



UNDISCUSSED DIMENSIONS OF MASS KILLINGS: TRANSFORMING A PROFOUNDLY SICK SOCIETY

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PART 2. THE RECENT OPEN ADMISSION and general concession that the pretending president is a racist came with much reluctance and continuing reservation. For even with all his mean-spirited and harmful practices, and his garbage pitching and peddling, Trump is seen as serving White, corporate and Christian right-wing interests. Indeed, he is protected and promoted as the biblical King Cyrus, vice-ridden and vulgarly flawed but useful. Also, by some millenary evangelicals, he is seen as a god-sent biblical-like savior in a time of trouble and coming chaos. And for others, he represents a breath of strangely invigorating stale air reeking with the stench of an unadorned and undisguised racism, so cherished and championed by White supremacists.

So, yes racism, as personal and social sickness, resides in high and low places in American society, in both secular and self-described sacred spaces. And yes, the pretending president is a racist and thus sick too with his White supremacist language and delusions of “invasions,” “infestations,” phobias of all kinds and his lying as a way of life. But who elected him when he gleefully and openly expressed and exhibited the addiction, not only to racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, xenophobia, and almost religious commitment to capitalism and militarism?

And even after the election, who in secret, silent or open ways supports and enables him? Let’s face it; it is difficult for any society to concede its sickness. And it is even more difficult for a society so proud of itself, its wealth and weapons, its technology and self-deceptive talk of freedom, democracy and defense of its people; its triumphalism, exceptionalism, chosen-peopleism, consumerism and its self-declared capacity to obliterate its real, imagined and conveniently invented enemies.

It’s easier to call other societies sick, for example, Nazi and fascist societies, or developing societies, condemning them for the gaping holes American imperialism and its allies brutally bombed in them and mercilessly dug in them to extract material and human resources. Here we see it is not only about gun violence in America, but about violence on every level of life and all over the world.

It is a common psychological contention that pathology is to be defined in terms of how individuals function in a given society, how they fit, adjust, cope and concede. But what if the whole society has problems? Sanity would dictate or at least encourage and support righteous and relentless resistance to change the society, not only to cure it of its illness, but also to open up new horizons for human freedom and flourishing.

The psychologist, Na’im Akbar, introduces us to the concept of “democratic sanity,” a questionable process and condition in which sanity is determined by the consensus of the majority, regardless of objective evidence to the contrary. In other words, the shared views and values of the majority determine mental health, even if they, themselves, are insane, unsane, unhinged and in direct need of help. The psychiatrist, Alvin Poussaint, tells us, that this is the problematic position the American Psychological Association took when decades ago a group of Black psychologists argued for racism to be put on its index of mental disorders in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

In a word, he says, they saw racism as “normative - a cultural problem rather than an indication of psycho-pathology.” And he rightly argues that this position lends legitimacy to racism when it is posed as normative, rather than a mental disorder and for this essay, also a social disorder, given the link

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between the personal and the social and racism's pervasive presence in society.

Indeed, let's be honest. There is something radically *wrong* and *sick* about a person or a society that hates, degrades, assaults, deprives, kills and seeks to eliminate different vulnerable others for no real reason, only delusional ones. Again, as Poussaint states, clearly racism "meets the criteria for a delusional disorder, a major psychiatric illness" in its psychology and social practice.

Afterall, how else can we classify the approved regular racist hunting, profiling, and killing of Black boys and men with social sanction and under the color, camouflage and protection of law? And how else can we classify the racistly delusional White woman who "imagined" and claimed a 9-year old African American boy sexually assaulted her by passing close to her and called the police. He had not, of course, and was traumatized by the whole regular racist rendition of "America the ugly." There are numerous incidents of White people and police claiming fear, funny feelings, suspicions and uncontrollable hatred against Black girls, boys, women and men based on delusions about Black people. Too often it leads to false arrests, assaults and killings. But always it leads to violation and trauma.

It is clearly a tall order and difficult, dangerous and demanding task to even begin to turn things around, but it must be done. And to do it, we must see it as not only the gun or gunman that is the problem, but also the society itself, the way it conceives and conducts itself. It is about its oppressive impositions, ideology and institutional arrangements rooted in hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, religion, etc.

It's about facing the fact that racists can be and are *both* sick and those who must be held responsible for harm and killings they commit.

And it's about U.S. society's recognizing and responding psychologically and socially in the most transformative sense to the fact that in spite of the hymns, banners and bugle-blowing about "America the beautiful and the great," there are immigrant cages for children of color cruelly separated from their families at the border; Black children and young men and women falsely charged, caged and killed, victims of a truly criminal justice system and of police abuse and violence in the cities. And there are torture chambers at Guantanamo, American war, warmongering and military bases around the world on which trillions are spent, and yet inadequate budgets for education, housing, healthcare, and other necessities "to establish justice" and "promote the general welfare." In a word, society is deeply implicated and involved in the racism and White supremacy that cages, cripples, disadvantages, disables and destroys in numerous ways.

AND THUS, IT IS NOT ONLY THE ILLNESS of a few, but also the illness and oppression of society that must be treated and eliminated in righteous and relentless struggle at every level of society and social life. With such a comprehensive conception of the problem, we can focus on one or many things for immediacy. But we must never forget or fail to act on the fundamental principle of an urgent need to radically transform this society, creating for everyone a post-imperial, post-oppression life, indeed, a new history and expansive promise for ourselves and humankind.▲

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