

Silence and the Excess of Speech: The Lynchings in Duluth

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Unspoken in Duluth

The Events of 1920

The Unspoken (1920-2000)

The Remembering (2000)

Prosopopoeia (the Voices of the Dead)

The Campaign (2012)

Still Unspoken, Now Unfair

The Lynching

GREAT COMBINATION!
**ROBINSON'S
CIRCUS AND MENAGERIE!**



TEN SHOWS IN ONE!
Embodying the essence of
120 Men, 200 Horses!
and a Grand, Comprehensive **MENAGERIE**, consisting of specimens of rare
WILD ANIMALS

MONDAY, JUN
**ROBINSON'S
CIRCUS**

**WEST DULUTH
GIRL VICTIM OF
SIX NEGROES**
Attacked on Circus Grounds
While Watching Load-

The Lynching



The Lynching



The Erasure

On June 21, a man identified only as "Jack" wrote in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper:

"Last week's happening is indeed unfortunate--it cannot be undone, therefore it is better the quicker it is forgotten." (HBH)

The Erasure

A St. Louis County Historical Society employee in the '40s reportedly threw out the file on the incident...

...deeming it too unseemly for study by Normal School students. (HBH

The Erasure

The lynching went unrecorded in histories of the state of Minnesota published for the next 40 years.

The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken



The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

The Memorial is an act of *Prosopopoiea*.

Quintilian writes of the power of *Prosopopoeia* to "bring down the gods from heaven, evoke the dead, and give voices to cities and states"

Who is given voice in the Memorial?

The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken



The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

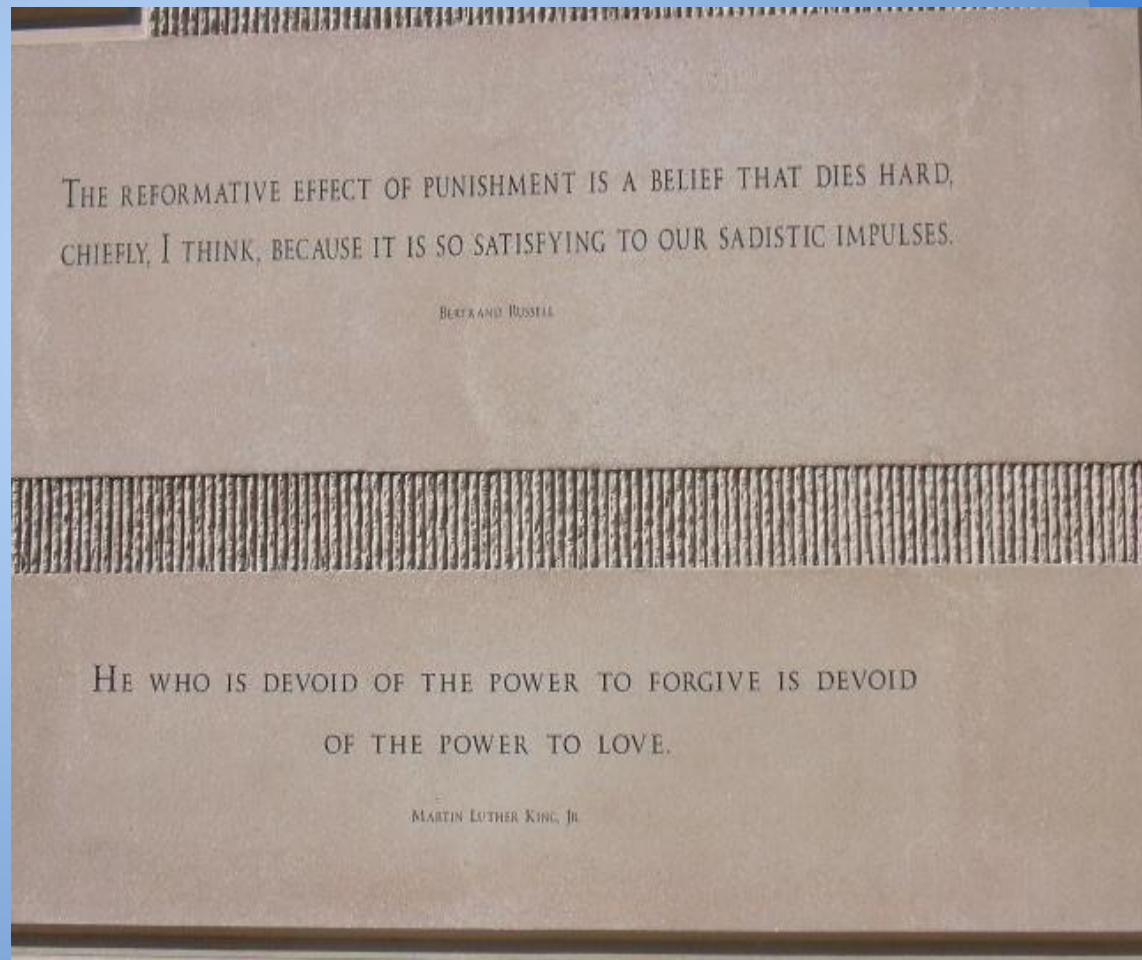
There is no
mention of race
in the didactic
text of the
memorial.

