

Lynching

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LYNCHING

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Abstract

A single word can bring forth a plethora of emotions. Such a word, lynching, appeared repeatedly in the news recently; its use offended many in the African American community and others. The purpose of this article was: to explore the history and current meaning of the word lynching; to determine why the concept should be examined at this point in time; to examine the meaning of lynching specifically to African Americans; and to create a discussion so that health care providers may reflect upon and understand the concept it calls forward to the African American community and others. In order to provide cultural care to clients, the health care provider is called upon to understand the culture of the client. Cultural understanding begins with knowledge of many aspects of culture including the impact of history and of such words as lynching. A concept analysis lynching was completed in order to enlighten and to cause reflection on the emotions evoked by the word and its implications. A definition of lynching derived for this purpose from the concept analysis was: A definition of lynching for the purpose of understanding derived from the definitions and specific to this need was: *Lynching is an extreme violent or covert mob action based on presumed guilt, hate and supremacy without legal sanction aimed at physical and nonphysical punishment through cruelty, terror, torturing and/or execution during unsettled times aimed at a cultural group denied identity and justice, often ignored, intimidated, and humiliated.*

Keywords: Lynch, Lynching

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

If words used, like lynching, bring such negative emotion from the community as evidenced by the latest media reports (Associated Press, 2008; Ferguson, 2008), the reason for the emotion, the history and underlying meaning of the word are important to understand. Clack, an African American, described how he and other African Americans felt as they viewed a noose photograph; he said it made his “stomach turn” and the sight resonated “strongly and emotionally with African Americans” (Clack, 2008, para. 18). African Americans were offended by the use or image of the word.

Recently, a sports anchor commented that anyone who desired to beat Tiger Woods at golf would have to “lynch him in a back alley” (Associated Press, 2008, para. 1). Although there was an atmosphere of teasing and Woods dismissed it as having no “ill intent,” people were offended (para. 2). A well known African American, Al Sharpton, said she should be fired for the comment. Sharpton believed the insult applied to every African American.

Although Tilghman, the anchor, offered an apology saying she was deeply sorry, the plethora of emotions that arose was breath taking. Woods said the story was driven by the media (Austin American, 2008). Shortly after, *Golfweek* replaced an editor for placing a noose on the cover of the magazine and the copy of the January 19, 2008 edition cover was deleted from Golfweek’s website (Ferguson, 2008).

Other instances of lynching or nooses in the news have appeared recently. From Jena, Louisiana to Columbia University, stories of unease and racial tensions came forth as uses of the noose

symbol were involved (Cummings, 2008). In Jena, Louisiana, three white students were said to have placed nooses in a tree outside the school (Foster, 2008). Some said the student action committed an act of intimidation against another race. Although they did not violate a law, the emotions that arose as well as the memories, were powerful.

Although other groups were lynched in the past, the word is specifically painful to African Americans. The history of lynching in America allowed for other people to understand why. In America, lynchings (mob rule) were carried out all over the country on “African Americans, immigrants, and native-born whites” usually because of value or “honor code” differences (Sparatacus Educational, 2008, para. 1). “During the antebellum period, lynch mobs across the country preyed upon individuals and groups deemed dangerous because they were political, religious, or racial ‘others.’ Abolitionists, Catholics, Mormons, Asian, Mexican, and European immigrants and African Americans all were targets” (para. 2). During slavery, whites used lynching as punishment against African Americans; those whites who were against it were also at risk of lynching themselves (Sparatacus Educational, 2008). Lynching of African Americans was different from other lynchings; African Americans were usually mutilated before being lynched (Clack, 2008).

“Symbolic nooses” still appear in the news in America and racism remains a problem in America (Earp, 2007, para. 1). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (E.E.O.C) has “sued several employers in what are commonly known as ‘noose cases’” (para. 3). To the African American, lynching strikes a serious cord.

As health care providers and care givers, words and actions are important in an already challenged health care system. The attitudes of health care providers can lead to health care disparities (Smith et al., 2007, p. 656). Ethnic minorities receive lower health care quality than whites, disparities do exist. Health care providers can begin to address this disparity by learning about the people entrusted to their care.

Task forces have been created to develop curriculums to examine attitudes and to improve communication and knowledge (Smith et al., 2007). Through task force initiatives, providers look at their own beliefs and experiences, stereotypes and barriers (Smith et al., 2007). This examination of attitudes may affect disparities.

Dr. Madeleine Leininger, an anthropologist and nurse, stressed the importance of cultural understanding to care (Leininger & McFarland, 2006). Dr. Leininger found health care providers sometimes fail to recognize cultural influences. As the media discussed the use of the word lynching by journalism professionals and others, this author began to question personal understanding and meaning of the concept. In order to promote understanding, a concept analysis that examined the “structure and function” of the concept, lynching, was accomplished (Walker & Avant, 2005, p. 63).

