



TIMMIN', TOMMIN' AND TALKIN' 'BOUT RACISM: DEALING WITH AMERICA'S ACUTE DENIAL

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AND THERE WAS SEN. TIM SCOTT (R) OF South Carolina responding to Pres. Biden's address to the nation, dismissing the seriousness of racist encounters, trying to reason away racism, and calling for a "common sense and common ground" he failed to show or share. He referenced his Christian credentials to strengthen his argument, but the spirit was not there, for his speech lacked both reason and rightfulness. I might have missed something, but it sounded a lot like what my father, a Christian minister, speaking from biblical insight, called walking in step with the wicked, standing in the way of the wrong-doers and sitting in the seat of the scornful. He had been assigned to carry the water and waste of his Trumpized party, to deny truth, lift up the lie and try to sell as many air sandwiches about racism as the irrational mind, unrepentant heart and current market for social madness would bear.

It would be too harsh to call what he did tommin, but we can call it timmin' which seems on its face to be a similar species of speech, thinking and practice. He does not want us to think race, even though it is imposed by society as a social construction used to assign human worth and social status using White people as the paradigm. He talks of color coding and our oppression based on color as "a hundred years ago." And he has the strange gut and gall to suggest a moral equivalency between identifying White oppressors and indicting and oppressing Black people. No, the racial coding and oppression is not long ago, but a daily reality in countless constraining, disabling and deadly forms. And it is not only in the graphic and barbaric violence of the police, but also in the savage violence of systemic racism itself in virtually every institution and social space.

"Hear me clearly," he declares. "America is not a racist country." But it's not that we don't hear Sen. Scott, it's that we can't in good faith accept his irrational assertion of loyalty to party line and betrayal of the truth of our oppression. President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala

Harris have expressed agreement with this position and they will need to distinguish their rationale and version of this from Sen. Scott's. For if racism is not systemic, then any correctives they offer to end the savagery of our racial oppression will only be superficial and self-deluding.

Scott peddles the patriotism of his party, camouflaging the pathology of oppression imposed on his people. And he says, "I know firsthand our healing is not finished." But this is a wrong and misleading focus. The central issue is not our healing, but our freedom from the oppression that injures and kills us. If the gross and grievous injuries are conceded and halted, then we could begin to heal. And if we acquire the healthcare, housing, education, income and the reparations we need and merit, our healing and health would greatly improve.

A dedicated defender of the racist realm, Scott makes reference to his race to bolster his party's fake claims, not to support his people's real demands of freedom, justice, and equality. He talks of voter suppression as if it is freedom to vote and defends unjust laws that limit and prevent democracy, not enhance and expand it. Indeed, it raises Min. Malcolm's critique of racist conceptions of democracy which are *herrenvolk*, master race, and deformed versions of democracy masquerading as real. Thus, he calls it a victimizing democracy, "nothing but disguised hypocrisy."

Talking the double-speak they usually assign to their enemies, he says efforts to correct and prevent future voter suppression are "not about civil rights or our racial past. It's about rigging elections in the future." So, voter suppression is freedom to vote and a proposed federal initiative to stop and prevent it in the future is defined as a "Washington power grab." Let's face it; it is about the racial past as well as the racial present, for racial here is also a substitute for racist. And it is the racial and racist past and present which cannot be wished away or defined

away by self-deluding claims of a post-racial society.

Scott tells us that "Race is not a political weapon to settle every issue the way one side wants. It's far too important." But there is a problem here. First, this is a lesson he should teach his party cohorts, allies, associates and supporters. It's an understanding we have held at the center of all our struggles. We said it in the Holocaust of enslavement during the Jim Crow period and the Black Freedom Struggle and reaffirm it in the defiant and dignity-affirming assertion that Black Lives Matter.

Also, it is Europe that developed and weaponized the concept of race, employing it in determining superiority and inferiority, in denying our humanity and human rights, in the distribution of social goods and social services, and enhancing or diminishing life conditions, capacity and chances. Scott's affirmation that race is important is an uncredited and bad faith concession to the battle cry "Black Lives Matter." But because it's an uncredited appropriation used to pretend valuing Black lives rather than actually protecting them and helping to create conditions for their survival, development and flourishing, it is left hanging without associated programs or proposals.

In weaving the artificial cloth of American mythology about its goodness, greatness and unplausible perfection seeking to be more perfect, he repeatedly stumbles over the large rocks of reality and racist lies placed on his path. And thus, he embraces and becomes hopelessly engulfed in the acute denial of the wrongdoing, wrong headedness, gross evil, and savage oppression that accompany the founding and development of this country.

Plodding on doggedly and determinedly, he tells us "We are all in this together," as if we knew what "this" was and what is the nature, reason and basis of this imagined togetherness in a

context of systemic racism. Moreover, he says, "we get to live in the greatest country on Earth." But the phrase "get to live in" hides a monstrously horrid history of the Holocaust of enslavement. And racially and humanly speaking, it wasn't about "getting to live," in America, but being forced, being enslaved, being dominated, deprived and degraded here.

Moreover, to talk about it as if American society simply opened up to us so we could move "from cotton to Congress" is again lifting up a lie and illusion of an unfought for freedom and justice for all. Every inch and iota of progress made, Frederick Douglass told us in the midst of the Holocaust of enslavement, is gained and sustained in righteous and relentless struggle. "For power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." So, it was then and so it is now.

SCOTT CLOSES TRYING TO SPIRITUALIZE A material problem, a social, economic, political and cultural problem, i.e., the systemic pathology of oppression. As Nana Fannie Lou Hamer says, "America is a sick society," sick with racism, classism, sexism and other pathologies of oppression. And we cannot confuse or conflate spiritual redemption with social liberation. I don't doubt the role or reality of the power of his mother's prayer or all our mothers' and fathers' prayers. But they taught us too that faith without work is dead, that God helps those that help themselves, that struggle, righteous and relentless struggle - internally and externally, opens the way to a whole 'nother world of justice, caring and other varieties of goodness. Let us set aside all illusions about race, racism and reality, then, intensify the struggle, bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place, and build the good world we all want and deserve.▲