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# RE-MARKINGS

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**‘INDEPENDENT VOICES MUST BE HEARD’:  
A CONVERSATION WITH ROBIN LINDLEY**

*Nibir K. Ghosh*

Robin Lindley is a Seattle-based writer, artist, and attorney, and the features editor of the History News Network (hnn.us). His articles have appeared in *HNN*, *Re-Markings*, *Salon*, *3<sup>rd</sup> Act*, *Crosscut*, *Real Change*, *Documentary*, *Writer’s Chronicle*, *BillMoyers.com*, *ABAJournal (web)*, and others. He has worked as a law teacher and attorney for government agencies. He received his law degree, J.D., from the University of Washington School of Law. A focus of his writing is the history of conflict, human rights, medicine, and the arts. He lives in Seattle with his wife Betsy. He can be contacted by email: robinlindley@gmail.com.

**Ghosh:** Greetings from Re-Markings and the city of the Taj!

**Lindley:** Thank you for reaching out. I am honored that you would opt to talk with me. I appreciate the opportunity. It has been a privilege to share the words of many distinguished historians and other writers and artists over the past few years.

**Ghosh:** What accounts for your abiding interest in History? When did you first get the inkling of your love for the subject?

**Lindley:** For as long as I can remember, I was fascinated by stories from the past. My mom and dad were both lovers of history, and they were always ready with family stories and personal tales that were often funny but tinged with sadness.

I grew up in Spokane, Washington, a small city in Eastern Washington—the site of horrific battles with Native Americans and displacement in the mid-eighteenth century—at a time haunted by memories of the Second World War and the post-war threat of thermonuclear annihilation. As I came to understand the world in the wake of the war, history permeated life. I was curious and wanted to know more. Even before grade school, I paged through grim picture histories. Everyone it seemed was hurt or dead. At age five, I sat in the living room of my cousin’s farmhouse and looked at a large illustrated history of religion. I was struck by the terrible images of gruesome violence on page after page: images of atrocity, of people tortured, burned, mutilated, crucified, hanged, shot down, of massacre after massacre. All in the name of God.

And we lived with the constant threat of nuclear war. At grade school, we curled up under flimsy desks during A-bomb drills. We learned that Spokane was a primary Soviet target because of nearby Air Force bases.

And we learned that, with an attack, thermal burns would leave us looking like overcooked, shriveled, incinerated turkeys—no matter the drills, the metal desks.

I watched the televised films of bombed out European and Asian cities, shivering wounded children, goose-stepping soldiers, sinking ships and drowning men, the crematoria of death camps, weapons that could destroy the world, a Nazi officer using a pelvic bone as an ashtray.

**Ghosh:** How did these sights effect you?

**Lindley:** I was troubled by unfairness, violence, suffering. Perhaps I shared a hope of many who love history that, in learning about the mistakes of the past, we can shape a better world, a more just, peaceful and humane world. I sense that learned historians believe knowledge of the past can provide valuable lessons for the future, but also understand the reality that humans often ignore lessons of the past.

**Ghosh:** What specialized branch of History attracted you the most as a student at UW and why?

**Lindley:** Many of my courses were in modern European history, probably because of two legendary professors at UW then, Giovanni Costigan (Irish and British History) and Jon Bridgman (20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany and Modern Europe). They both inspired us to want to learn more. They breathed life into history, and their spellbinding lectures captured all the spectacle, folly and absurdity of history.

I also attended several US history courses and several seminars on the world wars and their legacy, including Professor Bridgman's fascinating colloquium on the First World War, a deep dive into the fetid trenches and the horrors of industrialized war.

And my history professors devoted time to helping me learn the ropes of writing and research. Professor Bridgman, for example, carefully reviewed my papers and encouraged me to develop a clear, plain writing style. I later had the opportunity to assist Professor Bridgman with research from about 2005 until his death in 2015. Unfortunately, his book project on FDR was never finished. He did write ground-breaking books on the opening of the Nazi concentration and death camps at the end of the Second World War, and on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century German massacre of the Herero people in what is now Namibia.

