

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

Center for Reconciliation FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

“Hope & Healing: Black, White, and Native American

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RECONCILIATION---APPLIED HEALING

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It is a very special honor for me to be invited to be the opening plenary speaker at this very important conference of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation. And since our dates correspond to the 90th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, I especially applaud the unambiguous, fully affirmative theme of this Center: “From Tragedy to Triumph.”

Indeed, after 90 years, there is some reason to believe that we Americans have learned a little about the science of the analysis of ethnic and religious conflict and violence and the art of healing the traumas from these conflicts. This morning I would like to share with you some ideas on this subject and begin a conversation that I hope will be helpful during this conference and in our collective efforts after we leave this place.

Personal Discoveries

First, a little background on how I came to learn about applied healing.

I discovered depth psychology through the personal experience of a close family member’s psychoanalysis after returning to Washington from diplomatic assignments in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco between 1965 and 1973. My family and I had experienced the Six Day Israeli-Arab war that started for us the morning of June 5, 1967, with a large and violent mob attack on the American consulate in Basra. No one was hurt but the imprint of terror affected our small group of three wives, three husbands and two little girls for many months thereafter. Foreign Service began to lose some of its romantic allure for us.

Transferring to Beirut for eighteen months of intensive Arabic language training, the environment was tense politically, but we were in no noticeable personal danger. However, during this period Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were both assassinated back home. Many Lebanese people mourned these losses with us. A shop across from the American Embassy where the language school was housed erected a

large billboard with the pictures of the martyred John F. and Bobby Kennedy and Reverend King. (That was the same embassy that was destroyed by a terrorist truck bomb in 1983 with great loss of American and Lebanese life.)

I was transferred to Libya in early 1969 only to see the revolution carried out by Muammar Qadhafi six months later. From 1971-73, I was in Morocco and witnessed two violent attempts to overthrow King Hassan II. The coup-makers failed, but there was quite a bit of shooting and fighter aircraft strafing the Royal Palace in Rabat. The themes of violence, destruction and death became more and more dominant in my professional life and they could not be stopped from being part of my daily consciousness. I was a political analyst, and I constantly wrestled with trying to understand what motivates tribes and nations to use violence against other tribes and nations.

Learning About Political Psychology

After some five years back in the State Department, I heard about the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Psychiatry and Foreign Affairs which was chaired by a colleague of mine in Washington. I was invited to be an unpaid consultant to the committee and to their lasting credit, allowed to do this moonlighting on government time by my supervisors in the Near East bureau and bureau of intelligence and research.

The APA committee convened six five-day workshops of retired military officers, cabinet members, academics, journalists, and psychiatrists from Egypt, Israel and Palestine to support the Middle East peace process. Out of the APA effort, which lasted until 1985, emerged a theory of the psychodynamics of ethnic and sectarian conflict and also some ideas about the necessary steps of therapeutic interventions. The psychiatrists focused on the concepts of dehumanization, the intergenerational transmission of historical grievance and the psychology of victimhood.

We learned that one cause of the apparent intractability of ethnic, religious or, more simply, identity conflicts, is characteristic of almost all of them. Where one or more sides in a political conflict has suffered traumatic historic or current losses whose depth and tragedy have not been acknowledged or atoned for by the side that caused the losses, the wounds do not heal. They can be five, fifty or five hundred years old. We learned that time does not heal wounds. Only healing does.

Consciously and unconsciously these wounds are part of the historical identity of the losing side, handed down from generation to generation. The memory of these unhealed wounds is a perpetual assault on the sense of self-worth and security of the people affected. This memory, in turn, fuels strong ethnic or religious consciousness and intense nationalism. It can only be dealt with if the wounds to self-esteem are healed. It might be useful to explain the concept of victimhood because it is central to the psychology of conflict analysis.

Victimhood psychology is an automatic product of aggression and resultant traumatic loss in individuals and peoples. The refusal of aggressors to acknowledge the pain of the hurts inflicted on victims, and therefore the absence of remorse by the aggressors, creates an overwhelming sense of injustice in the victims. A society, a leadership, a world, and, indeed, a universe the victims had heretofore assumed would shield them from harm have all let them down. Their new psychology would henceforth keep the victimized people highly suspicious and on permanent alert for future acts of aggression and violence. It would also make them strongly resistant to pressures to make peace before the aggressors acknowledge the victims' losses and ask forgiveness for their violence. The victims' collective sense of security in their identity, their self-concept, their basic dignity, and a future for their children have been dealt a devastating blow.

