

Too old to be surprised by the murder of Trayvon

Written by Fred Easter
Monday, 02 April 2012 09:35

I am way too old to be surprised by the murder, last month, of young Trayvon Martin, in Sanford, Florida.

When Emmett Till's murderers were acquitted, back in the fifties, I saw my Mother cry for the first time. Emmett and I were the same age and she knew I was as likely as Emmett to whistle at a woman.

I also know that there have been entire decades in this country's history when a Black man was lynched, somewhere in the South, every day. Yes! EVERY DAY! Over 365 brothers murdered each year, for decades at a time. Many were murdered for the same reason young Martin lost his life. They were walking while looking suspiciously Black and appearing to have no cares.

However, even my advanced age and knowledge of history are not sufficient to ease the pain and dampen the outrage at seeing another bright Black life snuffed out and listening to pitiful, mealy-mouthed attempts at cover ups and spins of the awful truth.

Cogent arguments have been advanced that America owes the descendants of its former slaves a huge debt that should be quantified and paid. For my purposes here, it would be a useful first step if America would just get up one night, when it's quiet in the house and go into its bathroom, put on the light and look in the mirror. Perhaps then, it might be able to acknowledge that the face peering back at it is not the face of the world's steadfast fighter for freedom, fairness and democracy. It might see clearly that some scrubbing is needed on the "home of the brave and land of the free". Lying to others is reprehensible. Lying to oneself is pathology; deeply rooted sickness.

One encouraging sign is that, these days, with tweets, blogs and all the social media, heinous acts are known around the country and the world before very long. It is getting harder to lynch someone and suppress the news, as was done with most of Jim Crow's victims.

I heard someone say, the other day, that the problem with Alabama and Mississippi was that they were too small to be a nation and too big to be a mental institution. Florida is in that category, as well.

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If you watch the nightly news and see the coverage of some local tragedy you will hear people say “I didn’t think this could happen here”.

The reality is that there is no “there” anymore. There is here. It has arrived at our doorstep. We have to answer the doorbell and deal with the caller who is this American society.