When I look back on my college concentration, I realize how narrow my studies in history were. In recent years, I've had the opportunity to expand my studies thanks to history courses I've audited at the UW. I've been able to sit in on classes with excellent professors on ancient and

medieval history, as well as courses on Asian, African and Latin American history, African American and Native American history, and the history of medicine, among other courses. I'm grateful for the Access Program at UW that permits people over 60 to audit courses for a small fee. I'm also honored to serve on the History Advisory Board for the UW History Department. Go Huskies.

**Ghosh:** What have been your high points and low points in your career as a Lawyer?

**Lindley:** Not many high points, alas. My professional experience was mostly in public service law. I was never a litigator, and most of my duties usually entailed writing and research in federal agencies: with the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission on worker safety and health issues and with the Social Security Administration on medical issues involving claims for disability benefits.

My most interesting job was perhaps as a staff attorney with the US House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations in the late seventies. I worked mostly with a team that investigated the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Not a lot of glamour. Days of research at the FBI and some at State Department and CIA plus very helpful outings at the Library of Congress. I wrote reports. I talked with witnesses. I did travel to the UK and met with Scotland Yard police officials and witnesses to investigate the last few weeks of the travels of assassin James Earl Ray in England before he was arrested at Heathrow Airport. I also helped write and edit the committee's final reports on both the JFK and Dr. King assassinations.

I haven't kept up on conspiracy theories, but I'm convinced that Ray assassinated Dr. King. We had no direct evidence of FBI or other government involvement, but the efforts of J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI to undermine and destroy Dr. King at every turn certainly created a hateful and incendiary atmosphere. And Dr. King recognized the peril, as he stressed in his prescient and elegiac Mountaintop speech on April 3, 1968, the day before he was shot to death on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

My favorite work environment was at my first job, teaching at a law school. I liked my colleagues and the opportunity for continued learning. I taught legal writing and research. My teaching unfortunately was lackluster at best, and I apologize to my former students for my inexperience and awkwardness. But I learned a lot and worked with my favorite boss ever, Professor Wick Dufford, who was head of our program and a superb mentor who was uniformly generous, thoughtful,

and encouraging, as well as warmly witty. He's also a brilliant writer and thinker and a distinguished expert on environmental law. He remains a dear friend.

**Ghosh:** Does any particular case that you handled singularly stand out in your consciousness? Could you share some details?

**Lindley:** Probably working on the Dr. King investigation was the most interesting legal experience, as discussed above.

In my government work, I helped with some significant cases on worker safety and health. In dealing with disability cases, I presented training on assessing mental impairments. I also had collateral duties as an Equal Opportunity counsellor. In that position, I mediated workplace discrimination complaints between complainants and alleged responsible parties. Settlements were most successful when the people involved could look beyond their immediate differences and decide on how to work together fairly and effectively in the future. I also offered training on civil rights and diversity with a focus on law and US history. I presented programs for judges, lawyers, and other officials. I relied on experts and people of diverse backgrounds to speak about their experiences and resources for further understanding and some powerful documentary films were also useful and impressive. Some people said they were moved and inspired by these novel programs, and I was pleased to hear that.

I also had the opportunity to work with our county public health department on projects involving hoarder houses, meth lab clean-up, and gun violence prevention.

**Ghosh:** What are your views regarding the criminal justice system in the U.S.? Would you agree that trials like the Sacco-Vanzetti, the Rosenberg's, the Rodney King and Trayvon Martin, to name a few, are glaring instances of "miscarriages of Justice" as numerous writers have pointed out in their fictional and poetic works? Please elaborate.

**Lindley:** I'm not an expert and I have never practiced criminal law. But our fraught history reveals that the American criminal justice system has been infected by brutal systemic racism for decades.

American history is rife with examples of police brutality and violence against citizens of color, as in the case of Rodney King whose savage beating by several police officers was videotaped. In the civil rights era of the sixties, police were accomplices in defending white supremacist legal structures in the South.