The goal of this analysis was to “capture the critical elements” of the concept, lynching, at the “current moment in time” (Avant, 2005, p. 64). For this analysis, definitions of the concept were gathered, defining attributes listed, a definition formed, and then model case, contrary case and invented case were created from the definition (Walker and Avant, 2005, p. 65). This concept

analysis was an attempt to put forth a definition and to promote further understanding of the word lynching in the hope understanding and knowledge will be gleaned. Perhaps Tiger Woods was a hero for other things than golf. His statement as reported in Reuters, “we all say things we do regret,” lent great understanding and was a brave caring attitude (Reuters, 2008, para. 16). By discussing and exploring those things, the things we regret, a new understanding comes forth. Perhaps there is a better way of learning instead of this way, a scholarly way of educating before regret becomes necessary. Some believe hostility to blacks still exists and that “no one wants to deal with it” (Herbert, 2008, para. 19). Perhaps analysis is a beginning, an attempt to begin...to do just that.

HISTORY OF LYNCHING

Lynching, most commonly linked to “racist violence in the post Civil War American South,” was described as unlawfully hanging or otherwise killing a person by mob action” (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2008, Lynching sect., para. 1). The practice of lynching, thought to have originated in Ireland in the seventeenth century, was brought across the ocean to America (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008). James Fitzstephen Lynch of Glaway, Ireland, was associated by some historians with the first lynching around 1493 (Rhodes, 1989). Some scholars believed he followed the sentence handed down when he hung his own son.

An Englishman, Lynch, in 1687, lynched pirates in the colonies. A third incident in 1778, near Lynch Creek in North Carolina, was associated with early lynching. The term’s creation was also associated with Col. Charles Lynch (1736-1796) (Sparatacus Educational, 2008; Gado, 2008) who used it as punishment in the American Revolutionary War.

Lynch had a habit of holding illegal trials of local lawbreakers in his front yard. Upon conviction of the accused, which was usually the case, Lynch took to whipping the suspects while they were tied to a tree in front of his house. Over time, this practice became known as ‘lynching’ (Gado, 2008, The history of lynching, para. 3).

Lynchings of African Americans

Lynchings were more common in the Mississippi Delta and the Black Belt of Georgia (Tolnay & Deane, 1996). In slavery days in America, lynchings were thought to occur less in areas that were surrounded by or akin to other areas where lynchings were taking place. The number of lynchings in one area may have decreased the number of lynchings in neighboring areas because African Americans responded in behavior change to “minimize conflict with local whites” while whites “were satisfied that local blacks were sufficiently threatened by nearby lynchings” (p. 788). The goal was to send a message; it was a “terroristic” method to black people that whites did not see African Americans as equal and were not willing to change their views (p. 793). Lynchings of African Americans were not simply hangings as they had been in the past with Catholics, Mormons and the other groups. The events were seen as celebrations or “macabre carnivals, which drew crowds with children and picnic baskets from miles around. The victims’ bodies were sometimes photographed for postcards, which were used as instruments of terror until mailing such postcards was barred in the early 20th century” (A lynching memorial unveiled in Duluth, 2004, para. 2).

Lynching Excuses

Whites were also lynched in the 19th century. It is little discussed that “before the 1890s, lynching was most prevalent in the West and Midwest, and most victims were white” (Clack, 2008, para. 14). After that, lynching “became a Southern phenomenon, and from 1882 to 1968,

there were 4,742 black lynching victims” (para. 16). What Clack pointed out about the lynchings, brought a difference to the forefront. Whites were simply hung while black victims were sometimes “mutilated before and after they were killed” (para. 16). Until 1944, “lynching and other terror tactics” were used to “intimidate blacks into political, social, and economic submission” not only for these crimes but more for “outspokenness and other presumed offenses against whites” (para. 3). In essentially lawless frontier days, crimes such as “rape, horse stealing, and cattle rustling, were punished by lynching” (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2008, Lynching sect., para. 2).

An article that appeared in 1919, in the *Cleveland Advocate*, identified another reason for lynching (No need for lynching now, 1919). Research indicated that lynchings were more likely during certain times and under certain conditions (Tolnay & Bailey, 2006). Lynchings were more likely when the percentage of African Americans was too great in the population, when economic or social conditions were not good for the whites, or when Democrats were in power (Tolnay & Bailey, 2006).

