

The Press & Dakotan

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OPINION

Church Massacre Was A Race Crime

No matter how anyone tries to spin last week's massacre at a historic black Charleston, South Carolina, church that left nine people dead, the incident was a race crime. That fact is painfully clear. And yet, there are mighty impulses in certain places to see it other ways, even though the accused shooter himself has spelled it for the world.

According to the witnesses, the suspect, Dylann Roof, went into the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, stayed for about an hour during a prayer meeting, then announced he was there "to shoot black people. ... I have to do it. You rape our women, and you've taken over our country. And you have to go." And with that, they did.

Roof, who has confessed to the slaughter, reportedly had a website that contained a link to a long, rambling, violence-filled condemnation of blacks, Hispanics and Jews. It has been reported that he allegedly carried out the shooting in order to ignite a race war.

And yet, some still struggle to label it as a racial incident. In particular, there are politicians, especially those Republicans aspiring for the presidency, who have been stepping lightly around the issue. Some of them have said no one knows why the shooter committed this "senseless" act (again, see the third paragraph to remove any doubt about the "why" part) and have attributed the crime instead to mental illness, Christian persecution, drugs or, as Rick Perry first proclaimed, an "accident." Americans, they say, shouldn't be so quick to judge the situation.

That's usually sound advice. But in this case, the judgment has been delivered to us in the words, writings and, sadly, actions of a young white supremacist who apparently felt threatened by a changing world in which people of color were building new foundations of hope.

America owns a tragic racial history that still haunts and hounds us to this day. (We're also shackled by the proliferating gun culture, which once again has splattered blood across the headlines. But we know where that debate will go in this age.) It takes more than good words, good legislation and heroic deeds to change that legacy. It takes more than electing a black president to undo it. And it takes more than politicians denying what's before their eyes to make it go away.

This massacre came on the heels of other violent events in recent months in which race has been perceived as a component. Despite the rigorous efforts to explain them away, an unfortunate pattern has emerged. It's not a new template at all. It can be found in the veins of the Civil War 150 years ago. It thrived with the old Jim Crow laws that still held sway in parts of the South for a century after black slaves were "freed." The historical groundwork for the Charleston tragedy cannot be ignored. Only the wounds and the graves are fresh.

Perhaps as white people, we have a difficult time grasping what we haven't experienced so personally, so painfully and for so long. There is, then, this perspective from former NBA star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who wrote in the new *Time* magazine: "Those who refute the clear racial element in these attacks are like Holocaust deniers who say there were no gas chambers, no mass genocide, that the world is just conspiring against the poor misunderstood Nazis. Slavery was America's Black Holocaust."

Let politicians and commentators continue to explain why the Charleston massacre wasn't really about race. Let them parse the reasons and shift the blame elsewhere. History and common sense will argue otherwise. The fact that one of those who also argues the point happens to be the accused shooter might suggest just what kind of footing such blind rationalization stands on at this sad hour.

kmh

OUR LETTER POLICY

The PRESS & DAKOTAN invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & DAKOTAN will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.
- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.
- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Tuesday, June 23, the 174th day of 2015. There are 191 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon and White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman discussed using the CIA to obstruct the FBI's Watergate investigation. (Revelation of the tape recording of this conversation sparked Nixon's resignation in 1974.) The same day, President Nixon signed Title IX, which barred discrimination on the basis of sex for "any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

On this date: In 1314, during the First War of Scottish Independence, the two-day Battle of Bannockburn, resulting in victory for the forces of Robert the Bruce over the army of King Edward II, began near Stirling.

In 1757, forces of the East India Company led by Robert Clive won the Battle of Plassey, which effectively marked the beginning of British colonial rule in India.

In 1812, Britain, unaware that America had declared war against it five days earlier, rescinded its policy on neutral shipping, a major issue of contention between the two countries.

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt was nominated for a second term of office at the Republican national convention in Chicago.

In 1931, aviators Wiley Post and Harold Gatty took off from New York on a round-the-world flight that lasted eight days and 15 hours.

In 1938, the Civil Aeronautics Authority was established.

In 1947, the Senate joined the House in overriding President Harry S. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor.