The horrific televised police murder of George Floyd has opened the eyes of millions of white citizens to the discriminatory practices of police forces that Black citizens endure. Often, as in the case of Trayvon Martin, vigilantes who kill Black citizens go unpunished. We will see what happens with the alleged white killers of young Ahmaud Arbery, who was jogging when hunted down and shot to death by a white father and son.

Beyond police brutality and vigilante violence, the judicial system today incarcerates Black people at five times the rate of whites, and tries Black children as adults 18 times more than white children, according to Professor Leonard Steinhorn. And then you have decades of history of a government that sanctioned slavery and then brutal Jim Crow segregation. Michelle Alexander details issues of racial injustice and mass incarceration in her acclaimed book *The New Jim Crow*. And former prosecutor and law professor Paul Butler offers a carefully researched assessment of the systemic racism in the criminal justice system in his ground-breaking book *Chokehold*.

You mention the Sacco and Vanzetti and Rosenberg cases. Historians have noted civil liberties violations and other irregularities in the course of the arrests and trials of these prominent defendants. But the greatest injustice, however, was that all four were sentenced to death and executed. More enlightened industrialized countries have abolished the death penalty as costly, inhumane, unfair state-sponsored murder. In the US, the death penalty is applied disproportionately to Blacks and Latinos. For a sobering look at injustice and racism in the application of the death penalty, please read *Just Mercy*, the memoir of attorney and Equal Justice Initiative founder Bryan Stevenson. And consider the death penalty in light of the ban on cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution

**Ghosh:** In this context how do you connect your views to the outrageous George Floyd episode?

**Lindley:** Now hundreds of thousands of people are marching for justice in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd. Systemic racism and discrimination must be addressed in American policing as well as the American justice system. Reforms are needed now. Communities need to think in terms of public safety rather than in terms of the racially charged and militaristic "Law and Order" narrative. Rather than "shoot first, ask questions later," police officers would do well to consider "first do no harm" as watchwords in the interest of public safety.

And racism infects virtually every aspect of American life. For a vivid and heart-breaking history of the treatment of Black Americans as medical research subjects and patients, please read Harriet Washington's ground-breaking book, *Medical Apartheid*.

It's heartening now to see a rethinking of the place of Confederate flags and statues in America. These symbols of hate, treason, slavery, dehumanization, terror, cruelty, and white supremacy stood for decades to intimidate and belittle Black Americans. Perhaps some statues are museum worthy, especially if there's a place for a slavery/ Jim Crow/ racism museum along the lines of the Holocaust Museum. Several historians now suggest that local communities decide on how the statues and memorials should be treated, whether to destroy, store away, or display with information on historical context and meaning. These symbols may be a starting point for critical history education.

**Ghosh:** Leon Jaworski has affirmed in his book, *Prosecution of the Watergate*, that in the U.S. "no one – absolutely no one – is above the law." What is your take as a lawyer and historian on the above statement?

**Lindley:** As Jaworski indicated, no citizen, including the president, is above the law. He was referring to President Nixon during the Watergate hearings. Now a president and his enablers challenge this basic tenet of the rule of law in our democracy.

Trump has believed through his adult life that the law does not apply to him, and he has acted accordingly, as attorney James Zirin extensively documents in his book *Plaintiff in Chief: A Portrait of Donald Trump in 3,500 Lawsuits*, based on extensive investigation of Trump's many legal actions for the past half century.

Trump's lawyers have argued in legal proceedings that the president cannot be held responsible for violations of law. And Attorney General William Barr has been accused of turning the Department of Justice into a politicized "thugocracy" where defense of the president's actions and interests is paramount. Barr embraces the unitary executive theory that the president has supreme power over all executive branches of government, and his actions may not be investigated or otherwise questioned by Congress.

Fortunately for the future of American justice and the rule of law, the US Supreme Court decided on July 9, 2020 in *Trump v. Vance*, that the president is not above the law. Trump's lawyers argued that a president could not be investigated while in office, no matter what crimes he might

have committed. By a vote of 7-2, the Court upheld a criminal subpoena issued by Cyrus Vance, Jr. of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for financial records to look into hush money paid to adult film actress Stormy Daniels and a Playboy model Karen McDougal. In an opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts, the Court rejected the president's argument. "In our judicial system," Roberts wrote, "the public has a right to every man's evidence.' Since the earliest days of the Republic, 'every man' has included the President of the United States."

