

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

How Western media would cover Minneapolis if it happened in another country

Opinion by **Karen Attiah**

May 29, 2020 at 4:57 p.m. EDT



If we talked about what is happening in Minneapolis the same way we talk about events in a foreign country, here's how the Western media would cover it. The quotes and those "quoted" in the piece below are fictional.

In recent years, the international community has sounded the alarm on the deteriorating political and human rights situation in the United States under the regime of Donald Trump. Now, as the country marks 100,000 deaths from the coronavirus pandemic, the former British colony finds itself in a downward spiral of ethnic violence. The fatigue and paralysis of the international community are evident in its silence, America experts say.

The country has been rocked by several viral videos depicting extrajudicial executions of black ethnic minorities by state security forces. Uprisings erupted in the northern city of Minneapolis after a video circulated online of the killing of a black man, George Floyd, after being attacked by a security force agent. Trump took to Twitter, calling black protesters "THUGS" and threatening to send in military force. "When the looting starts, the shooting starts!" he declared.

"Sure, we get it that black people are angry about decades of abuse and impunity," said G. Scott Fitz, a Minnesotan and member of the white ethnic majority. "But going after a Target crosses the line. Can't they find a more peaceful way, like kneeling in silence?"

Ethnic violence has plagued the country for generations, and decades ago it captured the attention of the world, but recently the news coverage and concern are waning as there seems to be no end in sight to the oppression. “These are ancient, inexplicable hatreds fueling these ethnic conflicts and inequality,” said Andreja Dulic, a foreign correspondent whose knowledge of American English consists of a semester course in college and the occasional session on the Duolingo app. When told the United States is only several hundred years old, he shrugged and said, “In my country, we have structures still from the Roman empire. In their culture, Americans think that a 150-year-old building is ancient history.”

Britain usually takes an acute interest in the affairs of its former colony, but it has also been affected by the novel coronavirus. “We’ve seen some setbacks with the virus, but some Brits see the rising disease, staggering unemployment and violence in the States and feel as if America was never ready to govern itself properly, that it would resort to tribal politics,” said Andrew Darcy Morthington, a London-based America expert. During the interview, a news alert informed that out of the nearly 40,000 coronavirus deaths in the United Kingdom, 61 percent of the health-care workers who have died were black and or have Middle Eastern backgrounds. Morthington didn’t seem to notice. “Like I was saying, we don’t have those American racism issues here.”

Trump, a former reality-TV host, beauty pageant organizer and businessman, once called African nations “shithole countries.” But he is now taking a page from African dictators who spread bogus health remedies, like Yahya Jammeh of Gambia, who claimed he could cure AIDS with bananas and herbal potions and pushed his treatments onto the population, resulting in deaths. Trump appeared to suggest

injecting bleach and using sunlight to kill the coronavirus. He has also said he has taken hydroxychloroquine, a drug derived from quinine, a long-known jungle remedy for malaria. Doctors have advised against using the treatment to prevent or treat the coronavirus.

Meanwhile, Americans desperate to flee will face steep challenges to cross borders, as mismanagement of the coronavirus and ethnic tensions in the country have made them undesirable visitors. But some struggling American retailers, like Neiman Marcus, are hoping to lure shoppers with traditional 19th-century colonial travel fantasies through neutral khakis and cargo shorts as part of a “Modern Safari” collection. “Utilitarian details & muted tones meet classic femininity,” reads a caption under the photograph of a white woman. Pith helmets were not included in the accessory lineup.

Some nations are considering offering black Americans special asylum. “Members of the white ethnic majority are forming armed militia groups, demanding their freedom to go back to work for the wealthy class who refer to workers as ‘human capital stock,’ despite the huge risk to workers,” said Mustapha Okango, a Nairobi-based anthropologist. “This is a throwback to the days when slavery was the backbone of the American economy. Black slaves were the original essential workers, and they were treated as non-human stock.”

Africa could be an ideal asylum destination, as several African countries have managed to contain the coronavirus outbreak through aggressive early measures and innovations in testing kits. Senegal, a nation of 16 million, has only seen 41 deaths. “Everyone predicted Africa would fall into chaos,” Okango said. “It is proof that being a black person in this world doesn’t kill you, but being a black person in America clearly can.” The African Union did not respond to requests for comment, but it released a statement that said “we believe in American solutions for American problems.”

AROUND THE WORLD, GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS, CELEBRITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND

even students are doing what they can to raise money and awareness about the dire situation in America.

“It’s sad that the Americans don’t have a government that can get them coronavirus tests or even monthly checks to be able to feed their families,” said Charlotte Johnson, a 18-year-old Liberian student activist, who survived the Ebola pandemic. “100,000 people are dead, cities are burning, and the country hasn’t had a day of mourning? Lives don’t matter, especially not black lives. It’s like they’re living in a failing state.”

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Updated June 29, 2020