ON JUNE 15, 1920, FOLLOWING THE ALLEGED RAPE OF A YOUNG WOMAN, DULUTH POLICE LOCKED UP A NUMBER OF MEN WHO WORKED FOR A TRAVELING CIRCUS. THAT EVENING, THOUSANDS OF DULUTHIANS GATHERED OUTSIDE THE CITY JAIL. THE POLICE WERE UNDER ORDERS NOT TO SHOOT, AND THEY OBEYED.

WITH TIMBERS AND RAILS AS BATTERING RAMS, THE MOB BROKE DOWN THE DOORS OF THE JAIL AND STAGED A TRIAL OF SIX OF THE MEN. THEY CONVICTED ELIAS CLAYTON, ELMER JACKSON, AND ISAAC MCGHIE, WHO HAD BEEN HELD AS A WITNESS. THE CROWD DRAGGED THE YOUNG MEN ABOUT A BLOCK, BEAT THEM AS VICIOUSLY AS YOU MAY IMAGINE, AND HANGED THEM FROM A LIGHT POLE THAT STOOD DIAGONALLY ACROSS THE STREET FROM WHERE YOU ARE NOW. SOME BRAVE PEOPLE SPOKE OUT IN PROTEST, BUT THEY WERE FEW AGAINST THOUSANDS. ONE MAN TOOK A PHOTOGRAPH THAT WAS LATER DISTRIBUTED AS POSTCARDS. THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORIES OF THE MURDERED HERE AND EVERYWHERE.