The “economic threat models” as described by Tolnay and Beck proved to be the most likely reason. They proposed: “these associations reflect both the need of white planters to control black laborers and the economic competition between poor whites and blacks” (Redding, 1996, p. 1451). Lynchings were “associated with lower cotton prices over time, cotton dominance and white landlessness across counties, as well as a “seasonal demand for labor” (p. 1451). Redding proposed mobs were varied and the act failed to explain “how lynchings became the established means for controlling the economic threat of blacks to whites, or of how they were sequentially

related to one another” (p.1451). Irregardless of the reason, “between 1880 and 1930 mobs lynched between 3,000 and 4,000 southerners most of them African Americans” (p. 1450). The practice of lynching was a response, according to some, for the delay in speedy court hearings. It was used to “intimidate” and to punish those who speak out as some African American farmers did when their earnings were not paid for their labors (No need for lynching now, 1919, para. 3). Lynchings occurred with public support usually and “in the name of justice” (Gado, 2008, The history of lynching sect., para. 1). The practice put African Americans and some whites on notice they were not to challenge the white system. It was true whites were lynched “at times in greater numbers than blacks” but the difference was that whites committed a crime or some offenses where blacks may have done nothing wrong (para. 2); they were lynched for the wrong reasons. After the Civil War, more lynchings were carried out mainly on African Americans and usually in the south (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008). The Ku Klux Klan establishment increased the number of lynchings in the name of white supremacy (Sparatacus Educational, 2008). Lynchings sometimes were “semiofficial violence, directed by whites who feared business competition from emerging black entrepreneurs” (A lynching memorial unveiled in Duluth, 2003, para. 2). Gerasole (2008) suggested that even Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. might have been lynched if it were not for the intervention of Sergeant Shriver. “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested on trumped up traffic charges and sentenced to four months hard labor in Georgia”; he was taken in handcuffs and put in the back of a car (para. 2).

The Horror of Lynching

Lynching was the theme for songs as was the case of Billie Holiday’s song written by a Jewish Bronx teacher (Public Broadcasting System, 2003b, para. 1).

‘Southern trees bear a strange fruit

Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees...'

Lynchings of African Americans often involved mutilation and an audience of spectators. The south was responsible for the most lynchings. South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana had more, while North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee had fewer (Tolnay & Deane, 1996). The body of the victim was often used to send the warning to other blacks (Tolnay & Deane, 1996). Signs were placed on the bodies and the bodies were placed where others could view the corpse. Newspapers reinforced the white message that blacks should beware of unacceptable behavior. Whites wanted to dominate blacks for economic gain and to discourage the poor people from both races from joining together against the wealthy.

In 2000, Ruth Horowitz Gallery in New York City exhibited postcard photos of lynchings that occurred between 1883 and 1960 in American (Sylvester, 2000). Those viewing the photos were described as “people with tears, some with anguish, some looked surprised with the horror they had seen” (para. 2). The photographs may be viewed today at withoutsanctuary.org and are owned by Mr. James Allen. The images of lynchings from the display at Roth Horowitz gallery in New York cause one to understand the anguish and horrible times during which the lynchings occurred (Smith, 2000). Smith described the photos candidly:

They will burn a hole in your heart. They depict the lifeless forms of black men and women hanging from trees, bridges, from telegraph poles, often tortured or mutilated. They depict charred corpses held aloft like banners and relatively intact one arranged like hunting trophies” (para. 4).

Even more troubling was his description of the white people at the lynchings: “maskless, milling about, looking straight at the camera as if they had nothing to be ashamed of, often smiling. Sometimes they line up in an orderly fashion, as if they were at a class reunion or church picnic. Sometimes they cluster around the victim, hoisting children on their shoulders so that they can see too” (para. 6).

Lynchings were horrific scenes (Pritchett, 2008). In Duluth, Minnesota, in 1920, a young white girl claimed to have been raped repeatedly by black men passing through town; the story was not true. The men were lynched from a street light pole. It was a terrible night. Still, today, people are reckoning with what happened that night and are still haunted by the sight and word- lynching. Lynchings were not simply carried out in the south; they took place in many areas in the United States. The deaths of the men in Duluth is an example of such: “Elmer Jackson, Elias Clayton and Issac McGhie, three young black men who were lynched in Duluth in 1920 while a mob of 10,000 looked on” (A lynching memorial unveiled in Duluth, 2003, para. 3). And when the black did commit a crime and was lynched, the crime was published with great details as if to stimulate hate. Such was the story of the rape and murder of a white child which was told in great detail (*The New York Times*, 2008).

In the south, many regarded blacks as inferior justifying slavery in their minds (Gado, 2008). Blacks were put down in multiple ways. Whites were not fearful of punishment and “no white man was ever punished for a lynching until 1915” (para. 8). Prior to this, spectators were invited to attend the event by the newspaper announcements. This “mob violence” act was driven by “mostly racism” (para. 9). The reason given for most lynchings of blacks was rape of white

women although this was not the only reason given. Other reasons included: “registering to vote, arguing with a white man, disrespect to a white woman, shoplifting, drunkenness, elopement, insults and refusing to give evidence” (para. 10). Although racism continued, it was the death of Emmett Till in 1955 that would push change forward.

