

Another Steam Plume - Epilog

Written by Alex Baer
Thursday, 29 March 2012 15:17

More than a month we are now from Trayvon Martin's killing, still unable to get any clean traction of facts amid all the slipping and sliding of local cops tripping all over stand-your-ground laws. So, here we are, wondering why it is we have to step back to take in this view, a scene that seems pretty cut and dried, simple for anyone to understand why this teenager died.

Racism never likes to announce itself, though. As drivers of action, it's quite retiring, instead preferring to hang in the background, make excuses, nudge other notions closer to the front as reasons for things people do. See: Racism understands that if it came right out and spoke its mind, truth would be revealed: *I don't like you because you are different from me.*

If Racism spoke its mind like that, people would feel like the fools they and we sometimes really are: We admit Racism, we might as well come out and admit we don't like people for all their characteristics they come in -- *this one's too tall, that one too wide, this one with caveman eyebrows, that one with a chicken's beak, or ears that are too weird, or eyes too blue or green or brown or gray.*

Racism is terrified to admit its arbitrariness, that it's superficial and nonsensical, that judging people by characteristics is stupid and plain dumb. Unlearning anything, untangling it from your mind and heart requires lots of energy -- whether we're talking beliefs regarding color of skin, or climate change, denial is the easiest way to go. Damn shame, as we have all learned, over and over, the negative benefits of just, you know, *staying the course.*

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What do you want from a country and people, a place where 20 percent of Americans think President Obama's a Muslim -- or, in Mississippi, where the number shot up to 55 percent, in a poll made around GOP primary time? Of course, this is in spite of clear evidence, and decades of Christian, church-going action to the contrary -- but that's really not what is meant. Racists really mean Obama is a terrorist, and, boiled down even further, at its base, is that Obama is from that terrifying category, *"Other Than Me."*

So, yes, racist clods will continue to think they are wielding weaponized insults, hurling

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accusation at Obama, charging him as a Muslim or whatever handy hallucination of "other" they can grasp -- when, in fact, these racists are simply shouting to everyone around them, "*Hey! Look at me! I'm a dunce! I'm a troll! I'm as stupid as stupid can possibly be!*"

One in four Americans think Obama was born in a foreign country, more handy hallucinations of other, *Birther Fever*. These are people who breathe, eat, and move around under their own power, who are able to vote, who no doubt have friends and family they care about, and, in turn, are cared about, too. Surprising, given their toxic poisons they spout. These are not bad people -- they have been wired up all wrong by faulty Nurture, not bad Nature. As the song says, you have to be carefully taught. Racism's not ingrained: look at a mix of kids playing, and that's all the kids see -- not an accountant's ledger breaking out numbers by race and ethnicity.

No amount of external reason or fact can be offered for people lost to racism -- it is stubborn that way. No-one likes being told they are insane, duped, propagandized, incorrectly taught, and just plain wrong. *Denial* makes sure of that. This kind of change comes from strength, and comes from inside; many people prefer their fears -- it's easier, you know.

Meantime, the Secret Service reports death threats against President Obama are up 400 percent from the 3-thousand a year that Dubya got. Hate groups have been steadily rising, now hitting 1,018 groups of people stuffed full of amorphous, venomous hate. Hate-speech radio and teevee get to claim much of the credit, as does racism -- the rest we can credit to low-wattage thinking, those afraid of their own shadows.

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You don't think racism's at the center of much? Nearly 59 million Americans voted for that stellar, crackerjack, top-flight McCain-Palin ticket. *Figure the odds: Do the math on your hand.*

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The two-bit explanation for all of this: People see their lives circling the drain, getting sucked down inside it, and reach around for solid ground, instead getting quicksand as answers from so-called opinion leaders, all beating drums of ignorance, superstition and fear. They simply don't have the brain-or-will-power, nor the clear vision, to see who it is turning the screws on them, can't see the GOP, corporations, the rich, screwing them right to the wall. People are blinded by the easy, cue-card answers held up for them by their most-loved, hate-media heroes.

Time after time, it's the fault of the liberals, the Muslims, the socialists -- he's a Kenyan, you know -- the Mexicans, the atheists, the blacks, the communists, the non-believers, all trying to steal your good times right away from you! □ Next, they'll be coming for your guns and your bibles! □ They're coming right now! □ Shoot! Shoot! □ Fire!

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If you get caught in the crossfire of your own stupidity, just remember to cross yourself, say a fast, "Whoops, sorta sorry," and away you go, riding on in to heaven.

It's pretty easy, here on Earth, never having to take responsibility for anything you think or say or do -- just wait for the Rapture, and everything will be set right, you betcha.

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Racism and hate are like smoking, or climate change, or a *really* long fuse on a bomb: The harm's not immediately clear, it's too long a time between cause and effect to see the relationship, and, by the time the outcome arrives, it's too late. Too late to change.

Thing is, the slow learners in charge of the fuse never take just themselves out of the gene pool -- they always want us to go along on the ride, with them, right over the cliff, too.

If you're not sure any situation is racism, just turn it around to get a new view. In this shooting,

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for example, how would things have been different if the shooter had been a black man, with a history of troubling issues, a white teen dead at his feet?

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Equations 101: Reptilian brain racism + Stand-your-ground-laws = Prescription for Deaths. Class dismissed.

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Lots of blame and shame to go around, except one can no longer *shame* politicians, PACs, hate or special-interest groups -- they are all shameless. That leaves us with *blame*

to distribute, a word still able to land with a resounding thud when it is aimed, point-blank, and the trigger pulled -- which we now squarely do, at the NRA and its push for stand-your-ground laws, and at politicians and people in states allowing these vigilante laws through.

The only bright spot, if you can call it that, dim as it is: we are having something approaching a national discussion based on facts and higher ideals once again -- justice, fairness, equal treatment, law and order, how it is laws are made and passed, how power-mad pressure-groups like the NRA operate, how it is politicians fold under such pressures, how it is that something as ugly, useless, and repellant as racism is still with us.

Life has gone terribly wrong and we are now, finally, talking it over -- something members of a truly wise species would have done *first*, to save awful amounts of loss, to save unfathomable amounts of tears.