

## UNCLE SAM PLAYS THE TRUMP CARD

by Justin Desmangles

*“Tis dangerous to take a cold, to sleep, to drink; but I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety. The purpose you undertake is dangerous, the friends you have named uncertain, the time itself unsorted, and your whole plot too light for the counterpoise of so great an opposition.”* – Hotspur, *Henry IV*, Act 2 Scene 3, William Shakespeare

*“This is NOT a time for penny-pinching or horse trading on the Hill.”* – White House economic advisor Peter Navarro, February 23, 2020, memo to the President warning of an impending 2 million deaths in the U.S. from corona virus.

I had been wondering what they dug out of Reinhard Heydrich’s grave last December; I guess this virus may have been it! Having just read *The Man in the High Castle*, Philip K. Dick’s dystopian sci-fi masterpiece in which the Nazis emerge as victors of World War II, the name sounded familiar. In the novel, set in the Bay Area, Dick places Heydrich quite high in the order of things, as well he would have been had he not been assassinated by Czech Resistance fighters. The real Reinhard Heydrich was the principal designer of the proposed “final solution” as well as the organizer of Kristallnacht. A man whose infamous cruelty was so severe it was both feared and admired by his Nazi peers, he was also rumored to have Jewish ancestry. Contemporary admiration for his ideas led his followers to resort to grave robbing at the end of last year. Who is to say towards what ritual purpose these actions may have been put? Among certain secret societies, fraternal orders, even wealthy occultists, there would be a great demand for such a substance as previously contained in that grave. Haven’t heard a lot from Skull and Bones at Yale lately. Maybe some of the folks in the Federalist Society could find some Johnnie Walker for a round of congratulations? They can send the bill to A.L.E.C., Americans for Prosperity, or maybe Freedom Works. I am sure Dick Arme’s pension can handle it.

Nazi intellectuals and law makers had great admiration for American domestic policies concerning race and ideas of racial hygiene and were not shy about saying so prior to the U.S. entering the war (see *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*, James Q. Whitman, Princeton University Press, 2017). They, too, looked out at the world and saw “shithole countries,” to quote Donald Trump, rather than places where people lived. Forced sterilization of undesirables was especially attractive to them, a policy which remained active in the United States well into the 1970s. The factory-like settings in which Germany would implement their version of these strategies resemble nothing so much as their American cousins in the prison system. Replete with often lethal, illegal medical experimentation on

prisoners. Had Heydrich lived to ascend to Germany's Chancellorship, as many believed he would, I am sure he would have approved of the Trump-Pence junta and its handling of the coronavirus thus far. Particularly the lines of class, race, ethnicity, education and income levels so clearly demarcated by its lethality. To put it country-simple, the right people are dying.

Dean Baquet would probably be the last to admit it, right after David Remnick, but a great many of their wealthiest readers scan headlines like "BLACK AMERICANS BEAR THE BRUNT AS VIRUS SPREADS" (lead story, front page, *The New York Times*, April 8, 2020) and breathe a quiet hallelujah. The impulse leading toward the genocide of non-white people in the Americas is not only alive and well, it is thriving and growing in strength. Though that impulse began many centuries ago, too many of its key features are with us today in stark and undeniable ways. The elaborate construction of concentration camps along the southern border, tens of thousands of children being held at subsistence level, barely alive, the violent breaking apart of their families as public spectacle. All of these details would show themselves as familiar to any serious student of the history of these continents north and south, going back to the earliest settlements by Spanish, French, Portuguese and English colonists. Their mirror images in the present become obscured only by the fact that collectively we put those events in a sentimental, seductive past, rather than accepting their hideous, grotesque reflection of now. Our greatest palliative in the process of this un-remembering, dismembering today has been access to the narcotizing excesses of so-called media. As the poet Bob Kaufman accurately reported in his now classic "Heavy Water Blues", "Television, america's ultimate relief, from the indian disturbance." Can the Navajo draw such a distinction with its near past? Can any indigenous tribe that has survived unto the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Surely the rampantly rising infection rates among immigrant workers in Wisconsin's meat processing plants reveal the centuries old motive for this violence.