In response to the decision, Trump was furious on Twitter. "The Supreme Court sends case back to Lower Court, arguments to continue. This is all a political prosecution. I won the Mueller Witch Hunt, and others, and now I have to keep fighting in a politically corrupt New York. Not fair to this Presidency or Administration! ... Courts in the past have given "broad deference". BUT NOT ME!" He was wrong. The Supreme Court notably also restricted the president's power in cases involving Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton.

**Ghosh:** Even in thriving democracies like the US and India we often see the media controls remotely handled by wealthy tycoons who have an agenda of their own. In what way does it create a conflict of interest with the guiding principles of democracies?

**Lindley:** First, a democracy can't survive without a free press, the Fourth Estate that monitors government and society and informs the public. Journalists are tasked with speaking truth to power and with providing timely, accurate information as the watchdogs for democracy. Thomas Jefferson said, "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

A free press is indispensable in a healthy democracy so that citizens can knowingly participate in the political process. Freedom of the press protects reporters and the news media, but also protects each citizen's right to access the information necessary to make decisions about our government.

The current president has made damaging statements by calling the media "dishonest" or the "enemy of the American people." Bullying the press with threats and insults works to undermine trust in the media and thus to weaken our democracy. Dictators often start by eliminating all adversarial voices of news and information, as we saw in Nazi Germany and now see in autocratic states around the globe.

You note the conflict of interest when wealthy tycoons control media and have an agenda that runs counter to our democratic ideals. As Nobel

laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz stated, “The fourth estate is a critical part of the set of checks and balances within our society. When the media get captured by those they are supposed to oversee—whether government, corporations, or other institutions in our society—they cannot or will not perform their critical societal role.”

Concentration of media ownership within too few hands contradicts the basic tenets of democracy, threatening diversity of expression and risking autocratic control of communicative spaces. When media moguls control the channels of information, the flow of critical information on the conduct of the government and other institutions suffers, and this jeopardizes informed citizen participation in a true democracy. Super rich, powerful billionaires such as the Koch brothers and Rupert Murdoch control media empires that can drown out opposing progressive voices. To protect free expression, independent voices must be heard, and this requires a vigilant and independent media.

I need to study this issue further. *New Yorker* writer Jane Mayer wrote a revealing book on the media and democracy, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. She has also commented on the influence of right-wing Fox News in the White House now. Trump notoriously consults with his friends at Fox in determining his policies. This contributes to the daily chaos of the administration.

History Professor Nicole Hemmer, the author of *Messengers of the Right*, a history of the conservative media and US politics, said Fox is “the closest we’ve come to having state TV.” According to her, Fox has strengthened Trump’s hold on the Republican Party and intensified his support by using fear as “a business strategy—it keeps people watching.” According to some accounts, Trump gets ideas from watching Fox in the morning and then makes policy proposals based on these television programs later in the day. Fox has served as his defender through scandals and impeachment.

Another concern is how the media glorifies wealth as it ignores or vilifies the poor and underclass, as journalist Chris Hedges mentioned in an interview with me. He said that underprivileged people are “figures of ridicule in the commercial media. The media propagates a message that corporations want, and there’s a belittling and mocking of the poor and celebration of wealth. A kind of cutthroat, rapacious capitalism is celebrated on reality television shows where you betray and manipulate and push aside your competitors for fleeting fame and money. These are

sick values, but they're disseminated through corporate media in almost every program you watch."

**Ghosh:** The President is in the White House and all is right with the world. Name a few American presidents who, according to you, created a special place for themselves with their contribution in the annals of American History? Please highlight their contributions.

**Lindley:** Probably the most influential president for me personally was John F. Kennedy. I was a preteen when he called on all Americans to ask what we could do for our country. He made public service seem a noble career path to my young mind. His administration created the Peace Corps and other humane efforts to directly serve people. I had a sister who was developmentally disabled so I especially appreciated his efforts to recognize and support citizens dealing with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

When I finished undergraduate school, I was accepted by the Peace Corps and was far enough along in the process to get an assignment: Micronesia. However, I was also accepted at UW Law school, and took that path.