Lynchings today, according to the media, are not done with an actual hanging but with other tactics. Photos of nooses or actual nooses are sometimes used to prove a point. In 2007, Potok, Visconti, Frankel and Holmes listed many incidents where symbolic nooses were used in today’s world. And still others believe lynchings of a different type still occur (Cone, 2007). One symbolic noose, according to Cone, is the legal system where “one can lynch a person without a rope” (para. 7).

A Move to Stop Lynching

Around 1930, there was a call for lynchings to cease by Jessie Daniel Ames who formed, with the help of others, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) (Ford, 2006, para. 1). As lynchings in the south increased, Ames called a conference “to explore the means for southern white women to stop lynching” (para. 2). The mostly Protestant group espoused that lynching justification was false. Most of the lynchings were not the result of crimes against white women, in fact; “only 29% of the 204 lynchings from 1922 to 1929” were “crimes against white women” (para. 2). They called on sheriffs to stand against lynchings and by 1938, “lynchings had fallen by 50%” as police officers participated (para. 2). Mostly women signed the pledge for peace.

The press had traditionally been “quick to identify the race of the offender and the victim” and guilt was usually assumed (Gado, 2008, Lynching as reported by the press sect., para. 3). The

press reflected the feelings and thoughts of the public or of its readers. They “set the tone and molded public understanding of the issues” (para. 3). No details were avoided in their reporting. However, not all papers supported the sympathetic view; many stood against the lynchings and reported such. “*The New York Times*, the *New York Herald*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, bravely led the voice of criticism against lynchings” (para. 6).

Elijah Parish Lovejoy, of the *Alton Observer*, wrote about lynching and asked for the end of slavery; he was killed (para. 1). The Tuskegee Institute, Chicago Tribune and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) kept records on the lynchings (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008). The first decade of those statistical findings best illustrated the transformation of lynching patterns. In 1882, 113 people were lynched, sixty-four whites and forty-nine African Americans. The year 1885 was the last year in which more whites than African Americans were lynched, and 1892 witnessed the largest number of lynchings in U.S. history (230). From 1882 to 1903, there were approximately one to two hundred lynchings annually. Between 1882 and 1968, there were 4,742 recorded lynchings (3,445 of the victims were African American or approximately seventy-five percent) (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008, para. 2). With the advent of race riots, lynchings declined between 1952 and 1954 (in 1954 “no lynchings were recorded”) (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008, para. 3); however, other ways of punishment were present.

Ida B. Wells, an anti-lynching advocate, investigated the deaths which were never solved and few brought to trial (Smith, 2000). Miss Ida B. Wells, an African American born in Holly Springs, Mississippi, accomplished a great deal in her fight against lynching (Tucker, 1971). Her

parents were house servants. Wells became a school teacher and later, almost single handedly, she fought against lynchings and the mistreatment of African Americans. She dared to speak when others were afraid. Ida Wells was a remarkable black woman (Gado, 2008, The begging of the end sect.). She was the daughter of slaves who told the story of the mob lynchings. Miss Wells found “728 black men who were lynched by white mobs, almost seventy percent were killed for minor offenses” (para. 2). In 1909, Miss Wells and other prominent blacks and whites “formed an organization, partly in response to lynchings of blacks, and called it the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)” (para. 4). This movement against lynching lasted 30 years. “With little or no help from Washington, the barbaric practice of lynching subsided” (para. 7). Ida B. Wells spoke out against the violence and did the most to “destroy the myths about the causes of lynching, though it took decades for her findings to permeate mainstream American consciousness” (para. 4). In 1948, an article appeared in *The New York Times* that cited a reason why some voted against the measure (Anti-lynching fades in Congress, 1948). Lynching was already illegal but the law would call for the crime to be a special Federal offense as well. Legislation was difficult to pass and those attempting to stop lynchings legally were unsuccessful at that time. Legal bodies in the South “did little to curtail lynchings; various laws against mob violence were seldom enforced. Three times (1922, 1937, 1940) antilynching legislation passed the House of Representatives, only to be defeated in the Senate” (Columbia University, 2008, Lynching sect., para. 4). It was in 1968 some action could be taken to stop the lynchings as a result of the Civil Rights Act (U. S. History Encyclopedia, Lynching sect., para. 4).

On June 13, 2005, the United States (U.S.) Senate apologized for its failure to stop lynching (Senate Apologizes, 2008). “At least 4,749 Americans are known to have been lynched during a time when the Senate failed to act on some 200 anti-lynching bills” (para. 2). The senate apologized and expressed regret for its lack of action during the “darkest chapters of American History” (para. 1).

Culture and Care

As health care providers and care givers, words and actions are important in an already challenged health care system. Without talking about cultural histories and painful issues, how can understanding take place? And “attitudes can influence health care practice and patient behavior, leading to health care disparities” (Smith et al., 2007, p. 656).

Racial and ethnic minorities often receive lower quality health care than white patients, even when socioeconomic status, education, access, and other factors are used as controls. To address these pervasive disparities, health care professionals should learn more about them and the roles they can play in eliminating them (Smith et al., 2007, p. 654).