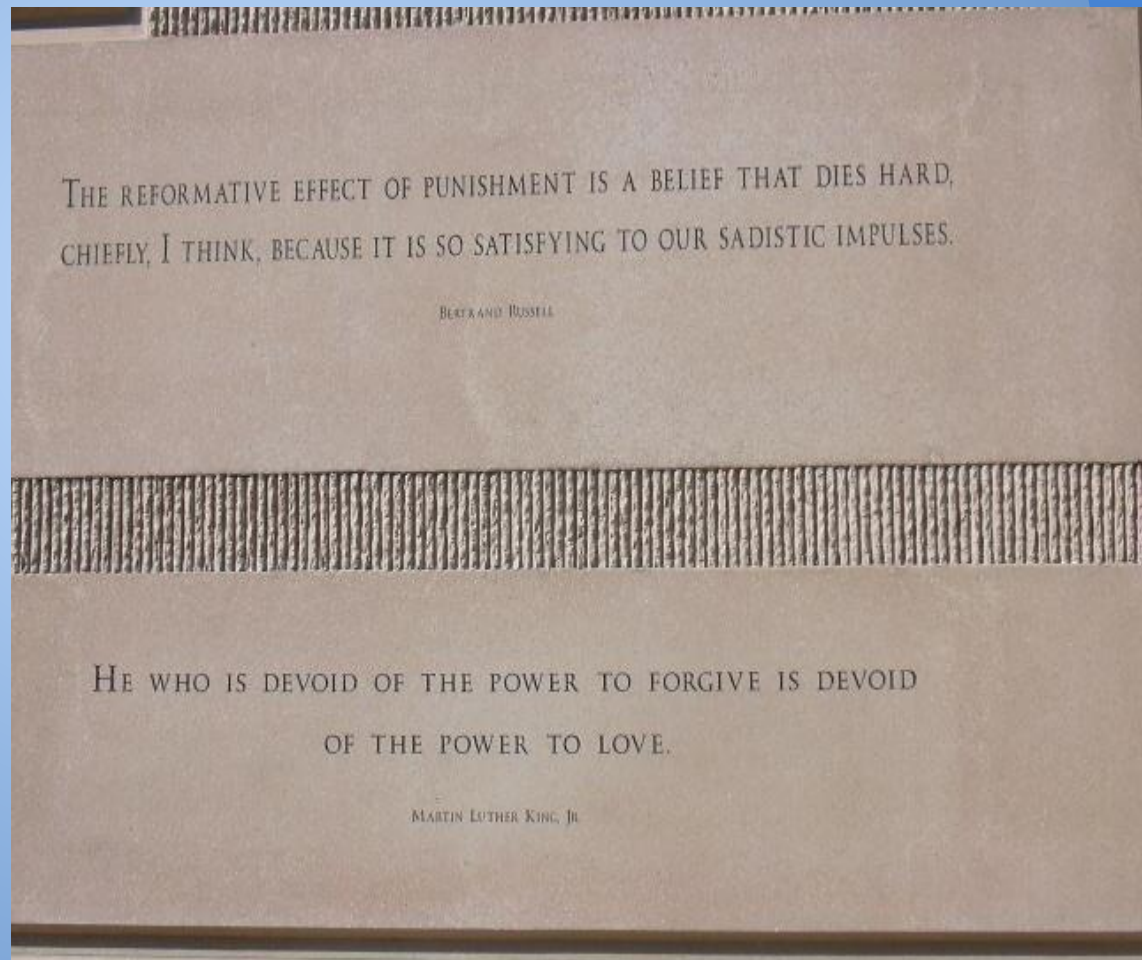
The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

Who is the
object
of punishment
here?