For all of his faults, JFK was an inspiration to many of us older Americans. In our conversation, Bill Moyers discussed his work in the Kennedy administration and his view of Kennedy's influence: "I think JFK's singular contribution was psychological. He changed some of the metaphors in our heads about the world around us. The Peace Corps, I believe, remains his most enduring legacy, because it offered young people a moral alternative to war. It gave us a new way of being on the planet, of carrying two passports: one stamped as a citizen of the United States and the second as a citizen of the world. And of course, his rhetoric could be very moving. I stood in the freezing cold at his inaugural in January 1961 as he spoke those bracing words: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" and knew right then and there that I wanted to be part of the Peace Corps. He had a way of enabling you to see your life—especially if you were young—in larger terms than you might otherwise have believed possible; at least he made me think I could do more than I had imagined before." Moyers eventually served as assistant director of the Peace Corps.

I'm really interested in all of our presidents, but my focus has been modern American history, so here's a few other presidents of special interest to me sans the flaws: Lincoln (wordsmith; eloquent; team of rivals; emancipation of slaves); T Roosevelt (trust busting; consumer

protection; environmentalism); FDR (New Deal; Government Experimentation; Unifying US in Second World War); Truman (Desegregating military; Firing MacArthur during Korean War); Eisenhower (Danger of military-industrial complex); LBJ (Civil Rights laws and War on Poverty); Jimmy Carter (Diplomacy; Civil rights); Bill Clinton (Empathy); Barack Obama (Affordable Care Act; Response to gun violence).

**Ghosh:** When I interviewed several writers during my Senior Fulbright year at UoW in 2003-04, a majority of them expressed the remotest possibility of a Black man ever entering the White House. What is your response to Barack Obama's two resounding consecutive victories?

**Lindley:** Barack Obama's electoral victories were stunning and heartening. I remember acclaimed author Sherman Alexie saying in the spring of 2008 that Americans would never elect a Black man as president. I then thought he was probably right. I supported Obama, but was certainly not optimistic about his prospects until, perhaps a few weeks before the 2008 election, it seemed that a groundswell of support was building. I was pleasantly surprised when he won, and still vividly recall his victory speech in Chicago with Michelle and his children and thousands of cheering and some weeping supporters.

I interviewed internationally renowned writer and professor Charles Johnson a few months after the inauguration of President Obama on his reaction to the election and the promise of an Obama administration. <https://crosscut.com/2009/04/charles-johnson-on-meaning-obama> Professor Johnson was pleased by Obama's victory and described the election as an instance when voters looked beyond race and trusted the candidate's intelligence and professionalism. And Obama saw that all beings are interconnected, Professor Johnson said, and understood Dr. King's words that all people are bound in an "inescapable network of mutuality."

**Ghosh:** Would you consider President Trump's victory in the 2016 election an anti-climax to popular expectations?

**Lindley:** There's lots of analysis of Trump's surprising victory. Election night was a shock to millions of voters. Secretary Hillary Clinton had led comfortably in most of the polls. There was a sense that even Trump was stunned by his victory. Of course, Secretary Clinton won the popular vote. Trump was elected thanks to the antiquated Electoral College, a vestige of the pre-Civil War era that, among other things, gave slave states an outsized role in the electoral process. Russian election interference also played a role.

But obviously, many voters wanted a change from the traditional politics that they saw as favoring elites and special interests while ignoring them. Trump promised chaos and hate mongering and played to the fears of his base. Many white voters felt they were disadvantaged by a government that bent on privileging people of color, even though that government also was a purveyor of the systemic racism historically.

The lesson of Trump's election: Be careful what you wish for. You can have chaos and autocracy or a government that values the common good, a thriving democracy, and the rule of law. The fate of the nation will be determined in November 2020.

