

Violence and Privilege

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“America is not ‘a proposition’ or a shared set of values. Instead, it is a country for white people descended from European settlers, whose accomplishments should not be diminished by acknowledging the people that some of them enslaved, the Native Americans they killed, or anyone else denied equal rights at the founding.” - Missouri Sen. Eric Schmitt (9/15/2025) openly promoted white supremacy in a recent public statement.

Could the words of Senator Schmitt reflect the core of privilege in America?

Joy Reid recently offered a thorough analysis of the reasons behind ongoing dissatisfaction and anger among MAGA supporters, despite achieving many of their objectives. Setting aside the rhetorical aspect of Reid's commentary, it is essential to consider broader perspectives on how both media and society respond to the issue of violence affecting Americans.

According to the FBI's behavioral analysis of mass shootings and active shooter incidents, individuals responsible for such acts often show identifiable behaviors and stressors prior to an attack. While mental health issues may play a role in certain instances, the FBI stresses the importance of considering a wider range of behavioral indicators and psychological motivators. Mass shootings are not wholly arbitrary events; they frequently reflect underlying anger or grievances, which may relate to issues of privilege.

The media often characterizes predatory crime within Black communities as a social construct, suggesting that disenfranchised individuals may target one another due to proximity. In contrast, similar descriptors are less commonly applied to crimes committed by white perpetrators.

From 1982 to August 2025, 54% of mass shootings were committed by white shooters. Let's examine evidence indicating that privilege may play a role in violence in America.

Throughout history, there have been instances in which white communities, perceiving their influence as threatened, engaged in acts of violence against marginalized groups. Notable examples include: the Fort Pillow Massacre of 1894 involving Black Federal Troops in Tennessee; the Red Summer of 1919 resulting from northern migration after World War I; the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921; and the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 in Huntington. These events illustrate the longstanding challenges and fears faced by Black and Hispanic Americans because of social tensions and unrest fueled by privilege.

Marginalized groups have led race riots, notably during the Long Hot Summer of 1967, which saw unrest in over 150 cities sparked by Martin Luther King's assassination. While white citizens were not directly targeted, their dominant presence in inner cities was identified as a factor in the violence.

Joy Reid highlighted several pressing concerns: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are being reduced; access to education is declining; fundamental civil rights are increasingly unprotected; urban areas are experiencing heightened surveillance and incarceration; and Supreme Court arbitration stays notably absent. All these actions are meant to preserve a Privileged America.

What distinguishes privilege from racism?

Racism may result from particular social dynamics, while privilege refers to an individual or group's psychological and societal advantages.

Recently, Vice President JD Vance responded to news reports disclosing text messages among a group of young Republicans promoting racism, misogyny, and bigotry. Vance responded with lighthearted laughter, asking that Americans “not ruin these kids' lives” - implying that children often make unexpectedly amusing remarks. America holds its core privilege and anima as a national trait. The vice president knows better than to treat hate and prejudice as something less than serious. It is his privileged status that allows him to deflect and defend such behaviors.

The issue of violence in America is frequently attributed to factors other than societal privilege. However, the issue of privilege is one that America must confront to ensure its continued progress and stability.

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