

The Highest and Best Use of Keith Ellison

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Now that Keith Ellison, our first Muslim Congressman, has lost out to Thomas Perez for the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee – though being given the specially-created sop of “Deputy Chair” – he may wish to strike out on his own, for clearly he has a lot of energy, and ambition, and Wants To Make A Difference.

It would be a pity if Ellison’s gifts as a publicist, agitator, and Washington operator were not to be used for the greater good. For Keith Ellison is uniquely qualified to fill one particular role: that is, to help black Africans obtain some modicum of economic justice from Muslim Arabs, given the havoc wreaked by the Arab slavers in black Africa over thirteen centuries. He needs to convince the deep-pocketed Arabs of the Gulf that they have more to lose by refusing to offer reparations for that “other slave trade,” while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Qatar will hardly miss a few tens of billions of dollars of the hundreds of billions

they take in year after year.

That we all need to be reminded of that Arab slave trade in Africa was brought home to me by Henry Louis Gates, who has been on NPR discussing his new documentary series on black Africa. It's not what he said, but what he didn't say, that was so telling. He several times mentioned the Atlantic Slave Trade, but he said nothing about the Muslim Arab slavers in Africa. Not even Henry Louis Gates, it seems, is fully cognizant of how widespread and damaging that Arab slave trade was to black Africa. The world needs to be told more about that trade, so much more extensive, in time and space and number of victims, than the Transatlantic Slave Trade that receives almost all of the world's attention. Keith Ellison, an Afro-American and a Muslim, is ideally situated to remind us of this trade, and to demand justice for black Africans.

[There are those who claim](#) that there are still black Africans held in "slave-like conditions," even if slavery no longer exists officially, in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and some of the sheikdoms of the Gulf.

In the Sudan, [Jihad Watch](#).