

Racism, Lynching, Slavery - Pillars of the American Dream

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"At the heart of racism is the religious assertion that God made a creative mistake when He brought some people into being." — Friedrich Otto Hertz

The 80-year-old Edgar Ray Killen, a former part-time Baptist preacher, has been charged with the murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964. He has now confessed to being a member of the notorious White supremacist group, Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Despite the fierce opposition from local white population, the civil rights workers came to aid black people register to vote. Keeping black people away from the ballot box is still practiced in white America; the cronies of George Bush prevented thousands from voting in the Florida 2000 election.

For centuries, most of the acts of savagery committed against the black community manifested in the guise of mob violence and lynching. Behind the scene, it was organised and instigated by the KKK, with full cooperation from the Police and support of the local white population. Public lynching was eventually seen as a form of entertainment. It was advertised in advance through out the towns in the south. Locals brought along their children and street vendors sold beer and hot dogs. Witnesses described the atmosphere as like that of a carnival.

At times lynching was invoked for alleged crimes but also for trivial reasons like getting into a quarrel with a white person or for just looking at a white woman. Anthony Crawford [1] was lynched by a mob of 300 for arguing over the price of his cotton, his great-great granddaughter, Doria Dee Johnson, is still alive. Anti-lynching leader, Ida B. Wells and her successor documented [2] that nearly 5,000 black American males were slaughtered between 1880 and 1960 but who knows what the real figures were. These deaths always occurred without trials, often with the knowledge of local and national officials.

It seems like a coincidence that the US Senate has now moved toward passing a resolution to express regrets for blocking efforts to make lynchings and mob violence against black Americans a federal crime. **This is odd, why should the US Senate regret for its past conduct as they were merely exercising their democratic role? They opposed 200 anti-lynching bills reflecting the popular opinion of the time and thus have upheld the democratic principle of the majority rule. Even today, twelve or sixteen senators did not join in the anti-lynching vote; perhaps they also reflected their support base. As expected, all but one of them xenophobic-racist-Republicans; the neo-Nazi Klansmen of today.**

Racial killings constituted a very tiny proportion compared to the sufferings inflicted on the

black Africans, as a whole, by the ruthless slave traders. They operated with the approval of the Church and the blessing of the Pope. It is estimated that over 9 million Africans perished. As for the peaceful Native Americans they also suffered in a similar scale, many tribes virtually made extinct like the Dodos. Yes, this is the real unspoken and unprovoked, terrorism, mass murder and genocide, delivering real terror to entire communities for centuries!

Passing a resolution of apology by the US Senate serves very little purpose after all these years, especially as no compensation will be awarded to the community, not even to the descendents of the victims like Doria Dee Johnson. As for Edgar Ray Killen, if he is convicted, he is unlikely to be in position to serve the full sentence due to his old age. But the question is; – why was he allowed to get away with it for so long. **Why did it take so long for the US Senate to acknowledge the murders of so many innocent African Americans, especially when we are told constantly that the US is the bastion of justice?**

Criticisms are often answered by stating that, the US is not perfect. If the US is not perfect then why does it lecture others as if it is the ideal model to be emulated? Far from being perfect or even near perfect, the US is fundamentally imperfect, a beast like parasite that has evolved by feeding on the blood of the millions African Americans and other communities – and that process continues. More importantly, the criticisms points out fundamental hypocrisy of the US as it does not practice what it preaches, which is very remote from the point of perfection.

On the point of hypocrisy, drunk with imperial arrogance one can become immune to it, as the US has become. This is why the US shamelessly calls for human rights while implementing inhuman policies! It lectures the world about the right of the international community to bring prosecution for war crimes but excludes itself from the same jurisdiction, demonstrated by the US fear of the ICC (International Criminal Court). The laughable explanation is that it ‘fears’ that bogus charges will be brought against its army.

Why does the US need to fear if the charges are bogus? Surely justice would prevail and they would be exonerated. I mean it is not as though their citizens would be chained, gagged and shackled without legal representation, no due process, without the Geneva Convention, is it? Being tried in a court of law is lot less painful then being a civilian roasted alive slowly by the napalms, as it happened in Fallujah, Vietnam and else where! Also, with its strong culture of litigation over anything, the US is not exactly short of legal skills and money.

