

## **"SLAVERY IN MORE CONVENIENT FORM"**

by Pauline Jukes

Orlando Patterson, author of the book, *Freedom*, (a study of the Western passion for freedom despite, or even because of, its history of slavery) was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying he was struck by the line in the song "Rule Britannia" that "Britons never, never, never will be slaves!"

"Why did they have to be so absolute about it?" he wondered, deciding that the only meaningful way of saying you're free is to say you're not a slave!

I wonder whether Professor Patterson has ever read Henry George's *Social Problems*, (1883), which states:

*Chattel slavery is, in fact, merely the rude and primitive mode of property in man. It only grows up where population is sparse; it never, save by virtue of special circumstances, continues where the pressure of population gives land a high value, for in that case the ownership of the land gives all the power that comes from the ownership of men, in more convenient form.*

Henry George makes the point that where land is cheap and labor valuable, slavery as an institution can function, but where land is valuable and labor cheap, a slave would only be a burden. What person in his right mind would buy a slave today, only to have to feed, house and clothe him, and care for him when he was sick? It is George's contention that people can be enslaved just as effectually by making property of their lands as by making property of their bodies.

We have an economic system in place that forces workers to compete for scarce jobs, renders millions without work at all - witness the thousands on the streets of New York City - and simultaneously favors the landowner. In effect, we all have a spurious claim to freedom, and can only deny that we are slaves.