Confronting White Supremacy

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The arrest of a group of fanatical skinheads seeking to start a race war in Los Angeles was welcome news. But as shocking as the revelation of the depths of their hatred is the opportunity it provides to re-examine—and intervene in—the nature of race relations in America.

How is it that young Whites can be socialized to hate African people to the extent that they would plot to assassinate African American leaders and indiscriminately kill dozens or hundreds of church parishioners?

It is a mistake to view this case as the exceptional workings of a radical fringe. Instead, we must realize that the Fourth Reich—and groups like it—is the inevitable expression of a social culture that is historically steeped in the ideology of White supremacy.

The notion of White supremacy is older than the United States of America. It was the prime mover in much of European and American imperialism around the world. The idea of "Manifest Destiny"—derived in part from ancient Greek philosophy—was the justification for the taking control of land, people and resources in Africa, America, Asia, and the South Pacific.

In more modern times, the popular belief in inherited racial differences has been strongly supported in the halls of academe. Sir Francis Galton, Charles Darwin’s cousin, elaborated the theory of natural selection to conclude that intellectual differences among humans were genetically linked. His book, Hereditary Genius (published in 1869), set the stage for Arthur Jensen’s 1969 essay (published in the Harvard Educational Review), that concluded that Whites are superior to Blacks in inherited intellectual potential.

J. Philippe Rushton, at the University of Western Ontario, is reinvigorating the controversy with his "sociobiological" theory of racial differences. Consistent with the generations of racist scholars before him, he concludes that Blacks are a genetically inferior branch of the human family (for a critique, see Fairchild, 1991).

Scientific racists such as Jensen and Rushton—and there are dozens of others—are well known to the White Supremacy groups who trumpet their findings as scientific proof for racial intolerance.

At the public policy level, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is pursuing a hotly contested "Violence Initiative" that aims its lens of inquiry at inner city Black youth. Many of the studies in the Violence Initiative seek to identify the "biochemical markers" that give rise to violence among Black children, youth and adults. Nowhere in the Violence Initiative is there a mention of the kind of violence that emanates from White supremacy.

The subjugation of African people has been nearly complete. The few instances of open opposition to the system of racial stratification have been met with violence and assassinations.

It is no surprise, then, that the leading voices for overturning America’s system of racial hatred are the targets of this deadly violence. The names of the targets are, perhaps, an honor role of those individuals and institutions who are really "doing the right thing" relevant to American race relations: The Reverend Cecil Murray and First A.M.E. Church, Danny Bakewell, Minister Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton, and others.

This endemic problem must be solved first by acknowledging the omnipresence and persistence of racism in America. Malcolm X, the assassinated former leader of the Nation of Islam, said that racial progress is not made when the knife in our back is partially removed. It occurs when the wound is fully healed. The problem, he noted, was getting White America to acknowledge that the knife was there in the first place.

The arrest of the skinheads in L.A. should serve as a "wake up call" to the growing problem of racial intolerance in this city, this country, and around the world.

It is good that law enforcement was able to intervene in the outrageous plot to assassinate innocent people in Los Angeles. But it is even more important to develop concrete solutions for the problems that really ail us: prejudice re-education and transracial human relations training.

We must tackle White supremacy and all of its variants as vigilantly as we tackle floods, hurricanes or other disasters. White supremacy is not a thing of the past; it is a thing of the present. White supremacy will remain a part of our future until we acknowledge its existence and consciously program its elimination.

Reference


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