**Ghosh:** What is your opinion of Trump? How would you respond to James D. Zirin's view as expressed in his book, *Plaintiff in Chief* : "He sees law not as a system of rules to be obeyed and ethical ideals to be respected, but as a weapon to be used against his adversaries or a hurdle to be sidestepped when it gets in his way. He has weaponized the justice system throughout his career, and he has continued to use these backhanded tactics as *Plaintiff in Chief*"?

**Lindley:** This quote sums up Trump well for me. Zirin's assessment of the current president is based on years of extensive research of lawsuits brought by Trump and against him since the early 1970s. Zirin is a former federal prosecutor and self-described moderate Republican who knew Trump's mentor, the notoriously corrupt lawyer Roy Cohn.

Cohn mentored Trump on bending the legal process to his will by targeting perceived enemies, never taking responsibility, shifting blame, and never admitting failure. As Zirin stressed in our interview, Trump continues to operate as though no law applies to him, and he is supported by Republican enablers in the Congress. And he continues to blame his favorite targets such as President Obama and Democrats for his failures in addressing a deadly pandemic and other disasters.

Zirin's carefully documented book on Trump's history of use and abuse of the legal system deserves to be read by every American before the next election. And now the president's niece, Dr. Mary Trump, has published a book that confirms some of our worst senses about the president's unfitness for office, highlighting his fragile ego, lack of curiosity, limited knowledge, and his mendacity, misogyny, racism, and cruelty.

As one wag said recently, the only certainty in Trump world is that tomorrow will be worse. I won't delve into my personal opinion of Trump. In short, I have never liked bullies or hatemongers or fascists or

racists or sadists. I agree with those who describe this president as the worst in history as he and his enablers in the antidemocratic Republican Party undermine the rule of law and the foundations of our republic.

**Ghosh:** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought in its wake the tragic death of thousands of American citizens. Was America caught unawares as it happened during the Pearl Harbor attack and the 9/11 tragedy?

**Lindley:** America was unprepared for dealing with this novel pandemic, and inexcusably so. Scientists had warned for decades about a deadly epidemic like the novel COVID-19 and advised on necessary preparations. The Obama administration had developed a plan for addressing such a novel epidemic. Those plans were scrapped under the current administration. It's a more gradual catastrophe than the Pearl Harbor attack or 9/11, but one that could have been addressed more expeditiously if the warnings of scientists and public health experts had been heeded.

Distinguished historian of medicine Professor Frank Snowden described the lack of US preparedness to me when we spoke in April 2020: "Everyone should have anticipated a pandemic challenge because, since the avian flu of 1997, public health authorities and epidemiologists have been saying that a pandemic – probably of a pulmonary virus – is an inevitability and that it's only a question of when. In 2005, when [infectious disease doctor] Anthony Fauci testified before the US Senate, he made an analogy with meteorological science. Climate scientists can warn people who live in the Caribbean with a certainty that they will experience hurricanes in their future. It's not a matter of whether but of when, although it's impossible to predict the date or the force of the storm. But it will definitely come. The same, Fauci said, is true of epidemic diseases. We're ever more vulnerable to pulmonary viral epidemics because of climate change, human population growth, the destruction of biodiversity and animal habitat, and the growing frequency of viral spillovers from the animal world. All of that is part of the globalized society that we've created and therefore the vulnerability and risks that we're facing. The idea of preparedness was raised consistently and loudly from 1997 onward." See our complete interview at <http://hnn.us/blog/154335>.

**Ghosh:** The US avenged the damage caused to its power and might by the above two events by resorting to retaliatory measures against Japan and a few Islamic nations respectively. This time the enemy is the invisible Coronavirus. What should be a possible American road map to counter the current tragedy?

**Lindley:** It's unfortunate that the current administration is downplaying the deadly pandemic and, even months after the first American deaths, encourages citizens to reopen businesses and to ignore public health advice, such as wearing masks and avoiding crowds. National leadership has been lacking and the states have a cumbersome patchwork approach to the pandemic. This chaos makes America far less safe than it could be and should be. As thousands die.