In 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected president of Egypt.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin held the first of two meetings at Glassboro State College in New Jersey.

In 1969, Warren E. Burger was sworn in as chief justice of the United States by the man he was succeeding, Earl Warren.

In 1985, all 329 people aboard an Air India Boeing 747 were killed when the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near Ireland because of a bomb authorities believe was planted by Sikh separatists.

In 1995, Dr. Jonas Salk, the medical pioneer who developed the first vaccine to halt the crippling rampage of polio, died in La Jolla, California, at age 80.

Ten years ago: The White House defended presidential adviser Karl Rove against Democratic demands he apologize or quit for saying "liberals saw the savagery of the 9/11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers." Former Ku Klux Klansman Edgar Ray Killen, 80, was sentenced to 60 years in prison for the 1964 Mississippi slayings of three civil rights workers. The San Antonio Spurs won a thrilling Game 7 over Detroit Pistons, 81-74, to claim the NBA championship. Veteran journalist Shana Alexander died in Hermosa Beach, California, at age 79.

Five years ago: Following Gen. Stanley McChrystal's criticism of the Obama administration in a Rolling Stone magazine profile, President Barack Obama named Gen. David Petraeus to replace the Afghanisthan commander. Gary Faulkner, who was detained by authorities in northern Pakistan during a personal quest to track down Osama bin Laden, was released.

One year ago: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, visiting Baghdad, told leaders of Iraq's factions they had to keep their commitments to seat a new parliament before a Sunni insurgency swept away hopes for a lasting peace. President Barack Obama, speaking at the White House Summit on Working Families, said the United States should join the rest of the industrialized world and offer paid leave for mothers of newborns. Dominik Hasek, Peter Forsberg, Rob Blake, Mike Modano and coach Pat Burns and referee Bill McCrea were elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Diana Trask is 75. Musical conductor James Levine is 72. Actor Ted Shackelford is 69. Actor Bryan Brown is 68. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is 67. Actor Jim Metzler is 64. "American Idol" ex-judge Randy Jackson is 59. Actress Frances McDormand is 58. Rock musician Steve Shelley (Sonic Youth) is 53. Actor Paul La Greca is 53. Writer-director Joss Whedon is 51. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chico DeBarge is 45. Actress Selma Blair is 43. Rock singer KT Tunstall is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Virgo Williams (Ghosts-DJs) is 40. Actress Emmanuelle Vaugier is 39. Singer-songwriter Jason Mraz is 38. Actress Melissa Rauch is 35. Rock singer Duffy is 31. Country singer Katie Armiger is 24.

Thought for Today: "Loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self." — May Sarton, Belgian-born American poet (1912-1995).

FROM THE BIBLE

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Romans 6:3. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

ADDRESSING HUMAN-CAUSED CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICE IS OUR MORAL OBLIGATION.



The Rez Of The Story

The Requerimiento

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), I have never found a book more relevant from Native America's point of view than Steven T. Newcomb's "Pagans in the Promised Land" to the issue of the so called "discovery" of America.

Steven is Shawnee/Lenape who wears the hat of research coordinator for the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation in San Diego, California. He is also cofounder and co-director of the Indigenous Law Institute, a fellow with the American Indian Policy and Media Initiative at Buffalo State College and a columnist with the newspaper *Indian Country Today*.

In his book "Moral Politics," George Lakoff explains: "Rewards and punishment are moral acts; giving someone as appropriate reward or punishment balances the moral books. An important special case arises when the person in authority gives an order. That order imposes an obligation to obey. The obligation to obey is a metaphorical debt. You owe obedience to someone who has authority over you. If you obey, you are paying the debt; if you don't obey, you are refusing to pay the debt — an immoral act, equivalent by moral arithmetic to stealing a crime. When you disobey a legitimate authority, it is moral for you to be punished, to receive something of negative value or have something of positive value taken from you. Moral accounting then, of course, says that the punishment must fit the crime."

On page 32 of "Pagans in the Promised Land," we find: "The view that the conqueror has a responsibility to teach the indigenous peoples he intends to conquer and subdue the moral lesson that, from his viewpoint, they are required to learn, led to the development of one of the most bizarre documents in history. The text of the Spanish *Requerimiento* (the Requirement) ... written in 1514 ... perfectly demonstrates the way Christian Europeans applied [the concept] of Conqueror to the indigenous nations of the so-called New World and illustrates the conqueror morality system ..."