This is the burden of history. And to start the healing process, there needs to be a "walk through history"--a taking of an inventory of hurts—carried out together by the winners and the losers or the aggressors and their victims, or their descendents, to rediscover what happened in the past which keeps alive so much anger and resentment in the present.

We came to believe that effective, psychologically sensitive facilitation of dialogue between representatives of groups in conflict required that we listen carefully to the stories and especially the fears and anxieties of peoples in seemingly intractable political and religious conflicts. We came to understand that we must show respect for their humanity and their cultural identity, including religious identity, and to express our concern for their well-being and their children's well-being and future. Or more simply, that we cared about them.

Victims of White Oppression Speak from the Past

Walking through history is a key part of applied healing, and Americans have a rich resource for uncovering the voices of our brothers and sisters whose human rights and dignity have been swept away by the powerful. The late historian, Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove collected these testaments in *Voices of a People's History of the United States*. (2004). Hearing the words of real people gives immediacy to their human feelings and presence that historical narratives cannot convey.

We will start with excerpts from a speech the Shawnee leader Tecumseh in the winter of 1811-12 when he was trying to build a defensive alliance with the Osages in the Midwest to fight encroachment by white militias and settlers.

Brothers,--When the white men first set foot on our grounds, they were hungry; they had no place on which to spread their blankets, or to kindle their fires. They were feeble; they could do nothing for themselves. Our father commiserated their distress, and shared freely with them whatever the Great Spirit had given his red children. They gave them food when hungry, medicine when sick, spread skins for them to sleep on, and gave them ground, that they might hunt and raise corn.

Brothers,--The white people are like poisonous serpents: when chilled, they are feeble and harmless; but invigorate them with warmth, and they sting their benefactors to death.

The white people came among us feeble; and now we have made them strong, they wish to kill us, or drive us back, as they would wolves and panthers.

Brothers,--The white men are not friends to the Indians; at first, they only asked for land sufficient for a wigwam; now, nothing will satisfy them but the whole of our hunting grounds, from the rising to the setting sun.

Brothers,--The white men want more than our hunting grounds; they wish to kill our warriors; they would even kill our old men, women and little ones...
Brothers,--My people wish for peace; the red men all wish for peace; but where white people are, there is no peace for them, except on the bosom of our mother.

Brothers,--The white men despise and cheat the Indians; they abuse and insult them; they do not think the red man sufficiently good to live.

Here is another powerful moral indictment from the Sauk chief Black Hawk after his capture the U.S. 6th Infantry in 1832.

You have taken me prisoner with all my warriors. I am much grieved, for I expected, if I did not defeat you, to hold out much longer, and give you more trouble before I surrendered. I tried hard to bring you into ambush, but your last general understands Indian fighting. The first one was not so wise. When I saw that I could not beat you by Indian fighting, I determined to rush on you, and fight you face to face. I fought hard. But your guns were well aimed...My warriors fell around me...The sun rose dim on us in the morning... That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. His heart is dead, and no longer beats quick in his bosom. He is now a prisoner to the white men; they will do with him as they wish. But he can stand torture, and is not afraid of death. He is no coward. Black Hawk is an Indian.

He has done nothing for which an Indian ought to be ashamed. He has fought for his countrymen, the squaws and papooses, against white men, who came, year after year, to cheat them and take away their lands. You know the cause of our making war. It is known to all white men. They ought to be ashamed of it. The white men despise the Indians, and drive them from their homes. But the Indians are not deceitful. The white men speak badly of the Indian, and look at him spitefully. But the Indian does not tell lies; Indians do not steal.

