

The demon of history vs. the arc of justice

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There is a long history in Florida, in the South, in the United States. White peoples—Anglos and Spaniards—came from Europe and collided in Florida, stole black peoples from Africa and enslaved them in the south, displaced indigenous brown people from their homelands in what became the United States. That history and its relationships of power continues to replicate itself, recruiting players from across various divides, especially those who bear the borders within their own bodies. History insists humans choose a side in order to belong, to thrive. Power deputizes some to police the boundaries: to re-draw and re-enforce the lines outside as a way of choosing a way within. The most visible and violent powers accumulate within the lines; more subtle and life-giving powers criss-cross hearts and souls, bodies and countries.

On this writ-large stage, George Zimmerman incarnated and played out the history of colonial Florida, complete with Anglo domination of Hispanic identity—in his own divided self—and the killing of a black body: Trayvon Martin.

Without conscious intention, white bodies will incarnate and replicate this demonic history. While we grow up fractured, detached, unaware, history can continue to use our bodies to retell the same old stories, reinscribe the same old powers, reconstruct the same inequities. We have to know different to choose different. We have to choose different to live different. We have to live different *to live*. The alternative is that our death-dealing history will continue to recruit us unaware to live into a story that is killing us all, even as it makes some of us into killers and some into victims.

Yes, the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice; but not all by itself, and not all the time. There's a reason that arc is long; because it is bending against powers replicating across generations, with the collusion of economic and racial privilege. There's only one way for the arc to keep bending toward justice: for more of us to choose with intention and put our weight to bear, rather than allowing ourselves to be recruited by an unjust history and possessed by the frantic anxieties of this age. Every battle line we draw runs right through us, like a sword. Can we learn this now?

And choose differently. Choose life.

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