



**ANATOMY OF RESURGENT RACISM:
SOME SOURCES OF ITS SAVAGERY**
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THE LATEST OUTBREAK AND RESURGENCE of raw and even rabid racism, culminating in the violent insurrectionist attack on the Capitol, has sent the country into doldrums of conditional self-doubt, semi-traumatic disbelief and televised and twittered questions of how did we come to this and will we ever get beyond this monster side of “America, the-would-be-beautiful?” After all, it has lasted so long against all reason, religious and moral appeals and educational attainment. Moreover, it seems that for every form of racism we restrain, it regenerates itself in multiple other forms.

These conversations about resurgent racism bring to mind the Greek mythological many-headed snake-like monster that, if you cut off one of its heads, would grow back two more in its place. And only the god-like superhero, Hercules, could kill it. But racism is real, not a myth, in spite of fervent and faithful denials by its most devout, delusional and passionate practitioners. And there is no mythical hero, Hercules, to destroy it. Indeed, it is only the people themselves, who freed from myths and mystifications, must and will take their salvation and liberation in their own hands and exorcise the racist monster which is among and within them. For only in this way can they self-consciously and collectively achieve the just, good and democratic society we all deserve and must demand.

As A. Philip Randolph taught us, “the condition of freedom, equality and democracy is not the gift of gods. It is the task of men, yes men, brave men, honest men, determined men.” That is to say, men and women, brave, honest and determined men and women. It is these women and men who know that they must make the miracles they hope and wish for, must model and mirror the values and vision they stand for, and must build the good world they long and struggle for as a lived experience and enduring legacy.

To defeat racism and destroy it at its roots, we must study and know its social anatomy, its structure and functioning, its historical evolution and current forms. For the hydra-heads of racism

appear in various forms: open, raw, rapacious and unrepentant or closeted and cloaked under the color and camouflage of law, education, civil social exchange, national interests, and blind justice which miraculously gains its sight and applies its selective morality in matters of race.

It is important here to note that the current outbreak of viral strains of resurgent racism is not to be understood simply as a backlash. To talk of resurgent racism is to speak of racism rising again into promise. It is a current restoring to prominence attitudes, activity and acceptance of things racist formerly cloaked, closeted and camouflaged, but still existent. In a word, we speak here of a racist revival, not a new thing. This brings to mind the religious revival and indeed, this resurgent racism has a religious dimension to it. For not only the Trump supporting evangelicals offer evidence of this, but also the cult-like religious commitment and views of Trump and of his “mission” by his most devoted followers.

What we have here, then, is not a new phenomenon, but evidence of the endemic systemic character of racism rooted in foundational thought and practice. So, it’s not simply a case of backlash, a violent or negative reaction to something they, the racists, experienced from us, but something clearly within them and the system. To say backlash implies we did something to them and that they are somehow justified in doing something back to us. But we did not do anything to them, and the question becomes why are they doing these unjust, evil and oppressive things to us? And the answer is that it’s because racism is systemic and was/is always there, waiting for an opportunity and excuse to reappear. Thus, there is not really a *backlash*, but rather a continuous racist *frontlash*, retreating and resurging at various historical junctures.

Racism expresses itself in three basic ways: as imposition, ideology and institutional arrangement. Racism is first of all a violent imposition. Indeed, violence is its first, most fundamental and defining feature of it. Whether it is the founding of the country through genocide, enslavement,

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dispossession, colonialism, occupation and conquest, or massacre, lynching and state and societal sanctioned police and vigilante violence, violence is its signature feature. Also, racism expresses itself as ideological justification for its violence. It may use biological and cultural claims of superiority and inferiority or religious claims, getting their god to underwrite their diabolical designs on and destruction of the lives and lands of the racialized other. And finally, racism expresses itself as institutional arrangements, i.e., institutions, organizations, structures and processes which reinforce, promote and preserve the imposition and ideology at every level and in every area of social life.

The key and overarching issue in this current resurgence of racism is the struggle around the color, character and course of the country. In other words, it is a question of how do we conceive society? Is U.S. society a White finished product or an ongoing multicultural, multiracial unfinished project? A product is finished, but a project, as used here, is open-ended and ongoing. And if we are to move beyond the conceptual imprisonment of open, closeted, cloaked and even “unconscious” racists, then, we must dare to radically reconceive and reconstruct the kind of country and society we want and deserve.

The sources of systemic racism and its savagery are varied and interrelated. It carries within it a psychology, politics, economics and culture rooted in domination, deprivation and degradation. Racism is a psychology, indeed, a pathology of oppression. It is a disorder of hatred, hostility and the will to be superior, the will to dominate and degrade others different and vulnerable. It is delusional and imagines evil, threats and insults from those different. It is a state of insecurity that requires degrading others to allow its adherents to feel at ease in their inadequacies.

The politics of racism is a zero-sum politics that prefers domination to democracy, suppression of the vote rather than encouraging it, and a monopoly of power over, rather than a sharing of power with. It makes laws that are essentially the will of the ruling race/class and morality a selective concern and practice that empowers and privileges the dominant race and over polices others. Likewise, the economics of racism is one of deprivation, disparity and disadvantage. It is the practice of a racialized capitalism that sees nothing wrong in the proliferation of poverty in the midst of unconscionably obscene wealth disparities and resists providing morally imperative reparations for the Holocaust of enslavement and subsequent savage oppression. In a word, racism supports and sustains a level of exploitation and deprivation which denies its targeted victims a life of dignity, decency and security.

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF RACISM SEEKS not only to deculturize the dominated and oppressed and impose a dehumanizing definition of reality of them, but also to discredit and degrade them. In educational institutions, there is the savaging of our minds and the breaking of our spirits at an early age, undermining our love of learning, diminishing our commitment and capacity to develop a life of the mind. And the media distorts and criminalizes our image and aspirations and of late, post artificial portraits of interracial couples as a psychological and cinematic substitute for real sharing of wealth, power and status. And as always in this context of the pathology of racist oppression, there is no reliable remedy except resistance, no viable strategy except struggle, and no promising way forward except on the battlefield for African and human good and the well-being of the world. ▲

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