More evidence of the hypocritical nature of US is that she constantly rants about free speech but cannot tolerate genuine opposing views, like that expressed by Al-Jazeera and other independent Arab media outlets. The US media is filled with one-dimensional xenophobic channels like Fox-TV and CNN. There is no point in accusing Iran and Syria of sponsoring state terrorism when the US and its Zionist ally are actually engaging in direct state terrorism, piracy (oil and land) and ethnic cleansing. It is the same US that lectures about peace, but is constantly stock-piling and developing the most lethal weapons. The US this year, will spend \$450 billion on ways to potentially kill every man, woman and child on the planet, that is half of the world’s arms expenditure by one nation, doesn’t that sound like a war mongering nation.

It is not just the ordinary folks who are gullible about US history, past and present, but even

the academics. Many believe in the altruistic nation built like the “Little house on the prairie” instead of seeing the vicious predatory capitalist nation at work. A history professor at the Indiana University, James Madison, confirms this attitude as he stated: ***“It sends a message to the world that democracy doesn’t always work perfectly, but America admits its mistakes and remains committed to the ideal of justice for all”*** with regards to the US Senate passing this resolution of atonement.

It is a folly for Professor Madison to claim that the US made: mistakes. Mistakes are acts that are unintentional and devoid of clear ulterior motives. Nobody in their right mind will believe a shopkeeper’s claim of mistake when the customers are constantly overcharged and/or short-changed.

Does the professor, seriously believe that the actions of persecuting a community for centuries were merely mistakes, committed out of ignorance or inability to recognise the rights and the wrongs of the issue? Perhaps it is the latter. Which is further corroborated by the recent reports of the brutal murder of the two innocent Afghan prisoners and other acts of horror in Iraq, these were blamed partially on lack of training given to the US soldiers. So this is admission that the US soldiers have an inherent violent-criminal nature and are incapable of recognising right and wrong. Those soldiers certainly need to be trained in order to bring them into the fold of human civilisation.

What is more important is for the US to recognise that the same mistakes are being committed now in far greater magnitude. At home, the slave relationship continues, as nearly a million African Americans are in prison – the poor black youths are given only one opportunity, which is to fight ugly corporate wars, so that the republican folks can get more obese. Lynchings are now done by the brutal US police, whose powers have been enhanced using the 9/11 excuse, and all sorts of draconian legislation. The world saw a glimpse of that brutality well before 9/11, with the lynching of Rodney King and the subsequent farcical trial in the kangaroo court, by a racist jury. Abroad, the modern forms of lynchings are carried out by the US army; ample evidence is seen from Iraq and Afghanistan by the world.

We should ‘congratulate’ white America for its achievements, in terms of the accumulation of wealth and power, which has made it the sole superpower. However, I do lament about the cost of the American dream. The price was paid by the thousands that were lynched and the millions that died on the slave ships; and the millions of Native Americans that perished in their own homeland; the blood and sweat of the thousands of Chinese that built the transcontinental railway; the blood price paid by the hundreds of thousands in Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Central and Latin America and now Iraq. **I do not mind the US pursuing its so-called American dream, but should that be at the expense of a world nightmare?**

The world needs to find of ways of integrating the capitalist elite within the US, comprising mainly of white European settlers, into the fold of civilisation. South Africa has shown clear progress in this respect. Australia just needs to be reminded, preferably by the Indonesian and Malaysian army, they can kick start the process with extracting reparations for the Aborigines of Australia. The US needs to offer a sincere apology to humanity, not just to the African-Americans, but all of the nations it has enslaved via the IMF, arms sales and invasion. Then pay compensation or offer some sort of redress as clear evidence of that apology. However, to bring about a permanent end to exploitation, piracy and state terrorism all are inherent part of capitalism, it is this capitalism that has to be terminated or at least contained to free humanity.

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[1] http://www.blackcommentator.com/142/142_freedom_rider_lynching.html

[2] <http://newswww.bbc.net.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4090732.stm>

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