An Indian who is as bad as the white man, could not live in our nation; he would be put to death, and [be] eat[en] up by the wolves. The white men are bad school-masters; they carry false looks, and deal in false actions; they smile in the face of the poor Indian to cheat him; they shake them by the hand to gain their

confidence, to make them drunk, to deceive them, and ruin our wives. We told them to let us alone; but they followed on and beset our paths, and they coiled themselves among us like the snake. They poisoned us by their touch. We were not safe. We lived in danger. We were becoming like them, hypocrites and liars, adulterers, lazy drones, all talkers and no workers.

Finally, we have the testimony of a white army private, J. Burnett, who was part of the Cherokee removal force. In May, 1838 President Andrew Jackson sent a force of 4000 regular army troops and 3000 volunteer soldiers under General Winfield Scott to Smoky Mountain Indian country. And in the words of Private Burnett recorded in 1890, "wrote the blackest chapter in the pages of American history."

Men working in the fields were arrested and driven to the stockades. Women were dragged from their homes by soldiers whose language they could not understand. Children were often separated from their parents and driven into the stockade with the sky for a blanket and the earth for a pillow. And often the old and infirm were prodded with bayonets to hasten them to the stockades.

In one home death had come during the night. A little sad-faced child had died and was lying on a bear skin couch and some women were preparing the little body for burial. All were arrested and driven out leaving the child in the cabin. I don't know who buried the body.

In another home was a frail Mother, apparently a widow with three small children, one just a baby. When told that she must go, the Mother gathered the children at her feet, prayed a humble prayer in her native tongue, patted the old family dog on the head, told the faithful creature goodbye, with a baby strapped on her back and leading a child with each hand started on her exile. But the task was too great for that frail Mother. A stroke of heart failure relieved her suffering. She sunk and died with her baby on her back, and her other two children clinging to her hands....

At this time, 1890, we are too near the removal of the Cherokees for our young people to fully understand the enormity of the crime that was committed against a helpless race at the bayonet point to satisfy the white man's greed.

Future generations will read and condemn the act and I do hope posterity will remember that private soldiers like myself, and like the four Cherokees who were forced by General Scott to shoot an Indian Chief and his children, had to execute the orders of our superiors. We had no choice in the matter....

However, murder is murder whether committed by the villain skulking in the dark or by the uniformed men stepping to the strains of martial music.

Murder is murder, and somebody must answer. Somebody must explain the streams of blood that flowed in the Indian country in the summer of 1838.

Somebody must explain the 4000 silent graves that mark the trail of the Cherokees into their exile. I wish I could forget it all, but the picture of 645 wagons lumbering over the frozen ground with their Cargo of suffering humanity still lingers in my memory.

Let the historians of a future day tell the sad story with its sighs, its tears and dying groans. Let the great judge of all the earth weigh our actions and reward us according to our work.

I have been giving a good deal of space to voices of victims of oppression and those who could attest to it because they provide portraits of human beings with a dramatic sense justice, injustice and moral conscience. These are the voices that critical in healing dialogues. We look now to African American witnesses to history.

These two letters from Howard Zinn's collection of documents are a strange combination of genteel discourse enveloping accounts of cruelty. In a letter to his former master William Gatewood in 1844, former slave, Henry Bibb, wrote:

You may perhaps think hard of [me] for running away from slavery, but ...I have but one apology ...that I did not start [earlier]....To be compelled to stand by and see you whip and slash my wife without mercy, when I could afford her no protection, not even by offering myself to suffer the lash in her place, was more than I felt it to be the duty of a slave husband to endure....My infant child was also frequently flogged by [your wife] for crying, until its skin was bruised and literally purple....But I am willing to forget the past. I should be pleased to hear from you again....

And here is a letter from escaped slave Jermain W. Logeun to his owner Sarah Logue in 1860:

You are a woman; but had you a woman's heart, you never could have insulted a brother by telling him you sold his only remaining brother and sister, because he put himself beyond your power to convert him into money. You sold my brother and sister, Abe and Ann, and twelve acres of land because I ran away. Now you have the unutterable meanness to ask me to return and be your miserable chattel, or in lieu thereof, send you \$1000 to enable you to redeem the land, but not to redeem my poor brother and sister! ...I am indignant beyond the power of words to express, that you should be so sunken and cruel as to tear the hearts I love so much all in pieces