Again, in our conversation, Professor Snowden offered advice on how to deal with future health crises, and he emphasized the need for access to health care for all and addressing poverty. Here's an excerpt from our conversation:

"Bruce Aylward, the Canadian epidemiologist who led the WHO mission to China, was asked what is required for our preparedness. He said, "What is required is that we have to change our mindset." . . . As Dr. Tetros, the Director General of the WHO said, one of the requirements of preparedness is that every human being on the planet needs to have the guarantee of access to health care. It's not just a humanitarian issue, but also an issue of enlightened self-interest because we've now created a genuinely global world where a virus appearing in Jakarta in the morning will land in Mexico City and San Francisco by nightfall. And having access to healthcare is actually what it means to post sentinels. If people don't have access to a doctor because there are none, or the cost is prohibitive, or they're afraid to see a doctor because of stigma, then diseases can spread without anybody's knowing. That's one of the great lessons to be learned from COVID-19.

"It's also prudent economically and fiscally prudent to establish universal access [to healthcare] because dealing on an emergency basis with recurring challenges is the most expensive possible way of protecting public health . . . I think we'll see that the final cost of the coronavirus will be enormous and that it will disrupt the economy for a long, long time. It seems clear that it would have been far more cost effective as well as more humane to have had health care for everyone on earth. That would be my first point."

And Professor Snowden stressed the role of poverty in spreading. "We also have to recognize that a major driver of this disease is poverty. Millions of people can't afford to see a doctor, to practice social distancing, or to wash their hands frequently. One need only think of the chawls of Mumbai, the townships of South Africa, or the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. There are many places so crowded that people live with nine

or ten people to a small room with no water supply. If they are locked down, people face starvation. . .”

“The world needs to realize . . . we really are all in this together. This virus is a disease of globalization and we must realize that microbes don't recognize borders. They don't make a distinction between the wealthy parts of the world and the impoverished parts of the world. And you cannot create walls to hold them out.”

Professor Snowden also stressed the need to fund scientific research and to remain active in the World Health Organization to maintain international connections. Unfortunately, the current administration has withdrawn the US from WHO.

We have also learned that racism is factor in the spread of COVID-19, as Black and Latino populations in the US suffer a disproportionate number of cases and deaths.

**Ghosh:** As an individual how are you contending with situations like lockdown, quarantine, isolation, and social distancing in the current Coronavirus scenario?

**Lindley:** My wife Betsy and I are taking walks in our neighborhood. Also reading and talking with friends by phone and by email. We attend recent book group meetings online thanks to our host, America's librarian Nancy Pearl.

Betsy worked as a public health nurse, so she assures that I'm following healthy protocols: washing hands, not touching face, wearing mask in public, observing physical distancing, not over-napping. I do sneak food at times. We're also binge-watching too much television, recently of British and Scandinavian mysteries and some documentaries and always seeking comedy, if possible.

**Ghosh:** Thanks Robin. It has been a pleasure interacting with you. Stay safe, healthy and cheerful as ever.

**Lindley:** Thank you again for your engaging questions and your interest in my life. I hope for your continuing success on your scholarly efforts, your brilliant writing, and your other pursuits. Best wishes from Seattle.



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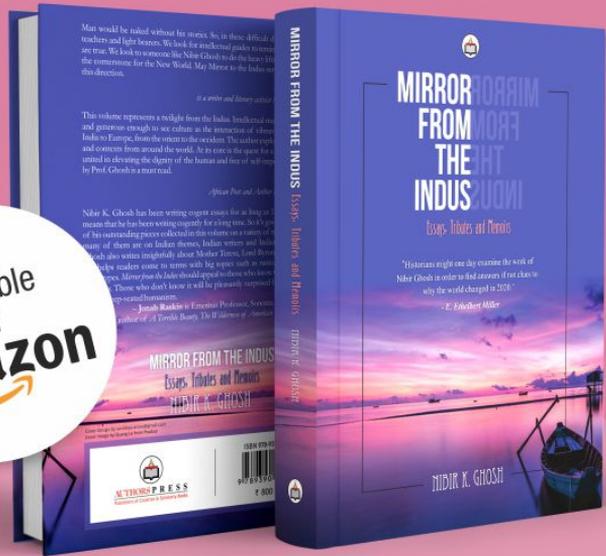
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