



**TRUMP'S AMERICA BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT:
NOTES ON LYNCHING, LYING AND SEEKING JUSTICE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

PUSHING BACK THE THICK FOG AND FUMES OF the putrid propaganda of White supremacist triumphalism, what can we really see and sing by the dawn's early light except Trump's deformed and deficient conception of America unmasked? For all the hype, hustle and hypocrisy around "making America great again", it presupposes an imaginary past void of its victims and of the violence, genocide, enslavement, segregation and other forms of decimation and oppression they suffered. And such a deficient and dishonest vision also fails to confront the contradictions obvious and oppressive in the lived conditions of current daily life in America. For surely there is no greatness in greed and no virtue or bravery in creating and indicting victims; no freedom, justice or honor in oppression, imperial aggression and betrayal of allies; and no pride to be praised in corporate plunder and predation against vulnerable others and the earth.

Frantic and frightened of losing the presidential perch from which he services himself, Trump has lowered his hypocritical flag-waving hand long enough to question provisions in the Constitution that do not serve his interests. He denounced as fake the provision which disallows his hotel hustling of world leaders for a G-7 Summit. Moreover, he questioned the Constitutional provision and process for impeaching him for "high crimes and misdemeanors", if the investigation called for establishes the evidence. But, then, sinking deeper in the mire and muck of his racialized mind with its fragile grip on reality, he characterizes the Constitutionally provided process of investigating him for possible impeachment as a "lynching". Such a desperate and cowardly conceived claim tells us more about Trump and how low and far he will continue to go to save and service himself. But it also reminds us that he represents the monster side of America and its enablers and supporters and that he continues to draw from and build on some of its most racist, White supremacist, destructive and degrading ideas and practices.

Even Trump, with his limited ability to think rationally, not to mention morally, must realize there is a clear difference between being tortured, murdered, mutilated and terrorized on the basis of race and being investigated for "high crimes and misdemeanors" by your peers based on a Constitutional provision. In a word, the process of impeachment is not about violence against Trump or his people, but on the contrary, *violence*, fiendish, cutthroat and cold blooded violence is the defining feature of the racist practice of lynching. It is about the sustained practice of killing in various ways: burning alive, blow torching to death, boiling, battering, skinning, stabbing, shooting, hanging, hacking, dragging, drowning and suffocation. And it is about antemortem mayhem and postmortem mutilation, about gruesome torture and vicious terrorism against Black men, women, children and Black people as a whole.

So, here I'm not talking about episodic lynching of White persons and groups, for example in the cowboy wild West for cattle and horse thieving or some other issues, or even the episodic lynching of some Whites for other reasons. The essential differences between the lynching of Blacks and Whites are: the central reason of race; the overwhelming numbers; the perverse passion for degradation and dehumanization of the victims; the systemic sanction; the social celebration of it; and the sustained and pervasive character of it. This is way beyond the seemingly "sanitized", soft-peddling definition of lynching as "mob justice", "murder by extra-judicial action" or "group murder to punish a perceived crime".

Here, lynching is defined as *the systemically sanctioned and socially celebrated racist practice of the torture, murder, mutilation and terrorizing of Black people by Whites*. This does not deny similar practice against other peoples of color, Native Americans, Latinos/as and Asians. It is rather to affirm that the concept of lynching as a weapon of war was used against Black people in the most focused, inclusive and

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sustained way. Thus, the overwhelming number of victims of this barbaric racist blood ritual, as Bryan Stevenson's the Equal Justice Initiative and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice attest, are Black people, over 4,000 recorded and no doubt thousand others unrecorded.

It was not enough to do a quick kill, as with most Whites, Black victims were subjected to gruesome tortures and murders, mutilations, including dismemberment with body parts photographed and put on postcards, preserved and sold as relics and publicly displayed or scattered throughout the Black neighborhood to terrorize and claim a cheap and cowardly triumph. And it was for the lynchers and their people, an occasion for public celebration, gathering for the spectacle of blood and barbarism with picnics, popcorn, sodas, liquor, werewolf howling and hyena-like laughing. The lynching of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas in 1998, was the latest reported and strangely listed as simply a murder, although the racist reason, torture, dragging, dismemberment, body dumping and celebration are all there.

The reasons contrived and cobbled together, before or after the lynchings, as Ida B. Wells demonstrated in her valuable studies, range from murder and rape (ever-present) to having an evil eye, being uppity, voting, demanding respect or defending themselves or their rights or seeking simple justice. But actually, Blacks could be lynched for any reason or no reason at all and there was no sanctuary from such racist savagery.

So, Trump's misuse of the word and imagery of lynching, then, is wrong and repulsive on several counts. First, it is a violation of the memory of the Black victims, exploiting a term which characterizes their suffering and death for his own petty purposes of pretending victimhood to escape accountability. Second, and inter-related, it is a trivialization of the torturous and

terrorizing violence and brutal murder of the victims and its traumatic and insecurity-producing impact it had and has on Black people. Moreover, it is another example of a member of the oppressor race and class appropriating the experience and moral status of the oppressed to achieve a moral status they, as oppressors, can never have. It is a futile attempt to give a moral character to an immoral and illegal pattern of practice. And it is an unintended recognition of the crimes committed against us, the wrongness of the practice and the moral consideration and reparations due us, even though he and others like him, will not admit it consciously.

In addition, Trump's self-serving and self-servicing use of the term lynching demonstrates again his callous and depraved disregard for the rights, lives and sensitivities of African Americans and other peoples of color. But again, he is emboldened in his ignorance and evil by the large number of Whites who enable and support him. Indeed, he has demonstrated time and time again that he could/can get away with almost anything and he is normalizing evil and much of America is enabling, supporting or surrendering to it.

Finally, however, for those of us who still stand steadfast and strong in struggle, this latest attempt by Trump to escape accountability, using Black suffering as a cloak and shield, is another reminder of the urgent need to continue, expand and intensify the struggle on every level. For as Kawaida teaches, in the context of oppression, there is no remedy except resistance, no strategy worthy of its name that does not foreground struggle, and no honorable or victorious way forward except across the battlefield for a new and whole 'nother world. And though the struggle is difficult, dangerous and demanding, it is also beautiful in the varied good it produces and promises for us and the world.

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