Perspectives on the State of Mind of Pre-and Post Civil War Southern Leaders

In his stunning 1998 study, *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*, Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson noted that even slaveholder Thomas Jefferson spoke from personal experience on the disastrous effects slavery had on the mind of the growing male European American. But Patterson writes that no black American was more insightful than the great W.E.B. Du Bois who said:

The southern planter suffered, not simply from his economic mistakes---the psychological effects of slavery on him were fatal. The mere fact that a man could be, under the law, the actual master of the mind and body of human beings had to have disastrous effects. It tended to inflate the ego of most planters beyond all reason; they became arrogant, strutting, quarrelsome kinglets; they issued commands; they made laws; they shouted their orders; they expected deference and self-abasement; they were choleric and easily insulted. Their 'honor' became a vast and awful thing, requiring wide and insistent deference. Such of them as were inherently weak and inefficient were all the more easily angered, jealous and resentful; while the few who were superior, physically or mentally, conceived no bounds to their power and personal prestige. As the world had long learned, nothing is so calculated to ruin human nature as absolute power over human beings. (from *Black Reconstruction*)

For Orlando Patterson, of black African roots, born and raised in Jamaica and educated in the UK, archival study of the post-Reconstruction period and the rise of Jim Crow repression of freed slaves was a constant shock. He found that the most persistent racist oppression took the form of attempts to emasculate the African American males in every way possible. He says that the post-Reconstruction South saw a form of neo-slavery:

in which religion, politics, and economics fused in the rituals of the lynch mob. In a substantial minority of lynchings, those rituals partook of a cult of human sacrifice, focused on the literal and symbolic castration of Afro-American males. The worshippers castrated and then immolated their victims alive, as burnt offerings to a Southern Christian God whom they felt they had to assuage and propitiate after their humiliating defeat in the Civil War and their trauma of losing a cherished way of life.

This theme gets elaborated in Patterson's discussion of the Ku Klux Klan. He describes the Klan as not a mob, but, in its twentieth century phase, an organized cult that brought together thousands of Protestant ministers to membership and a significant percentage in the leadership. Beyond clergy, the Klan leadership consisted of well-educated, prominent members of the community in business and the professions. And at the ascendancy of its power from Georgia to Colorado and Indiana, the Klan influenced local politicians, governors, and members of Congress. We recall that the late Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, was a Klan member as a young man.

The KKK preached a fundamentalist Protestant creed that rejected the concept of evolution and pledged restoration of the Bible and faith in God. Imperial Wizard Simmons, a former preacher, insisted that the Klan was just as much a religion as a secular movement. Orlando Patterson writes that his research into newspaper archives that described lynchings as sacrificial offerings made him sick to write and he warned his readers that his accounts were hard to read. And in a powerful observation he wrote:

...exploring [the Klan's] religious roots brought me close to spiritual nausea. How in heaven's name could Christianity, which worships as the one, true living God a swarthy-skinned, working-class Semite from the sticks of ancient Roman Palestine who preached a doctrine of love and fellowship, end up as a sacrificial cult that legitimized the genocidal torturing and burning alive, by its most ardent believers, of helpless males from a wretchedly exploited ex-slave minority?

As members of this audience contemplate the subjects of honest conversations during their walks through history to construct an agenda for healing, the place of Jesus in American Christianity would be a profound subject to consider.

An Unusual Approach to an Honest Conversation on Healing in America

I conclude this talk with a proposal for North/South; white/white healing I published in 1995 in an obscure, long defunct monthly newspaper called *American Civilization*, founded by none other than Newt Gingrich. A politically conservative editorial board accepted it. The piece was called "Reconciliation in America." This is the relevant portion. I would not ordinarily quote myself but the piece has been long buried.

A good part of white America's inability—North and South—to respond to the moral challenges made by the painful situation of inner city black is the strong residual resentment of the white North by the white South. Since the condition of Africans from slavery to freedmen has been the most visible contentious issue between North and South, white America has been essentially paralyzed psychologically in its capacity to deal with it openly and honestly. This burden of history is a major impediment to serious study and political collaboration between liberal and conservative/Northern and Southern politicians and leaders of other social and economic sectors of the country. These labels can be challenged on many grounds, but there is an underlying logic to their use.