The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

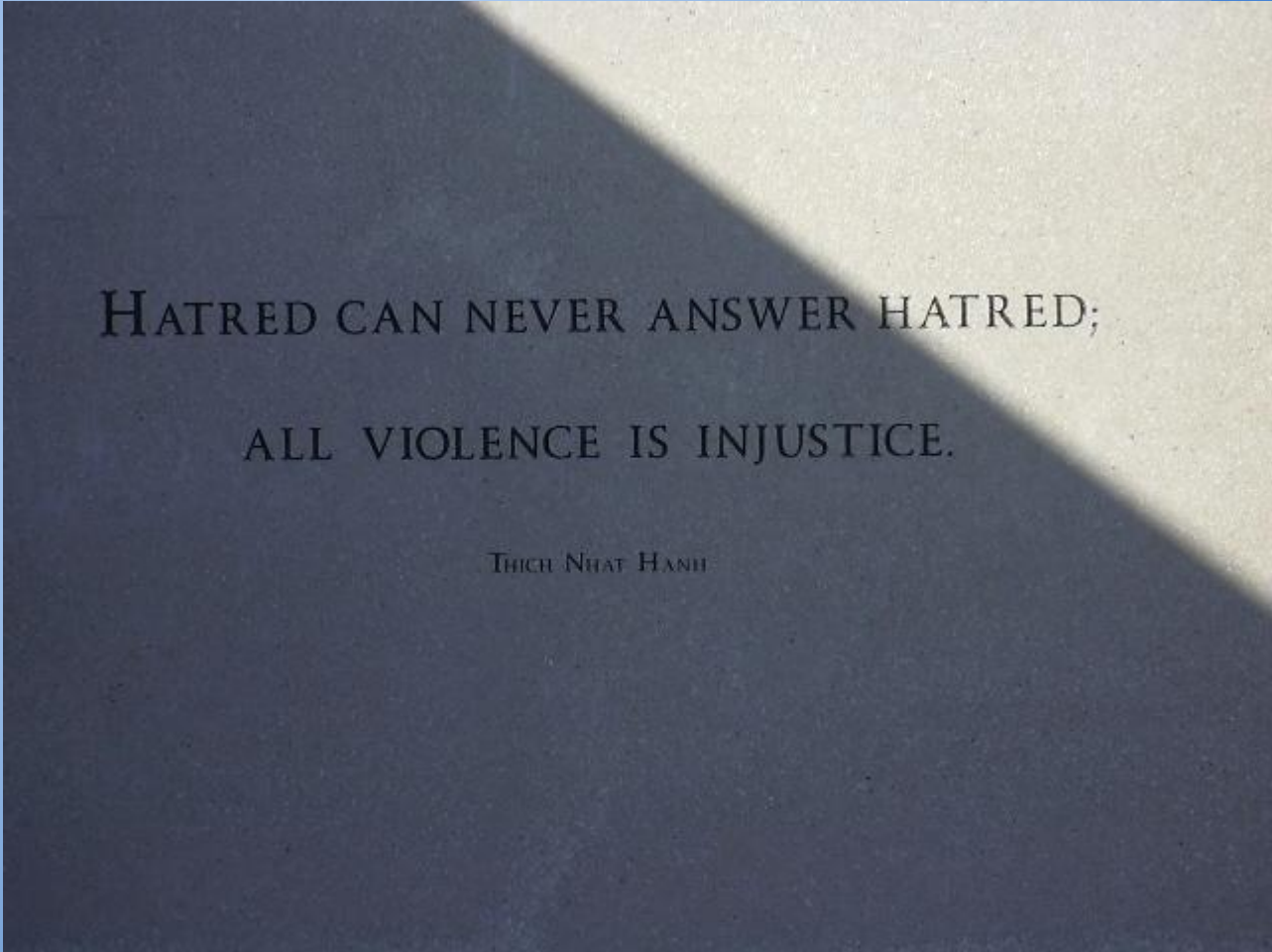
Who must
forgive
here?



The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

Why must
we speak of
all violence
here?

What are
we not
speaking of,
by doing so?