*Cut to commercial. Real Uncle Tom scene, Ben Carson singing Water Boy on a small riser at the end of dark room under a single spotlight, a tiny scrim behind him on which is projected a waving confederate flag.*

*Voice over: Stop the war of northern aggression, give generously to the Strom Thurmond Foundation to End Miscegenation.*

*Fade-to-black*

*Camera zooms out to reveal a Heidi-type character, smiling, arms extended a la Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, twirling atop green rolling hills.*

*Voice over: Yearning to return to her regular pogroming, Erica bought futures in pork bellies last week. She has faith in Tyson Foods and so can you.*

*Next we see the fat winking face of Mitch McConnell fill the screen like so much pink gelatin, "With so many channels to choose from, why have one point of view?"*

*And now back to our regular pogroming . . .*

The American presidency has always existed in moral twilight. Presidents lie, it is important that they do so in order to keep their job. Even those who audition for the role often start by telling a lot of lies in public to see how much traction they can gain coming into the race. No president as far as we know has lied as much as Donald Trump. His bilious regurgitation of insults, exaggerations, half-truths and outright deceptions is unparalleled by any measure, save for his heroes in professional wrestling. Rowdy Roddy Piper, indeed. But I'll tell one thing he is not lying about, the number of Federal judges he has appointed to the bench. Other than Ronald Reagan, no president has seated more of these immeasurably powerful lifetime appointments. This extraordinary ordinary fact is a vivid example of what can go wrong when a country stops paying attention. A lot of America's self-appointed intelligentsia at the papers-of-record and the jibber-jabber-jaws of cable news have taken porn stars, errant penises, and illicit payoffs to be more worthy of their commentary than federal judges. Charismatic advertising, you know. Because as long the news-gathering model for reporting is based on advertising revenue, they will continue to do so. Beguiling and bewildering their audiences for the cheap thrill of pretending they are the monsters they so despise. The desire for power among those who don't have it and the misconceptions that brings is more haunting than the Ghost of Christmas Past but with much less conscience.

*We interrupt this pogrom with a special news bulletin. Disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, a presumed death by suicide, was discovered impersonating Elvis as a contestant in a south Florida karaoke bar. Claiming to be the winner of the contest when detained by local officials, Mr. Epstein reportedly said that he was without an agent and willing to work at scale.*

*Next on Fox, Kitten on a Hot Mic, Becky Misandric spews mutilated Marxism before uncorking wine bottles with her teeth, a trick she learned at Socialist summer camp in the hills of Berkeley, California.*

The Confederacy was a declared enemy of the United States. Maybe that is the message from these crowds flying Stars and Bars, carrying big guns and screaming that the country be re-opened. They remind me of the religious flagellants from an earlier plague, some even have the same taste in headgear (see Francisco de Goya's painting *A Procession of Flagellants*.) These masochistic zealots were famously portrayed by Ingmar Bergman in his icy tour-de-force *The Seventh Seal*, a meditation on God's silence in the face of atrocities. Like the new breed of flagellants, they believed if they got the whipping over with, inflicting violence on themselves

and others, their God might show them some mercy. Last I checked, God don't let you pick your switch, but that's them. People who laugh at the malapropisms and misspellings of these new flagellants do so at their own peril. It's not funny. Fascist authoritarian governments have always had a tenuous relation with these kind of rabble-rousing provocateurs, they are as necessary to white supremacist terror as clean sheets are to the Klan. It can all go to Hell of course when these people mess-up, kill, or intimidate the wrong person. They're largely bunglers who have been known to bite the hand that feeds off at the elbow, sometimes even turning their former leaders upside down with entrails hanging out. The trouble in dealing with these death cult ecstasies is tell-them-off too well and they may like you just too much. As has been seen at these demonstrations, they're just getting riled up, spoiling for the fight and terrorism that comes later. But why would a country allow people carrying guns to fly the flag of its declared enemy in front of state houses and government buildings?