The Society of General Internal Medicine Health Disparities Task Force recommended a curriculum that included the examination of attitudes “such as mistrust, subconscious bias, and stereotyping, that practitioners and patients may bring to the clinical encounter” and to improve communication (Smith et al., 2007, p. 656). The Task Force developed recommendations that addressed disparities including: “examining and understanding attitudes, such as mistrust, subconscious bias, and stereotyping, which practitioners and patients may bring to clinical encounters” and “acquiring the skills to effectively communicate and negotiate across cultures,

languages, and literacy levels, including the use of key tools to improve communication” (p. 654).

By evaluating and putting into play leaning objectives, such as those set out by the Society of General Internal Medicine Health Disparities Task Force, health care workers examine their own backgrounds as well as their own personal beliefs and past experiences. Stereotypes and biases would be opened and examined by the individual (Smith et al., 2007, p. 656). The examination of “conscious and unconscious personal biases” could be identified by both providers and clients and then both could “contemplate the interplay between these attitudes and health disparities” (p. 656).

As health care providers, understanding culture is important in order to provide cultural care (Leininger & McFarland, 2006). Dr. Madeleine Leininger, a nurse and anthropologist, discovered the importance in cultural understanding and developed a way to deliver cultural care. Dr. Leininger theorized “nurses and other health professionals failed to recognize and appreciate the important role of culture in healing, caring processes and in medical treatment practices” (p. 1-2). Leininger desired to bring “culture and care together” (p. 2) and espoused cultures have specific “values, beliefs, and lifeways” and knowledge of this and the “lifeways of human beings” was important to provide cultural care (p. 4). Dr. Madeleine Leininger recognized a deficiency of cultural knowledge and understanding existed for the nurse and that the absence of these affected care delivery (Leininger & McFarland, 2006).

Munoz described “culturally responsive caring” as “a process of actively developing a synergistic relationship grounded in mutuality and an intentional respect for a person’s culture” (Munoz, 2007, para. 1). Cultural experiences are not always respectful of the people, however, and certain terms or behaviors may arouse memories and feelings.

DEFINITION OF LYNCHING

The second phase in the concept analysis was to discover definitions and uses of the concept lynching (Walker & Avant, 2006). The root of lynching, lynch, was defined as: “to put to death (as by hanging) by mob action without legal sanction” (Merriam Webster, 2008, lynch sect.).

Lynch is a verb pronounced ‘linch’. Its etymology is lynch law and it is dated back to 1836.

Other sources date the origination of the verb lynch to around 1825 (Dictionary.com, 2008, lynch sect).

Other forms of the word include lynched (verb), lyncher (noun), lynching (verb, noun), and lynchings (verb) (Dictionary.com, 2008, lynch sect.). The verb lynch was defined as “originally any sort of summary justice, especially by flogging; narrowing of focus to "extralegal execution by hanging" is 20c. *Lynch mob* is attested from 1838 (Online Etymology Dictionary, 1835, lynch sect.).

Lynch was also defined to “kill without legal sanction: ‘The blood-thirsty mob lynched the alleged killer of the child’” (WordNet, 2008, lynch sect.). Lynching was “defined as an act of violence perpetrated for the purpose of punishment (usually torture and death) for an alleged crime carried out by an extralegal mob” (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008, Lynching sect., para.

1). Lynching, most commonly linked to violence connected to racism as was described by the Columbia Encyclopedia (2008) as unlawfully hanging or otherwise killing a person by mob action” (Lynching sect., para. 1).

Lynching was also defined by Mayor William O’Dwyer in 1946 as he called for an end to the practice (Mayor designates ‘end lynching day’, 1946, para. 1). O’Dwyer described lynching as “a cruel and murderous cancer which, in sporadic outbreaks, shocks and horrifies the nation and holds us up to the world as a people who advocate equality and justice for all, but often fail in the application of these precepts” (para. 8).

Other definitions of lynching, the noun, included: “putting to death by mob action without due process of law” (Word Net, 2008, Lynch sect., para. 1); an “execution of a presumed offender by a mob without trial, under the pretense of administering justice; and “the illegal execution of an accused person by a mob” (Spartacus Educational, Lynching sect., para.1). It sometimes involved torturing the victim and mutilating the body” often during “unsettled social conditions” (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2008, para. 1).

Defining Lynching Today

Today there is a new way to describe lynching that does not involve a noose (Goldsby, 1996). The beating and murder of Emmett Till in 1955, and the accusations of Anita Hill against Clarence Thomas were declared as lynchings although a noose was not involved. Similarities between the lynchings of African-Americans between 1890 and 1919 and terrorism were drawn by Tolnay and Deane (1996). “Terrorism is often a strategy for breaching the established social

order, for creating disruption and disorganization with the aim of dismantling the prevailing system of social relations” (p. 788). Terrorism evoked thoughts of a crowd out of control, fed by the emotion. Although Emmett Till was beaten, shot in the head, and attached to a weight before being throw in into the Tallahatchie River, his death has been called a lynching (Public Broadcasting System, 2003). Even newspapers in Belgium referred to his death as a lynching. Was lynching “a form of state-tolerated terrorism aimed at the black community” as proposed by Tolnay and Deane?