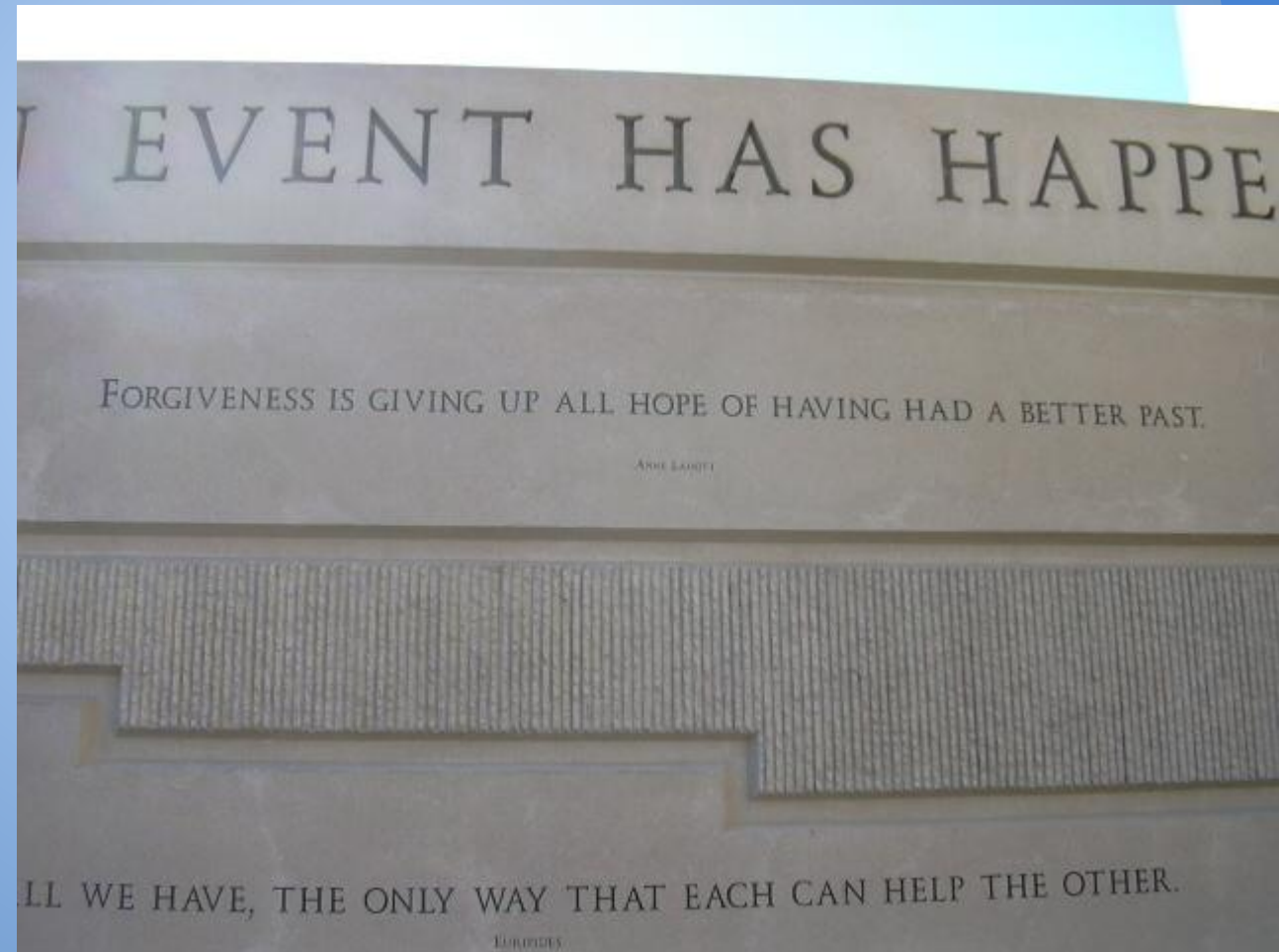


HATRED CAN NEVER ANSWER HATRED;
ALL VIOLENCE IS INJUSTICE.

