer Bear to plead his case and ask for assistance from the leader. He traveled across the forest to Brer Bear’s favorite feeding grounds. “We trusted you to provide us leadership and protection” said Brer Rabbit to the bear. “And now we need your help.” He recalled to their leader that Brer Fox had sworn to kill and eat Brer Rabbit and his family.



He recalled being tarred by the fox.



He recalled the time he was captured by Brer Fox and thrown into the briar patch

where the fox hoped Brer Rabbit would be torn apart.



But the wily ol' rabbit actually escaped through this familiar and friendly briar patch where he was bred and born.



“And remember the time I had to trick King Lion out of the pond and tie him up so that my friends could just get a drink?” implored Brer Rabbit.



He reminded the bear of the many other times he and the North Kingdom creatures had escaped sure tragedy only through cleverness and resolve. Brer Bear just licked sweet honey from his lips, shivered, and sighed. He had many times tried to talk to King Lion but to no avail. In fact, King Lion

had reminded the bear of a few things (Oh, he was a clever lion!).



So the simple Brer Bear now brought King Lion's message to Brer Rabbit: “Yes Brer Fox is angry and yes he is mean. But we creatures from North Kingdom actually are to blame for many of these problems.

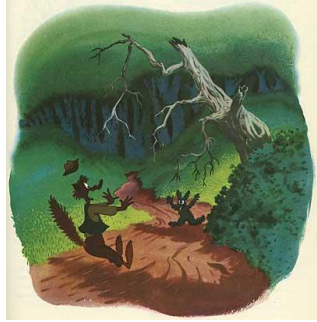


When Brer Fox and the other scoundrels came to visit, you and others were rude to them and made them feel foolish when they couldn't catch you – and when you insisted on using the pond, King Lion was very upset and embarrassed. So, it's really our fault. Just treat them better and things will improve.”

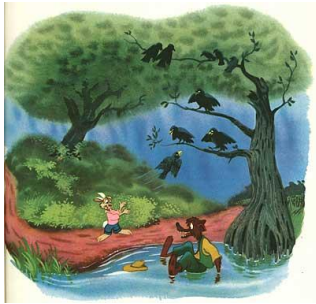
Brer Rabbit almost couldn't believe his ears (which were huge and hard to ignore, you know). He decided he would just have to do it himself. He posted “Do Not Enter” signs but that didn't help. He put up big ol' scarecrows but that didn't help. He tried to get King Lion and Brer Fox to get together once again to “talk about their differences,” but that didn't work. He even tried to set up a committee of North Kingdom creatures to come up with good ideas, but they couldn't think of anything other than another “peace

meeting,” and that didn’t help. So Brer Rabbit decided to do it his way and resort to some bold trickery. And Brer Fox and his friends really took some lumps from the North Kingdom creatures.

Sometimes Brer Rabbit scered’ Brer Fox (who was known to be afraid of the dark and all sort of other things).



He even lured ol’ Brer Fox to the edge of the pond where he pushed the bad guy into the pool where the fox darn near drowned.



And he tricked Brer Fox into the briar patch where the fox got all cut up and almost torn apart.



Here, there and everywhere, North Kingdom creatures were encouraged to stand up against the bad guys from the south. They tried this, they tried that – and they even tried the other thing. Brer Bear got many protests about such unfairness from King Lion, and the lion even tried to convince Brer Rabbit to quit making him so nervous. (Is that what they call audacity?) But the determined rabbit said “No way Jose!”

But guess what! Brer Fox and his South Kingdom gang slowed and finally stopped their cruel ventures of mischief and violence into North Kingdom. Brer Rabbit had taken things into his own hands and the North Kingdom became quiet and peaceful.



Poor Brer Bear finally realized his easy goin’ ways, feeble apologies and polite bows to King Lion only emboldened the bad guys and made things worse.

Brer Rabbit and Miz Rabbit and their big family could then have gatherings and feasts in the wonderful open air just outside the briar patch – under the watchful eye of Brer Rabbit of course.



Because they became just a bit afraid of Brer Rabbit and his clever power, the characters from South Kingdom even consented to get together once in a while for a “friendly” cross-border feast – but on Brer Rabbit’s terms of course! The likes of King Lion, Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, Sis Cow, and Brer Coon from the South Kingdom would get together with North Kingdom’s Brer Rabbit, Brer Bear, Miz Rabbit, Brer Possum, and even Old Man Tarrypin the Turtle. They even shared food and stories of the old days when things weren’t so peaceful.



But the creatures from South Kingdom were always under the careful, wary eye of Brer Rabbit of course!



Ol’ Brer Bear even seemed to be relieved that Brer Rabbit had lifted a certain burden from him – keeping the creatures safe and secure.



And he finally realized what real safety and freedom was when, for the first time, he took his family for a casual stroll through North Kingdom.



Some said Brer Rabbit should even have become North Kingdom’s leader. But who knows why he insisted on doing his job in private? Sometimes you just have to show who’s right and who’s wrong. Like some guy once said: “Ya’ gotta’ carry a big stick.” Or somethin’ like that.

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## Meet the Real Hero



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“So,” said Ol’ Gramps, “that’s how peace and happiness finally came to the countryside.” “Hey, I think I’ve got some ideas!” said the Kid (with a determined twinkle in his eye) to the Other Kid. “I thought you might,” smirked Ol’ Gramps. And it turned out that the Kid really did have some interesting ideas for dealing with the bad guys from Block South! But that’s a story for another day.

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This tale was inspired by the legendary Uncle Remus Stories

A clever Rabbit is a character in folktales of African, African-American, and Native American cultures. In the African tradition, Brer Rabbit is a consummate trickster who typically matches wits with Brer Fox, whom he always bests. The Native American tribes of the eastern seaboard of the United States also have a tradition of incorporating the Rabbit as a trickster in their myths and legends.

The characters and images are all from the “Uncle Remus Stories” and Disney’s “Song of the South.”