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Lynch Law: The Root of US Imperialism

By Danny Haiphong

March 31, 2014

The political and economic foundation of the United States is built on the corpses of legal lynching, or “lynch law”. Without the genocide and enslavement of Black and indigenous peoples, the US capitalist class could not have amassed its profits, wealth, or power. Following the passage of the 13th Amendment that supposedly ended Black chattel slavery at the close of the Civil War, the US capitalist class moved quickly to reorganize the capitalist economy so newly “freed” Blacks would remain enslaved. Convict-leasing, sharecropping, and legalized segregation ensured Black exploitation and white power. These brutal forms of exploitation were kept intact by white terrorism in the form of lynching.

Thousands of Black people were lynched by white supremacists from the end of the Civil War until 1968. Ho Chi Minh, the first revolutionary president of socialist Vietnam, worked in the US in the mid-1920s and examined the horrors of lynching. He described the gruesome details of white vigilantes torturing and killing Black people with impunity. Local law enforcement officials protected white lynch mobs like the KKK and Black Legion and often participated in lynching alongside their white counterparts. ‘Uncle Ho’ states in his work *Lynching* (1924) that “the principle culprits [of lynching] were never troubled, for the simple reason that they were always incited . . . then protected by the politicians, financiers, and authorities . . . “ It wasn’t until Black people organized themselves to defend and arm their communities that white mobs were forced to curtail their racist murder sprees.

The so-called end of “Jim Crow” racism only changed the form in which Black people would be lynched by the US racist order. The US capitalist class responded to the force of the Black liberation movement by institutionalizing “lynch law” into its criminal injustice system. Today, some form of law enforcement murders a Black person in this country every 28 hours. Nearly half of the estimated 3 million US prisoners are Black and nearly all are “people of color.” 80,000 mostly Black prisoners are caged in solitary confinement, which by definition is torture and illegal under international law. Numerous states in the US have “Stand your ground” laws that allow white supremacists to murder Black people with impunity. Sound familiar? And President Obama, the Commander-in-Chief of US imperialism, is too concerned with pathologizing Black America than forwarding substantive policies that address ‘lynch law’ on behalf of his most loyal constituency.

In this period of heightened exploitation for the oppressed in general and Black America in particular, the propertied classes are becoming increasingly paranoid about the potential for popular unrest. “Lynch law” is becoming the law of the land for the entire populace. A homeless man in Albuquerque, New Mexico was shot dead by local police for being homeless on March 16th. More US citizens have been murdered by US law enforcement in the last decade than have died in the US invasion of Iraq over the same period. The surveillance US imperialism had to conduct in secret on radical dissent in the past has expanded to the entire population through a massive surveillance state of federal intelligence agencies, private contractors, and US multinational corporations. The prospect of being lynched by Obama’s “kill list” or detained under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is just a “terrorist” label away from any American the US government finds a threat to its “national security.”

“Lynch law” is also a global tactic for US imperialism to maintain its global domination. Washington uses a nexus of intelligence and military institutions to lynch the world’s people of their lives and resources. This can be examined in specific instances like the thousands of people in the Middle East and Africa murdered by Obama Administration drone strikes or the NATO bombing of Libya that killed tens of thousands and nearly exterminated the Black Libyan population. The CIA has overthrown over 50 foreign governments since the end of World War II. These are just a few important examples of how Washington and its masters, the capitalist class, must lynch the majority of the world’s people to obtain their wealth and power.

The increasing violence, suffering, and social death imposed on oppressed people by US imperialist “lynch law” exposes the bankruptcy of the liberal wing of the capitalist class. Propped up by the corporate media like MSNBC, this self-proclaimed “left” actively participates in bi-partisan lynching in all of its forms to further their careers with the liberal imperialist Democratic Party and the untouchable fascist Commander-in-Chief, Barack Obama. Any movement that depends on this corporate brand of leftism to bring about the end of US lynch law is destined to fail. A people’s movement for complete justice will have to be led by the struggle of Black America’s oppressed majority and all communities suffering from US fascist rule. We must spend each day building a movement that empowers oppressed people to demand the power to determine their own destiny collectively. This movement is far from victory’s reach, but each day we fail to act, another exploited human being is lynched by the US imperialist system.