THICH NHAT HANH

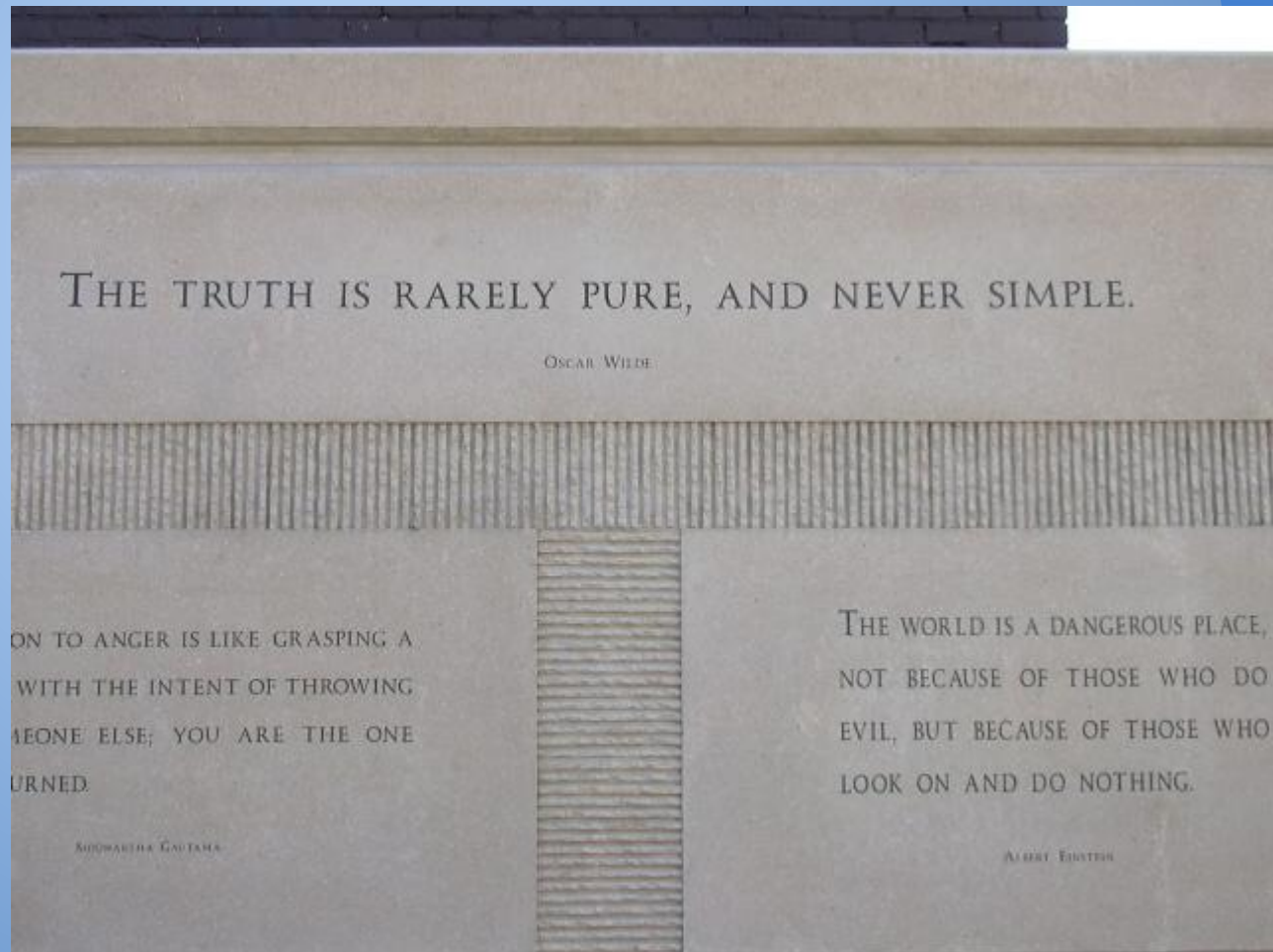
The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

Who is
called upon
to forgive
here?



The Surplus of Speech and that which Remains Unspoken

Isn't the
truth
relatively
simple here
-- if you are
able to
speak it?



Prosopopoeia in the face of Trauma

De Man (1984) describes “the latent threat that inhabits *prosopopoeia*, namely, that by making death speak, the symmetrical structure of the trope implies, by the same token, that the living are struck dumb, frozen in their own death” (p. 78).

The Memorial both speaks and yet renders the community mute.

Still Unspoken, Still Unfair



Unspoken, Unfair

The campaign brought together seventeen partner organizations (local nonprofits, universities, and others) who designed a billboard, print, and social media campaign that sought to provide opportunities for white people to acknowledge white privilege, create dialogue throughout the community on white privilege, and build a base of white allies to work together with people of color to eliminate racism individually and institutionally.

Unspoken, Unfair

Is it significant that this campaign began in writing, not speech?



Unspoken, Unfair

Writing
objectifies
thoughts.

Speech takes
responsibility
for thoughts.



An event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak and impossible to remain silent.

- *Edmund Burke*

...and yet, in many ways, in Duluth, we are still unable to speak.