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The Boston Bombing was American

The Tale of a Neatly Scripted Tragedy

by RUTH FOWLER

April 24, 2013

I've been loathe to contribute to the ever-increasing canon of American experts who feel that their unique and exceptional opinion about the Boston Marathon Bombers is important and worthy enough to merit yet another shittily written blog post or op-ed. "There is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre," says Kurt Vonnegut, obviously with his fellow Americans in mind. Ranging from amateur sleuths taking time out from their regular routine of avoiding chemtrails and beating off their smart meter-induced chlamydia to bestow upon us pearls of expert wisdom, to outraged (Irish?!) nationalists who think the biggest tragedy of this whole event is that two Chechens were "given everything by America – and [yet] repaid them in bombs", as if America is renowned for its benevolent, Santa Claus-like international presence and foreign policy, a generous, jolly immigration system, it's incomparable human rights record, an abundance of healthcare for all, its leading role in public education and a *wonderfully* compassionate welfare system which cares for the poor, the diseased, the marginalized and the vulnerable in society etc etc.



I could trawl the internet endlessly for the numerous examples of American idiocy emerging from the bombing and the identification of the alleged perpetrators as Chechen-American brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, but I think the most important observation we can draw from this whole episode is that, as Obama pointed out in his remarks at the victims memorial service, the spectacularly racist, blithely ignorant and brutal spirit of this country remains undimmed and undaunted. Boston PD continued to act like any other police force in America: they puffed up with pride everytime the TV cameras were on them, took the unprecedented move of shutting down an entire city to find the suspects, and then exchanged gleeful emails of Tamarlane's horrendously butchered body once they'd messily disposed of him. The Islamophobic hate crimes have been well underway for several days now: from the twitter rantings of angry conservative twat Erik Rush urging us to 'Kill all Muslims', to an attack on a Palestinian-American Doctor, while on twitter 'Czechoslovakia' was briefly trending as Americans struggled to locate Chechnya on the map and Chechens on the racial spectrum. The foiled Toronto plot, attributed to (Shiite) Iranians, with their well-know links and affinity with the (Sunni) Al Qaeda (All Muslims are the same! yes, that was sarcasm) was followed by speculation that the explosion in the Texan Fertilizer Plant was obviously a further attack on America by Muslims. ... Perhaps my favorite piece of idiocy emerging from this whole kaboodle is Amanda Palmer's appalling poem to Dzhokhar Tsarnaev: never one to miss a chance for self-promotion, we can only eagerly await the album which will be forthcoming from their edited exchange of prison correspondence set to dreary piano music, released thanks to crowd-source funding from Kickstarter.

Despite the fact the majority of this country seems happy in persisting with a neatly scripted tragedy, there have been some wonderful articles examining precisely what's wrong with the aftermath of this tragedy. It's probably worth reiterating, at this point, for the assholes out there, that criticizing the handling of the bombing by the media, the government and the state does not necessarily imply "understanding" the motivation of the Tsarnaev brothers, and certainly not "excusing" an act of brutal terrorism. It can be hard for the mentally challenged American to comprehend that criticism of one's own country – including its President, its government, its police state and its media – is actually the most patriotic and nationalistic act of accountability one can do. Al Jazeera's wonderful piece 'The Wrong Kind of Caucasian', examining the elision of the brother's American upbringing and nationality by the media's overwhelming

obsession with their ethnic and religious roots is well worth a read and is a brilliant illustration of the 'second class' nature of 1st generation immigrants who are always considered by their ethnicity first, their 'Americanness' second – particularly if, like Dzhokhar, they are newly minted Americans, with non-American immediate family. Leslie Savan writes a quick but thorough blog post over at The Nation on how the brothers' religion will dominate the national discourse and provide a safe, comprehensive, digestible political narrative for the American Racist. This theme is continued over at The Daily Beast where Charles King observes:

The Tsarnaev brothers will forever be the poster children for a particularly American fear, reflected in everything from blockbuster films to popular fiction: that the English-speaking, dark-haired young men with unpronounceable names, who wear baseball caps, win scholarships, and garner wrestling trophies, are also the ones who could blow you up.

Mia McKenzie over at Black Girl Dangerous points out that the emphasis on white suffering is creating a generation of POC who are unable to find sufficient empathy for the bombing victims. They are numb, nullified to the suffering of white children prioritized by the media at the expense of the nameless and faceless children of color who never even make it into the news. This is further exemplified by Richard Kim's insightful blog on The Nation, which points out that we glorify the deaths and victims of terrorist attacks almost as if they were celebrities, whereas the fourteen people – eleven of whom were first responders – who lost their lives in a workplace accident Texas remain unnamed and unknown. Texas is sad, but accidents happen. Get over it.

What's interesting to me is not how extreme, how radical, how Islamic and how Chechen the Tsarnaev Brothers and the bombing is – but how American. This is a country where the President can pick up a Nobel Peace Prize one day, and the next go back to being Commander in Chief of a CIA led covert war in Pakistan, dropping Hellfire Missiles from MQ-1 Predators and MQ-9 Reapers on the heads of women, children and elders in an attempt to target unspecific 'military age' males who may or may not have some vague connection to militant groups who may or may not pose a threat to the US. Then there's the 'less secret' drone program carried out by the USAF in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia. The President has already made clear he will use drones against American citizens if they are Muslim – ie, if they are not 'real' Americans.

The message seems clear: if you have an American passport, but criticize America, *you are not American and therefore the constitution doesn't apply to you*. As a new citizen, ironically naturalized on September 11th 2012, Dzhokhar is rarely referred to simply as 'an American' because the root of his 'evil' must, it is assumed, belong to some far off distant bloodthirsty land, a land of hate and brutality. A land, perhaps, which would fabricate the existence of WMD in order to justify an invasion and a war. A land which would mechanically and efficiently take out all militants and extremists, whether they posed a valid threat to America or not, in an assembly-line manner, shipping USAF pilots into small dark trailers in the Nevada and New Mexico desert to exterminate distant humans via remote control as if they were merely mosquitoes. A land which systematically denies both citizens and non-citizens alike the right to a fair trial – whether that be through detaining them indefinitely without trial or killing them before they ever get a chance to take the stand – like Awlaki, like Chris Dorner, like Tamarlan Tsarnaev. A land which

hands out guns which are specifically designed to kill other human beings as quickly and efficiently as possible. A land which is well known for CIA-funded military dictatorships which have led to millions of deaths and destabilized whole continents, encouraging the rise of extremist and militant groups which usually teeter out of US control and result in more carnage. A land which spends an inordinate amount of time, energy and money on entrapment techniques designed to tease disgruntled radicals into full blown terrorists. A land which breeds white males who like to shoot up kids in schools or folks at movie theaters and who are forgiven as 'mentally ill' or 'disturbed' – but never described, most truthfully, as simply 'American'.

The Boston Bombing was – is – American. Let us never forget that.