Nooses have returned to the news “as symbols to intimidate and threaten African-Americans in communities from Columbia University to Jena, Louisiana” (para 1). Cone wrote: “the crucifixion was a first-century lynching” (para. 4). He also connected the lynching of the late 1890s to the legal system of today as he compared the males in prisons and jails waiting and asserted “one can lynch a person without a rope or tree” (para. 7). Cone also wrote about the treatment of those during Katrina. “Whenever people are denied jobs, health care, housing, and the basic necessities of life, they are being lynched. There are a lot of ways to lynch a people” (para. 8). Ignoring people when they are in need is lynching. Cone (2007) believed the lynching tree was a symbol of America’s treatment of blacks. He encouraged, as a solution, for man to confront the sin and ask for repentance.

The noose is “a terrifying symbol” used by racist to “intimidate African-Americans (Potok, Visconti, Frankel & Holmes, 2007, para. 1). Within the last ten years, about ten incidents have occurred. From Pennsylvania to Illinois, South Carolina to Louisiana, incidents of nooses

hanging were reported. Hate groups are also on the rise increasing as much as 40% over recent years.

Ken Gonzales, in *Lynching in the West 1850-1935*, suggested lynching or mob violence was connected with the creation of a white national identity (Ken Gonzales-day, 2008). He believed Latinos were also likely to be affected by or victims of mob violence. “From the vigilance committee to the antilynching movement, lynching has touched nearly every community and continues to serve as a catalyst for thinking about race, ethnicity, and nation identity today” (para. 3).

“Lynching differs from ordinary murder or assault because it is a killing that is committed outside the boundaries of due process by a mob that enacts revenge for an offense” (Gado, 2008, *The history of lynching sect.*, para. 1). Lynchings occur with public support usually and “in the name of justice” (para. 1). Lynching was not the same as slavery and was described as the “concept of vigilantism, in which citizens would assume the role of judge, jury and executioner” and was carried out because some believed laws were not enforced enough especially for blacks who were often set free without punishment they believed (Gado, 2008, *The history of lynching sect.*, para. 4). Lynching was “morbid and violent” and did “not necessarily mean hanging” but often “included humiliation, torture, burning, dismemberment and castration” (para. 6). Lynching was defined by Al Sharpton as “a specific racial term...an insult to all blacks” (CBS Broadcasting, 2008, para. 10).

Lynch law was defined as “the punishment of presumed crimes or offenses usually by death without due process of the law” (Merriam Webster, 2008, lynch law sect.). Synonyms for lynch law include “criminal syndicalism, gang rule, kangaroo court, mob law, mobocracy, mob rule, ochlocracy, reign of terror, syndicalism” (Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus, 2008, lynch law sect.).

The relatively recent beating and murder of Emmett Till in 1955, in Mississippi, because he flirted with a white woman, shocked America (Goldsby, 1996). Although he was not actually lynched from a tree, some referred to his murder as a lynching. Till was beaten and mutilated. Others relate lynching to a new form of cruelty to African Americans. Some considered the trials of Clarence Thomas a non physical type of lynching; it was a “symbolic suffering” (Framing the terms of debate sect., para. 5). The events heralded a move from lynching as was known to a new type of racism and torture. And then others believed the state executioners took over lynching to carry out the white mans will at a later date (Clarke, 1998). There was even a loose connection in the Bush Gore election time. The “hanging chads” were strikingly close to a lynching of sorts. Dowd (2007) said it was “a low-tech lynching” (para. 23).

The word lynching evokes strong feelings. Even “false or exaggerated claims of bias piggyback on real instances of victimization” and they succeed because it is “plausible” because of history (para. 10). Clarence Thomas described the hearings surrounding his appointment as “a ‘high-tech lynching for uppity blacks’” (para. 24). Did this sexual charge connect back to the “black man as sexual predator”...a similar reason given for lynching? (para. 26). As women came out against

Thomas and stood behind Anita Hill in her charges against him, was this considered racial stereotyping against the black man?

Thomas sought to link his struggle to sit on the highest Court in the United States to the struggles of African Americans to avoid physical mutilation, torture, and death. He implicitly evoked the experience of blacks such as Emmett Till, a young black man from Chicago who was tortured and killed by whites after teasing a white woman in Mississippi. He compared milquetoast Democrats on the Senate Judiciary committee to an angry mob armed with firearms and strong rope” (para. 24).

