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**MADCAPPING AND CONNING WITH TRUMP:  
FEEDING AMERICANS ADDICTION TO ILLUSIONS**

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**DR. MAULANA KARENGA**

**T**HE CURRENT AND SEEMINGLY CONSENSUAL wisdom is that this pandemic has exposed the fault lines of injustice and inequality in society. But it has also added in the problematic person of Trump another blow to the racist conception of Whiteness, its claims of superiority in leadership, salvational power, divine election and a perfect union. At the risk of seeming racially insensitive to White people, it would seem that if anyone wanted or needed living and life-long proof that White people aren't superior and can be willfully ignorant, woefully incompetent and alarmingly unworthy of positions they hold and the praise they receive, then Trump offers abundant and unarguable evidence. But let's face it, whatever Trump is, America has made him. Indeed, it elected him to be its racial representative, a kind of great White hope, its corporate captain and collaborator, and the central symbol of its longed-for misconceived manhood regained and reasserted at the expense of all others at home and abroad.

Trump is America's carnival barker and racial bully, hawking and holding high Americana sights and scenes under the re-pitched Big Top, whose central act is MAGA. And stripped of its mystification and manufactured fog, MAGA is little more than a mad and toxic mixture of racist nostalgia, meanness, pettiness and patriotism misperceived, packaged and promoted as justifiable hatred, hostility and phobia towards different others, especially the vulnerable. Therefore, the White House has morphed into the Mad House with Trump madcapping and conning his way through problems he can't handle, silencing and sidelining scientists and experts when the country needs them most, and pretending knowledge and intelligence he does not have and can only wishfully witness and envy in others.

The man is certifiably mad by any rational criteria. He is the monster side of America with presidential power and autocratic ambitions, a fantasizing *male interrupted* by reality, but refusing to accept it. And to keep his supporters,

enablers and admirers in line and looking for another lemming-like rush to the edge, he continuously feeds America's addiction to illusion. These illusions are an interlocking web of self-deceptions about being the greatest with no unpleasant historical memories or current regrets, no reason to reflect, only to react, especially negatively and aggressively. And then, there is the twin myth to the unblemished greatness - that of having achieved perfection as a society and simply striving to achieve a more perfect union, in spite of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, religious and other contradictions to the contrary. Joined to illusions of grandeur, exceptionalism and excellence without an ounce or iota of self-interrogation or the modesty which would invite it, there is the colonial, enslaving and imperial tradition of savaging the history and humanity of others different, denying their dignity, equal worthiness, and their equal right to the common and shared goods of society and the world.

Some, maybe many, might want to deny it, but at the heart of Trump's perverse hold on so many White American minds is his ability and wanton will to pimp, pander and play on their illusions about this country, themselves and others, and to cultivate and cater to their misinformed grievances, confusions and fears. And this is joined to an astonishing unawareness of the world they actually live in and whose plunder, pollution and depletion they collaborate in and cosign. Conceptually imprisoned in these primal and founding myths and illusions of unsoiled greatness and sanitized history, it is hard for these "fellow Americans" to accept vulnerability, rather than invincibility and immunity in terms of the coronavirus 19. They cannot see the morality or meaning in their having to stay home, stand back, wash their hands repeatedly, wear a mask or consider the consequences of their actions on others.

Nurturing and asserting the narrowest and most degraded forms of individualism, they find it difficult to feel for others, delay gratification and think seriously about the consequences of

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their actions and those of their monster mentor. After all, Trump has assured them he needs no mask, argued early that the virus was a hoax, dismissed it for months and made no national preparations for it. Instead, he has offered them safety and salvation behind apartheid walls, bans on Muslims, Africans - Continental and Caribbean, Latinos and Asians, imprisoning and packing immigrants together in unsanitary and disease producing conditions, and urging them, his followers, to rush into the streets and rage against restrictions and rules instituted to save lives, including their own.

Trump bragged early in his quest for the White House that he could shoot someone in plain sight on Fifth Avenue and get away with it. But, if not stopped and removed from office and held accountable, he will get away with criminal neglect in allowing the preventable spread of Covid-19 and thus, an undetermined number of avoidable deaths. For it is he who dismissed reports from U.S. intelligence services in November about the emergence of the virus; notification from China in December and from the World Health Organization in January; and briefings, memos and reports from various government agencies and officials in January and February. But again, he engaged in criminal neglect and denial and people have lost health and lives and continue to die deaths that could have been prevented, as medical experts and researchers attest. And in the midst of this pandemic of disease, death and dying, Trump, with no shame, floats the madcap and dangerous idea of injecting and ingesting disinfectant to treat the virus causing a spike in calls and cases concerning this. This was also the case with his recommendation of chloroquine, causing some to try it with disastrous results. But like the Mad Hatter, he is known for switching places and positions and talking nonsense in short phrases or tweets.

Another of Trump's defining features is his seemingly being morally incapable of con-

ceding wrong or mistakes and his lying as a way of life. Such a person should not be president, not even for the Whites who worship him. For there is more at stake than them; there is the whole people to consider: Native Americans, Africans, Latinos, Asians and those Europeans who oppose him and also his disastrous effect on the world. He is leading the country to ill health, unnecessary suffering, needless deaths and an avoidable disaster. And he must be confronted, removed from office and called to account. Trump, after all, can be compared to a mad chef, hooked and hyped up on his spiked and toxic witches' and warlocks' brew and stew, raring to feed his followers "medication" for mindlessness. His call to lessen the restrictions too quickly would dismiss and undo the awesome efforts and sacrifices which the essential and frontline workers, healthcare providers, health workers and people in general have made. And thus, we must resist him, remain in place, hold the line and push back.

**G**IVEN HIS AVERSION TO KNOWLEDGE, learned women and men and experts of every kind, Trump refuses to learn the lessons from past pandemics, plagues and man-made disasters. And since he refuses to learn the lessons of history, he will continue to cover up his mistakes until they consume him. And whereas his worshippers see him as a savior and might turn to him for deliverance from evil, we know he will not and cannot do it, for he is the evil himself. Also, he and they are in a self-deluding, self-destructive co-dependency which addicts and their enablers find unavoidable. Thus, it falls on the radical and progressive peoples of the country to recognize there is no remedy for his illness except resistance and removal. And in this process of a radically transformative struggle, we must set aside all illusions and craft and pursue an agenda for a new society rightfully attentive to shared human good and the well-being of the world. ▲

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