

## DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

### INTRODUCTION

Since I am a woman, I chose the following 5 women scholars to examine how they define terrorism from women's perspective.

#### **Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan in her article "Civil War, Civil Rights, World Trade Center"**

starts out saying that while guerilla warfare is an engagement in irregular warfare by independent units carrying out harassment and sabotage, terrorism is the thematic use of terror, that is, of intense fear and violence, to effect coercion. Violence involves injuries physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, or psychological action. She claims that war, terrorism, and violence are central to the infrastructure and aegis of the sociocultural and historical ethos of the United States. She argues that there is no way to justify what happened in New York City and Washington D.C., on September 11, 2001, but one cannot help but hear the echoes of two adages: (1) What goes on around comes around; (2) Malcolm X's, "The chicken have come home to roost." She further contends that what happened to the United States that startling 9/11 day is daily fare for a large portion of the world's population (Kirk-Duggan: 30).

Her essay explores the theological, ethical, and global economic forces that have allowed the perpetration of terrorism and war in the U.S.A., toward framing a prolegomenon for an appropriate response in the twenty-first century. She tries to situate the sociohistorical heinous acts of war and terrorism through the setting of the Civil War, the civil rights movements, and the World Trade Center attacks. She uses the voices of Hannah Arendt and Martin Luther King, Jr., to ascertain a philosophical and theological response to war and terrorism from twentieth-century voices, and she uses economic analysis to examine the connections of war to oil (Kirk-Duggan: 31).

She tries to see the terrorism through a Womanist lens. The term *womanist* derives from the use of the term "*womanish*" in African American Communities, and refers to a black feminist who takes seriously the experience and oppression due to class, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and able-bodiedness. She claims that womanist evokes a plethora of variegated realities, yielding passion, love, hope, and change. From her womanist lense, the United States is viewed to be founded in violence and has used violence to become the alleged "greatest, wealthiest, most powerful country" in the world. This conquering mentality, in her view, has

causes tremendous oppression (Kirk-Duggan: 31).

From a social science perspective, terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring technique of repeated violent action used by a semi-clandestine individual, group, or state for political, idiosyncratic, or criminal reasons. The violence is meant to send messages. Threat-and violence-based communication processes between a terrorist organization, the at-risk victims, and main targets are used to control the main target, the audience (s), creating a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention (Kirk-Duggan: 35).

She reminded us of the fact that 9/11 was not the first time that lives were lost in terrorist attacks and war on these shores. The violence and terrorism of the Civil War and the 1960s civil rights movement also brought terror and death. The Civil War battle at Antietam cost about 12,500 lives and about 10,500 Confederate casualties. The bombing of the Murrah building in Oklahoma took more than 200 lives. Lynchings of men, women, and children of African descent, with suspect cases as late as 1999, have taken the lives of thousands. Lynching was a major public “entertainment” long before the emergence of professional sports. In the 1890s, 2000 people rode a train from Atlanta to see a lynching (Kirk-Duggan :37)

She concludes that the historical events of the Civil War, the 1960s civil rights movement, and the World Trade Center and Pentagon tragedies share many things in common. These events provide a venue for seeing the connections between religion, economics, and violence – albeit religion of the secular or sacred type. Religion and violence dance a mean dance together; they form a dark alliance, they scapegoat as the violence and terrorism become ritualized public performance (Kirk-Duggan: 45).

**Karen Baker-Fletcher, in her article “Dust and Spirit,”** writes from her experience of burying her grandmother’s ashes in the dust with feeling of comfort and burying her husband’s cousin in horror under the rubble of the Trade Center attack on 9/11. She confesses “when we are able to lay our loved one’s bodies to rest, it means one thing. When bodies are desecrated by violence, the whole earth cries out for justice. She used the term “dust” literally and metaphorically as the consequence of terrorism such as 9/11 and doesn’t get into an in-depth discussion regarding the root causes of terrorism as Kirk-Duggan does.

**On the other hand, M. Shawn Copeland, in her article “The Theologian in the Twilight of American culture,”** speaks as a “political theologian and as a black woman living in the tremor-*the in-between time* – of late imperial culture.” (Copeland: 143). She highlights racism as

a terrorism. She first names racism as one form of social or communal sin (Copeland: 143) and defines it as “systematized oppression of one race of another in various forms of oppression within every sphere of social relations-economic exploitation, military subjugation, political subordination, cultural devaluation, psychological violation, sexual degradation, verbal abuse, etc. It is so structured and institutionalized that it became normal and natural and that symbols, habits, reactions, and practices rooted in a racial differentiation and racist privilege implicit in the creation and transmission of culture; participation and contribution to basic aspects of the common human good; promotion of human flourishing; and the embrace of religion. Structural or systematic white racism conditions and is conditioned by *racial formation* (Copeland: 144). Copeland names the root causes of terrorism on the U.S. soil such as 9/11 is not because of democracy or our freedom but rather, it is our indifference and arrogance at the suffering and death of other people in the third world. What the Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright) said supports her theory; when asked what she felt about the fact that 500,000 Iraqi children had died as a result of U.S. economic sanctions, Albright replied that it was a “very hard choice, but that all things considered, we think the price is worth it” (Copeland: 147). Copeland again exclaim how arrogant, how xenophobic of us to think that American lives are worth ending the lives of others and think that *white* American lives are worth more than the lives of us! This is perspective from a woman, a black who experienced first hand the racism as terrorism. She seems to speak from the bottom of her heart.

Kirk-Duggan and Copeland seem to agree in viewing racism as terrorism within and without the United States and they also agree to find the root cause of 9/11 as a consequence of the terrorism the United States practiced toward other countries.

Baker-Fletcher is not in this discussion as the women are doing.