A firehouse dispute occurred in St. Louis when a stuffed monkey was found hanging by a strap tied to a coat hanger; “the Federal Bureau of Investigation recently ruled out a hate crime in its inquiry into the complaint” (Gay, 2008, para. 2). The white firemen said it was hung up to dry out while some African Americans disagreed. What made the incident so striking was during that time, an internal rift within the department was underway with the firing of the first African American fire chief. Even though some black leaders agreed the firing was the result of a “serious insubordination problem” and was not racial, others disagree citing the history of St. Louis, a past city of slavery (para. 11).

Even banks have taken to referring to investigations they are not in agreement with as a “‘media lynching’ of their client” when no racial parts exist (Clark, 2008, para. 3). Media lynching is a term used often. Are those lynched by the media, victims of “sensationalism making mountains out of molehills” as were African Americans during slavery-victim to small insignificant incidents sensationalized, leading to death by lynching (Bilefsky, 2008, para. 19)? Lynching is a

common word in the media; even Don Imus was said to have been lynched by the media for his comments about the Rutgers women's basketball team (Rich, 2007).

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

From the literature research, many words and phrases used to describe lynching were found and from those, defining attributes were determined (Walker and Avant, 2006). Lynching's defining attributes included:

- “To put to death (as if by hanging) by mob action without legal sanction” (Merriam Webster, 2008, lynch sect.)
- “Kill without legal sanction (WordNet, 2008, lynch sect.)
- “defined as an act of violence perpetrated for the purpose of punishment (usually torture and death) for an alleged crime carried out by an extralegal mob” (U. S. History Encyclopedia, 2008, Lynching sect., para. 1)
- violence connected to racism
- as unlawfully hanging or otherwise killing a person by mob action” (Lynching sect., para. 1)
- “‘cruel and murderous cancer’ in American life” (Mayor designates ‘end lynching day’, 1946, para. 1)
- “putting to death by mob action without due process of law” (Word Net, 2008, Lynch sect., para. 1)
- “execution of a presumed offender by a mob without trial, under the pretense of administering justice”
- “the illegal execution of an accused person by a mob” (Spartacus Educational, Lynching sect., para.1)

- “torturing the victim and mutilating the body” often during “unsettled social conditions” (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2008, para. 1)
- terrorism (Tolnay and Deane, 1996) as “a strategy for breaching the established social order, for creating disruption and disorganization with the aim of dismantling the prevailing system of social relations” (p. 788)
- “an extreme, but necessary, form of popular justice that guaranteed the swift and severe punishment of black criminals” (Tolnay & Deane, 1996, p. 789)
- “a form of state-tolerated terrorism aimed at the black community” (Tolnay and Deane, 1996)
- Crucifixion or “whenever people are denied jobs, health care, housing, and the basic necessities of life, they are being lynched. There are a lot of ways to lynch a people” (para. 8).
- ignoring people when they are in need is lynching
- “A terrifying symbol” used by racist to “intimidate African-Americans (Potok, Visconti, Frankel & Holmes, 2007, para. 1).
- Connected with the creation of a white national identity (Ken Gonzales-day, 2008).
- A killing that is committed outside the boundaries of due process by a mob who enacts revenge for an offense” (Gado, 2008, the history of lynching sect., para. 1).
- The “concept of vigilantism, in which citizens would assume the role of judge, jury and executioner” and was carried out because some believed laws were not enforced enough especially for blacks who were often set free without punishment they believed (Gado, 2008, The history of lynching sect., para. 4).

- “Morbid and violent” and does “not necessarily mean hanging” but often “included humiliation, torture, burning, dismemberment and castration” (para. 6).
- “A specific racial term...an insult to all blacks” (CBS Broadcasting, 2008, para. 10).
- “The punishment of presumed crimes or offenses usually by death without due process of the law” (Merriam Webster, 2008, lynch law sect.).
- “criminal syndicalism, gang rule, kangaroo court, mob law, mobocracy, mob rule, ochlocracy, reign of terror, syndicalism” (Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus, 2008, lynch law sect.).
- new form of cruelty to African Americans
- A non physical type of lynching; a “symbolic suffering” (Framing the terms of debate sect., para. 5).
- a new type of racism and torture
- A way to carry out the white mans will (Clarke, 1998).
- political injustice even against whites (Dowd, 2007)
- horrific thing
- “sensationalism making mountains out of molehills” (Bilefsky, 2008, para. 19)

Definition Development

Descriptors further refined included: terror, cruelty or execution for presumed or alleged crime, castration, crucifixion, burning, hanging, humiliation, horrific treatment, ignoring those in need, insulting, intimidation, denial of rights and necessities, morbid acts, racism, political injustice, dismemberment, sensationalism, symbolic suffering, or vigilantism carried out by an extralegal mobs through gang acts during unsettled social times for the benefit of a group.

