



This Is Most American

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When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. - Matthew 2:16 (NIV)

On January 6, 2021, the symbolic heart of American democracy was attacked. January 6 was also the Feast of Epiphany, the revelation of the Christ child to the wise men. But the light of Epiphany not only revealed the birth of Christ, it also revealed the heart of Herod, a king whose reign was one of political expediency and for whom no sacrifice was too great to maintain power.

Images are forever emblazoned in our collective memories of armed insurrectionists, acting upon the implicit and explicit orders of the current President of the United States, fueled by months of the baseless allegations of 14 Republican Senators and 147 House Republicans that an election had been stolen. This deluded mob descended upon our nation's Capitol waving the battle flag of the Confederacy and, at one point, replacing the American flag they claim to defend with the banner of a defeated president for whom no sacrifice is too great to maintain power.

The images are surreal and, were it not for live footage, it might be plausible and even preferable to the majority of White America to dismiss the seditious behavior of those who sought to overthrow democracy. We might choose, once again, to erase from our institutionalized narrative the treasonous acts of those who breached barriers, scaled walls, broke windows, desecrated monuments, threatened and violated public servants, and even built a gallows—yes, a gallows on federal property—with impunity.

The death toll of this failed coup has now risen to six, some of whom died as traitors and some of whom died as patriots. But all died needlessly and tragically because of the irrational fears of one man intoxicated by unchecked power and

endless access to the masses.

As we watched these culminating events unfold, media personalities began to proclaim, "This is not America!" I do not interpret such professions as denial as much as confessions of disbelief by those privileged to live in an America that has shielded them from such lived experiences. Nevertheless, as a Black woman living in America let me assure you there are many things this moment is not, but it is most American.

It is as American as stolen land and the sustained genocide of over 5 million indigenous people under the Christian banner of a self-proclaimed superior race. It is as American as 400 years of enslavement of African-descendant peoples and the amassing of wealth gained from their labor. It is as American as southern lynchings and the rampant raping of Black women, for which no white man has ever been executed. It is as American as the caging of refugees at our borders. It is as American as voter suppression, stop and frisk, and the war on drugs. It is as American as the militarized response to unarmed Black people protesting for the right to breathe and the de-militarized response to armed White vigilantes protesting the right to reign. It is as American as \$600 stimulus checks for 51 million Americans while the wealth of one American, Jeff Bezos, is reported to have ballooned to \$10.2 trillion dollars.

In the light of the Epiphany season, may we have the courage to look not only upon the hope of the Christ but also the horror of a king whose thirst for power desecrates, as we work to give birth to the America that can be.

May it be so.

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