



**CREATING AND KILLING CHRISTOPHER DORNER:  
AN AMERICAN SAGA AND SIGN**  
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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**P**art II. It comes as no surprise that even though most people do not condone or defend all that Dorner did, they still feel he had strong grounds for his grievances. For Black people and other communities of color, as well as the poor, the homeless, the mentally ill, and other vulnerable and devalued persons and populations bear consistent witness to personal, family, friend and neighbor experiences which offer corroborating evidence over generations. They speak of experiences and reports of a subculture of racist discrimination against people of color within the police department and harassment, penalties and firing for not accepting or supporting the departmental system of dominance. And they likewise speak of the experiences and reports of police violence and abuse against the vulnerable and devalued in the community and continuing practices resembling an occupying army.

Thus, there is also some admiration for Dorner for singlehandedly standing up to defy the police, regardless of how problematic, and forcing them and their families to feel a similar unsettling vulnerability victims have felt and feel at the hands of abusive and violent officers, a feeling described by Chief Charlie Beck and others as “frightening”, “scary”, “terrifying” and “terrorizing”. Still others admire Dorner for using his considerable military skills to “escape and evade” police forces of two states for ten days and having the audacity to set up shop right across the street from the Sheriff’s station before being detected and engaged.

Malcolm and so many of our ancestors have taught us that even in the most tragic situations, if history is rightfully read, there

are signs for those who want to see; lessons for those who want to learn them; and a good way open for those who want to walk and move in the right direction. And so it is with this tragic saga and sign of the life and death of Christopher Jordan Dorner. It provides society with another opportunity and invitation to revisit the continuing problem of police abuse and violence, as well as the societal racism and *psychology of domination and destruction* that inform and is used to justify the approach of “problem-solving by gun and war” embraced by the country, the police and the unhinged and ordinary civilian shooter.

Deny Dorner what you will and denounce him for the way he went about protesting racism and official concealment, but it will not be wise to use him as an excuse to deny and dismiss the gravity of the problem which he exposed on a national level as others before him. Even now, numerous Black police men and women have come forward to bear witness to the continuous toxic conditions of racism in the LAPD, the pervasive and permitted hate-speech, discrimination, coerced silence, unjust termination for punitive, spurious and specious reasons, as well as the callous practice against the targeted and vulnerable in the community. And they have warned us, as we already know, that the police are masters of cover up and concealment such as: automatic denial; missing notes and reports; mysteriously evaporating evidences; regularized findings of “in-policy” and “justifiable” disabling and deadly force; witness production; media friendly press conferences; pro forma hearings and ever-supportive commissions.

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The critical need now is to break beyond these thick walls of concealment and denial, reinforced by the current liberal and conservative “cult of congratulations” surrounding Chief Beck and by the hope that declaring the department “new-and-improved” constantly and with conviction solves still-existing problems. Instead we must have honest, serious and sustained conversations of review and real change in and with the communities who have the greatest stake in tearing down this sinister and self-concealing wall and ending the destructive practices. Dorner stated in his declaration of war against his former colleagues that the system had failed him, destroyed his faith in it and made him into the fearsome foe he had become. He declared, using police/military jargon, “I am the walking exigent circumstance you created”, i.e., an active and urgent threat generated from within their ranks. We must ask, then, how does one so loyal and committed to the system come to this tragic decision, action and end?

Clearly as Beck concedes with routine reluctance and reservations, there is a need

to investigate Dorner’s complaint and bring in outside reviewers of current practice and claimed progress, and strengthen and expand counseling for the fragile and frayed, and cultural and ethical training for the good and guidance of all. For there is no security or sanity in the people’s needing to guard themselves against their sworn guardians, to be protected against their claimed protectors and to be ill-served and abused by those hired and too often hyped as self-sacrificing servants of the people. But a word of counsel and caution from that towering activist intellectual, Frederick Douglass, who teaches us that, if the most vulnerable and victimized by such violence and abuse don’t engage in righteous and relentless struggle to achieve social and legal justice, it will not come into being by itself. For as Douglass says, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Power concedes nothing without demand; it never did and never will.” Our task, then, is to set aside illusions and intensify the struggle.

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