The *Requerimiento* continues by saying that the God our Lord 'commanded' Peter to place his seat at Rome, as the spot most fitting to rule the world from; but also he permitted him to have his seat in any other part of the world, and to judge and govern all Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and all other sects. This man was called Pope, as if to say Admirable Great Father and Governor of men. The men who lived in that time obeyed St. Peter, and took him for Lord, King, and Superior of the universe, so also they have regarded the others who after him have been elected to the pontificate, and so has been continued even till the end of the world."

Next week I'll have part two of the *Requerimiento*.

Doksha (later) . . .



Vince TWO EAGLES

Addressed to "barbarous" non-Christian nations that were considered destined to be subdued, the *Requerimiento* declares that, from a Christian standpoint, "the Lord our God, Living and Eternal, created the Heaven and the Earth" and that he created "one man and one woman,

of whom you and we, and all men of the world, were and are descendants, and all those who came after us."

In the five thousand years that the *Requerimiento* said had transpired since God created the world, "it was necessary that some men should go one way and some another, and that should be divided into many kingdoms and provinces, for in one alone they could not be sustained.

"Out of all 'these nations' says the document, 'God our Lord gave charge to one man, called St. Peter, that he should be Lord and Superior of all men in the world, that all should obey him, and that he should be the head of the

whole human race, wherever men should live, and under what law, sect, or belief they should be; and he gave him the world for his kingdom and jurisdiction.' The *Requerimiento* correlates with the point ... that the conqueror model posits a central figure, such as monarch (whether king, queen, or pope), who is considered divine or whose power is considered to come from a divine source. ... As a subduer (conqueror) of all men in the world, 'all should obey' Peter, and he 'should be the head of the whole human race: 'God our Lord' gave Lord Peter 'the world for his kingdom and jurisdiction.'"

"The *Requerimiento* continues by saying that the God our Lord 'commanded' Peter to place his seat at Rome, as the spot most fitting to rule the world from; but also he permitted him to have his seat in any other part of the world, and to judge and govern all Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and all other sects. This man was called Pope, as if to say Admirable Great Father and Governor of men. The men who lived in that time obeyed St. Peter, and took him for Lord, King, and Superior of the universe, so also they have regarded the others who after him have been elected to the pontificate, and so has been continued even till the end of the world."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lemonade, Anyone?

Joan Neubauer, Yankton

If you've been attending the Tuesday evening band concerts in the amphitheatre at Riverside Park, you may have noticed members of the Board of Directors of the historic Cramer-Kenyon Home serving glasses of cool refreshing lemonade.

Board members are always interested in bringing back some of the customs of days gone by. For many years, lemonade has been offered on the grounds of the Home at 409 Pine Street, but this year a decision was made to take the tradition to the park.

We hope that you enjoy a little touch of sweetness during the rest of the concert season.

'Fixing' Highway 50

Ruth Ann Dickman, Utica

Does anyone remember the old saying, "Don't fix it if it isn't broke"? Evidently, the South Dakota DOT doesn't remember it, or they wouldn't want to tear up Highway 50 going through Yankton. That is a perfectly good road!

Oh, they say they have to make it wider for the trucks going through Yankton. Do they realize that it will put people walking on the narrow sidewalks in danger, as when it rains or snows they will get soaked from being splashed on by road traffic?

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Poll Results

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Do you think the Minnesota Twins can make the playoffs?
Yes.....42%
No.....35%
Not sure/don't care.....23%

TOTAL VOTES CAST231

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you view the massacre at the Charleston, South Carolina, church as an act of "domestic terrorism"?

To cast your vote in the PRESS & DAKOTAN'S Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

Why not build a road around Yankton, like Vermillion has? The truckers have a time limit to get their products to their destination, and I know they would like it if they wouldn't have to stop at every stop light going through town.

Let's take a vote to see how many people want Highway 50 torn up!

DESTINY: "Our republic and its press will rise or fall together."

— Joseph Pulitzer

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: It's Your Right To Know!