A definition of lynching for the purpose of understanding derived from the definitions and specific to this need was: Lynching is *an extreme violent or covert mob action based on presumed guilt, hate and supremacy without legal sanction aimed at physical and nonphysical punishment through cruelty, terror, torturing and/or execution during unsettled times aimed at a cultural group denied identity and justice, often ignored, intimidated, and humiliated.*

MODEL, CONTRARY AND INVENTED CASES

Model Case

Walker and Avant (2005) defined a model case as an example of “the concept that demonstrates all the defining attributes” (p. 69). An example of a model case for lynching was formed from the descriptors:

Sweat glistened on his black brow as he faced the men, his hands behind his back tied with a rough rope. He had failed to remove his hat as he addressed the white mistress and now his life would be taken cruelly, violently as an act of retribution, retribution for something that should not exist nor be wrong. No judge or jury just pain in an intimidating time meant to crush any pride or worth at the hands of another group. There would be no stopping the men, a hundred fold, for no one would try.

Contrary Case

A contrary case was defined as a case that was not an example of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2005, p. 71). An example of a contrary case was:

He was accused of a crime he didn't commit; it was a case of mistaken identity between two African American men. They arrested him at his home explaining the charges and showed him the evidence. He was treated respectfully and allowed to call his neighbor

and best friend who was a lawyer, a white man. Although he was African American and the victim was white, it did not matter in his trial for justice was blind. He was treated fairly and found innocent.

Invented Case

An invented case is an example of the concept that “contains ideas outside our own experience” (Walker & Avant, 2005, p. 72). The following invented case was constructed:

The neighborhood baseball team practiced at the complex on the edge of town; it was a night league of middle aged men enjoying themselves while getting a little exercise. They were diverse in cultural background but it did not matter for society was one. As they readied their belongings to go home, the silver craft came over them. Terrified, the whites and blacks huddled together at home base as the yellow beam shined down on them. Soon an alien stood before them, transformed before their very eyes. The little man looked at them; he was different from them and thought himself superior. As they huddled closer together, friends and neighbors, he turned the ray upon them and they vaporized into dust and their remains fell upon the ground. Tolerance for difference was not possible for the space man and all that were different would be punished or killed. The yellow beam took him once again into his craft. He told the others onboard about the creatures that were different and that he had taken care of them. There was only room for one alien type, after all, and that was their type.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The history of lynching revealed a beginning of lawless hangings for punishment that grew into a projection of physical or nonphysical punishment because of hate for others. To the African American, the history of lynching is specifically painful as a memory; it was an act often carried out without real reason except hate and it often involved mutilation. That lynching was a far cry from early American days when lynching was done for specific causes such as horse stealing or murder.

It is possible that many whites do not know the emotions that arise from the use of the word and the horror that accompanies the concept of lynching for many African Americans. Today, it is almost unbelievable that a newspaper article was once titled “Another Negro Burns” (Another negro burns, 1893) or that a mayor in 1946 had to call for an “End Lynching Day” to be named (Mayor designates ‘end lynching day’, 1946). Kelly Tilghman, who suggested Tiger Woods be lynched by someone wanting to out play him in golf, possibly did not understand the impact of the word (Woods says lynching controversy is ‘done’, 2008) but perhaps her misuse of the word helped educate and bring to the forefront the horror that was associated with lynching. Lynching was far more than a hanging; that was only one view of lynching. Today, lynching is any legal or social injustice done for the betterment of another group.

The concept analysis explored the word and concept of lynching and found it was much deeper than the use of a noose; the word now is used to describe many situations. For this analysis lynching was defined as *an extreme violent or covert mob action based on presumed guilt, hate and supremacy without legal sanction aimed at physical and nonphysical punishment through*

cruelty, terror, torturing and/or execution during unsettled times aimed at a cultural group denied identity and justice, often ignored, intimidated, and humiliated.

The term lynching meant something totally different to some people than to others because of the history and experience for the group of people or culture. What about health care providers who care for people of all cultures without understanding their history, ways, beliefs and practices? Without knowledge, how can providers be aware of cultural history that impacts today and avoid offense to those in his or her care? How can providers understand the mistrust that exists in health care and begin to mend the brokenness without understanding?

Perhaps Frank Rich (2008) said it best: “we are always at a crossroads with race in America, and so here we are again” (para. 2). The hope that America has is that “after nearly a half-century of turning away, the country now seems more ready to look its nightmare squarely in the eye” (A lynching memorial unveiled in Duluth, 2003, para. 5). This author hopes this is a stone on the path to achieving that vision.

Although it may be asked, why open old wounds, Clack (2008) answered best when he described his reaction to the book *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Clack talked about his struggle to read the book and his dread of opening it again; at the same time, he could not part with the book. He wrote about the “gruesome and nauseating” photos and said he “could only take it in small doses” (para. 3). We can begin to heal the past and to understand each other in the same way, in small doses. He said that “anytime an issue can be discussed sensibly, within

context and from a historical perspective; it can be given greater clarity and understanding”

(Clack, 2008, para. 13).

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