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Hate American Style: Iraq Trees Bearing Strange Fruit

Are We Now Prepared To Deal Truthfully with the American Experience?

By Walter Fields
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The anger in the voices of U.S. military personnel and news commentators was evident in the immediate aftermath of the killing of four American civilian contractors, and the desecration of their bodies by an angry mob in the streets of Fallujah. Not satisfied that the foreigners were killed when a bomb detonated underneath their vehicle, the crowd of men dragged the victims

charred remains out of the vehicle, dragging one behind a car and hanging two from the steel girders of a bridge. The sheer brutality of the act was so searing to the conscious it caused one to wonder what could possess a human being to commit such an act of inhumanity against another person.

Almost immediately the reaction in the United States was one of outrage and cries for retribution rang out. The slayings were condemned as an atrocity and the perpetrators were immediately put on notice that they would be held accountable. Although the individuals killed were private security personnel, members of a growing fraternity, all of whom are operating in Iraq under their own set of rules; our nation's military command in Iraq made clear their intention to swiftly bring those responsible for the atrocity to justice. It was quintessential Americana, throwing down the gauntlet when a foreign concern is perceived to have disrespected our nation.

Listening to the accounts on television news programs I began to be filled with anger myself. Only my anger was directed at the righteous indignation of a nation that itself created the genre of hate that was on display in Fallujah.

Though not really surprised, I was still caught off-guard by the media's failure to recognize the similarities between the mob violence in Iraq and what transpired under Jim Crow in the United States in the 20th century. Seeing images of the corpses of the contractors hanging from the bridge, recalled all too well the song by Billie Holiday that captured the brutality of American segregation:

*Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood at the leaves
Blood at the root
Black body swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees*

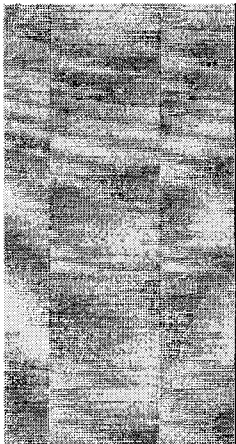
Indeed, the trees of our nation's bloody past has borne fruit that has now produced a bittersweet harvest. The violence against Blacks that was so much a part of American culture throughout the 20th century is now being visited upon those who are seen as agents of our national interest. I was stunned at how much the hate on the faces of the Fallujah mob resembled the near demonic aura



carried by mobs of angry whites during lynchings in the United States. The celebratory mood was identical to the scenes at lynchings when whites would bring their children, and in a festive atmosphere, watch as a Black person was strung from a tree or bridge, and take glee in the death of another *nigger*. If the poor soul were lucky death would come quick, if not it would often occur after mutilation or being burned alive.

How hypocritical to now label the acts of others as barbaric, after occupying their country under false pretenses, when their very behavior emulates the dirty laundry in our nation's racial closet. If these people are too be held guilty, labeled murderers, then what say we about their cowardly blood cousins in the United States who terrorized Blacks under the protection of law? What say we about the thousands of white jurors and judges who looked the other way and participated in gross miscarriages of justice when they knowingly let the guilty parties in white terrorist activity evade punishment? What say we about a government that sanctioned lynching, one of its presidents, Woodrow Wilson, who screened the racist epic *Birth of A Nation* in the White House, and by doing so stamped the imprimatur of the federal government on white mob violence?

Rather than point to Mogadishu when referring to the Fallujah attack, point to Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and New York, and other states where Blacks were dragged, hung and burned because they simply dared breathe the breath of freedom in a nation that had subjected them to the lowest form of existence. If the perpetrators of last week's bloody violence in Iraq are to be held accountable, then this nation must step forward and compensate the hundreds of



Black families who lost husbands and sons, wives and daughters, because their government failed to protect them. And we can easily determine who the surviving descendants are since these acts were perpetrated within the last hundred years. If we are not prepared to do so then those who express horror at the Fallujah incident should find another outlet for their outrage and spare us from their indignation.

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