The Southern feeling of resentment against the North long predates the Civil War, but it was powerfully amplified by the loss of the war. And much of the loss, this historic wound, has not healed. The white/white relationship is further complicated by the fact that Northerners do not 'remember' their own history of anti-black racism and record of systematic insult and disdain for almost all that was 'southern.' Furthermore, as Louisiana State Professor Lewis J. Simpson states in his jewel of a book, *Mind and the American Civil War: A Meditation on Lost Causes*, that after the Civil War the self-consciously moral and intellectual superiority of the 'North' as a distinct region—more or less disappeared as the country diversified and expanded. Thus in a major sense the historical object of Southern resentment has disappeared, to be replaced by a fragmented and dispersed set of targets, symbolized in part by the liberal intelligentsia and politicians, Hollywood, the New York Times, and Harvard University.

The modern manifestation of this antagonism is the belief among many southerners and conservatives that the liberal intelligentsia and its allies in the

Democratic Party have in effect paid subsidies to black Americans through preferences and the welfare system in order to keep themselves in power. The other side of this feeling is that many southerners believe that the liberal intelligentsia works to keep them down through perpetual condemnation for their history of slavery and the imposition of guilt which can never be atoned. These feelings engender a profound sense of injustice among southerners and conservatives and...the rejection of the (Liberal) rejecters.

Here are some suggestions of what a walk through American history would reveal about antipathy in the North/South relationship. For example, Americans are accustomed to hearing that their country was seen as a 'city on a hill'....In 1651, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley wrote in *The Gospel Covenant*, '...the people of New England...should in a special manner labor to shine forth in holiness above other people....We are as a city set upon a hill, in the open view of all the earth; the eyes of the world are upon us because we profess ourselves to be a people in covenant with God....what can we excel in, if not holiness?' In 1742, Jonathan Edwards of Connecticut and Massachusetts saw New England as the most likely place in the colonies for glorious work toward the millennium.

In 1743, Ben Franklin published 'Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge,' a plan to bring all the British plantations from Nova Scotia to Georgia under the dominion of New England nationalism—a cultural and moral imperium which was to reach almost hysterical heights in the abolitionist movement just before that tragic catharsis in [the Civil War.]

Well before the War, Thomas Jefferson was anxious that the University of Virginia at Charlottesville be completed quickly before the sons of its commonwealth had their minds permanently contaminated in 'the northern seminaries.' Jefferson singled out Harvard...as 'an institution particularly antagonistic to southern principles.'

Ralph Waldo Emerson was probably the most distinguished of the Massachusetts purveyors of insult—and thus wounds to collective self-esteem—to the South. In an 1837 journal entry, he wrote, 'The young Southerner comes here a spoiled child...very good to be spoiled more, but good for nothing else. He has conversed so much with rifles, horses, and dogs that he is become himself a rifle, a horse, and a dog and in civil educated company...he is dumb and unhappy, like an Indian in church.'

The tradition of insult and disdain was carried over in the twentieth century journalism of H. L. Mencken, the Baltimorean. But the reactive hurt to southern self-regard is most poignantly evoked in William Faulkner's fictional character Quenton Compson of Mississippi who reluctantly goes to Harvard at his mother's urging and commits suicide by jumping off a bridge into the Charles River. In prose as poetry, [Lewis J.] Simpson writes that 'Quenton has in effect assumed

the burden of the whole history of the destroyed world of southern slaveholders—carrying his burden to the lapsed world of Emerson.’

Faulkner believed that the past was in the present. I believe that the wounds to Southern self-esteem, inflicted relentlessly by a ‘North’ almost totally unaware today of its history and certainly of the political/psychological consequences of the conflicted relationship, must, somehow, be acknowledged. After a walk through history to document the facts, symbolic representatives of the New England tradition need to acknowledge its destructive behavior and accept moral responsibility for it. Only this way can the contemporary South, and its transplanted allies in the West, unburden itself of its resentments against Northern ‘liberalism’ and join with white America throughout the country in finally facing its responsibilities to black America—and today I say also Native America. This is the road to national reconciliation.

I am enormously grateful to the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation for giving me the chance to share these thoughts from its distinguished platform with such a dedicated American company.

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