

'This Is America, 2019'

The newscasters were glum, and their tone was dark. "This is America, 2019." An America where a gay black man could be beaten and almost lynched by Trump-loving, white-supremacist, homophobic thugs. What has become of our country?

Well, their words were quite on point. This is America in 2019.

Except it was the opposite of what they meant.

There was no "modern-day lynching."

There was no crazed MAGA attack.

The vice president was not somehow complicit (as per Ellen Page).

This did not reveal the violent state of our nation.

Instead, the response to the alleged attack on Jussie Smollett revealed another dark side of America.

A dark side just as ugly and potentially even more dangerous.

This is America, 2019.

It is an America in which we rush to judgment before having the facts at hand. And it is an America in which we also function as judge and jury, taking the law into our own hands.

It is an America in which soundbites educate and in which edited video clips inform.

It is an America which could easily lead to a volatile mobocracy.

Do you think I'm exaggerating?

Do you think there would not be a violent attack on the home

of an alleged racist homophobe, simply based on an allegation? Do you think there would not be a physical assault on the person himself? Do you think that if Jussie Smollett had identified an alleged attacker by name that his life would not be endangered?

“There he is! Get him!”

And get him they would—without facts, without verification, without justification.

It’s bad enough that menacing protesters showed up at the home of Tucker Carlson.

It’s bad enough that a disruptive little gang could drive Senator Ted Cruz and his family from a restaurant.

It’s bad enough that the Covington Catholic School had to shut down temporarily because of threats. (And may I point out that all these acts of mobocracy have come from the left?)

But it’s even worse when the media are complicit in fanning the flames.

It’s even worse when reporters report irresponsibly, just because the story fits their narrative. (In Joy Behar’s candid admission, it’s “because we’re desperate to get rid Trump out.”) Have they forgotten the word “alleged”? (In this context, a New York Times op-ed by Noah Rothman is relevant, addressing, “An object lesson in what happens when people in positions of political and cultural authority indulge their biases by suspending disbelief.”)

And what happens when political leaders join in the frenzy, also suspending critical judgment because the report so perfectly supports their biases? What happens when they’re joined by outspoken celebrities?

To say this would result in a highly toxic, genuinely dangerous situation would be an understatement.

As to the larger societal sickness that this latest episode has revealed, Andy Ngo had this to say over at the *National Review*: “Jussie Smollett’s hoax is symptomatic of America’s illness. Because of the mainstreaming of academia’s victimhood culture, we are now in a place where we place more value on being a victim than on being heroic, charitable or even kind. Victims or victim groups high on intersectionality points are supposed to be coveted, treated with child gloves and believed unreservedly. Their ‘lived experience’ gives them infinite wisdom. Those who urge caution are treated as bigots.”

The reality is that we did almost have a modern-day lynching.

A lynching of all those who would dare wear a MAGA hat. A lynching of Trump supporters in general. A lynching of those who happen to be white or who do not celebrate homosexuality.

All of them (of us?) were now complicit in the alleged attack on a gay black man.

This is America, 2019—and we’re only in February.

May I suggest that all of us slow down and take a deep breath? That we make a personal determination to investigate and confirm before drawing a conclusion? (Ironically, Sen. Kamala Harris, one of the first political leaders to rush to judgment and refer to a “modern-day lynching,” now wants to wait for a full investigation of the alleged attack before commenting on its apparent mendacity. So she was quick to believe its truthfulness but cautious to believe its falsehood.)

Can we make this unfortunate situation into a teachable moment for all of us, regardless of our political persuasions?

There are enough real issues of racism or hatred to focus on and address. We can agree on their wrongness and work together for a better country.

But our intellectually lazy and morally irresponsible rushes

to judgment, coupled with the very real threat of mob violence, have moved us on to very dangerous ground.

Time to take slow down and take stock. Or else.