*The only good \_\_\_\_\_ is a dead \_\_\_\_\_. You're an American, so you can fill in the blanks with live ammunition.*

Advertising psychology plays its experienced role as dramaturge, the golden rule being that of tricking the customer about the product. Why not be Jekyll when you can play Hyde and seek on the weekend? Political theater? The governor of California, a thespian by choice, has communicated far more effectively for having partnered with a professional actress. Don Jr.'s main squeeze is the governor's ex-wife, also trained in the theater arts. Her beaux has been performing much better on camera since she stepped in the picture, he even passes as an author on Amazon. Donald Trump for his part continues the traditions of Vaudeville. Still visible in the popular culture are the techniques of the traveling tent shows of the 19th century. There's Skip Gates swabbing celebrity DNA and telling them they were Cleopatra. Trump's rebarbative motifs are borrowed from the top-ten hits of European fascism. Vituperative, cruel, heartless, the words come easy. Venom lolls off the tongue, joining a river of bile. His imperious gaze reflecting fits of pique that his authority be questioned at all. Standing at the lectern with the world chomping at the bit, ready to restore ratings with the latest bilge. Having sewn chaos in the garden of democracy, he now reaps a harvest in the Electoral College. Women vote for him, their sons admire him, even grandpa's got his blood up again. "Dad called a man he didn't know a nigger at the grocery store in front of a security guard and the security guard laughed!"

Much in the style of Don Rickles, Trump performs the politics of the 19th century too, an era of obsession among his underwriters at the corporate level. "Those damn Civil War amendments, 13 and 14, you heard of them, well get rid of them!"

Mass incarceration of African-Americans is re-enslavement, a process beginning in the immediate wake of the emancipation provided by the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment (see Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* Anchor Books, 2008). As I have written elsewhere in this magazine (“Just Us and Jeff Sessions”, *Konch*, Spring Issue 2018) the elimination of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment’s guarantees of citizenship and voting rights is the center piece of the agenda promoted by the Trump administration’s first Attorney General Jeff Sessions and his former aide, now presidential advisor, Stephen Miller. Lee Atwater would have been proud of these guys. American liberal and progressive political thinkers often begin with the premise that the state and its authority have a moral and ethical right to exist. The murder of innocent blacks at the hands of police is viewed with the ironic distance of a malfunction in an otherwise purring engine that works for everybody. Drive it long enough and it will take you where you want to go, local and express. But the murder and destruction of non-white people by state authority is not an accident that calls for a tune-up, it is an essential constituent of American life. A set of religious rites and rituals that inform long standing traditions of Western domination. As Susan Sontag has famously written, “The truth is that Mozart, Pascal, Boolean algebra, Shakespeare, parliamentary government, baroque churches, Newton, the emancipation of women, Kant, Marx, Balanchine ballets, et al, don't redeem what this particular civilization has wrought upon the world. The white race is the cancer of human history; it is the white race and it alone—its ideologies and inventions—which eradicates autonomous civilizations wherever it spreads, which has upset the ecological balance of the planet, which now threatens the very existence of life itself.” (“What's Happening to America?” *Partisan Review*, 1967).

Front page, above the fold, a lead item, two of the four journalists who published the aforementioned *New York Times* piece followed up on May 11, 2020 with “Questions of Bias in Virus Care Haunt Mourning Black Families.” Above the headline is an image of the empty hall of a high school in northern Germany, its doors flung open to better circulate the air free of viruses. The article details the impact of anti-black racism on American public and private health care systems and their long history of abuse, neglect, illegal experimentation, and premature death contextualizing our moment of genocide. The acceleration of African American deaths due to coronavirus infection has been reported on in the European press as well, “African Americans have died at a rate of 50.3 per 100,000 people, compared with 20.7 for whites, 22.9 for Latinos and 22.7 for Asian Americans. More than 20,000 African Americans – about one in 2,000 of the entire black population in the U.S. have died of the disease,” (“Black Americans Dying of Covid-19 at Three Times the Rate of White People”, *The Guardian*, May 20, 2020).

Can we talk about those concentration camps now?

Of course collecting data is a problem, some would say the problem. As Althea Maybank, chief equity officer at the American Medical Association, has made clear, “We’re not collecting the stats on race and ethnicity we desperately need,” reminding us that “Fewer than a dozen states have published data on the race and ethnic patterns of the pandemic,” (“The Pandemic’s Missing Data”, *New York Times*, April 8, 2020). In other words the numbers reported above by *The Guardian* are likely much higher.

More on that missing data question. In January of this year the National Archives announced that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was free to destroy documents related to the sexual abuse and death of undocumented immigrants. Included also are detainee’s complaints detailing violations of their human rights. This maneuver on the part of the National Archives also extends itself to the destruction of records by the Department of the Interior, dealing with such subjects as endangered species, unsafe drinking water, even domestic oil exploration.

Heydrich and his admirers have done themselves proud. As Upton Sinclair would say, it’s a jungle out there.