

Hate Crimes

In a previous column, I talked about America's culture of violence. Our murder rate is several times higher than any other Western nation. We have been at war for over 80% of our existence. We glorify violence as the solution to problems in our movies, television series, and literature. The daily mass killings exist against that background.

However, many of those mass killings are not random; they target specific groups: people of color, Jews, LGBTQIA, Muslims. The underlying reason for this is the **Big Lie**, that white people in general and straight, white men in particular are more important than anyone else.

The big **LIE** is about much more than just race. It's largely about power – who is the assumed standard against whom everyone else is measured, who gets hired and considered for top positions in management, who's voice is heard and given credence in meetings, who gets the benefit of the doubt from police and retail personnel, **who sets the rules**.

Lord Acton's admonition applies here: "Power tends to corrupt; and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Thousands of years of patriarchy had conditioned men to wielding power over women and children, although usually tempered by bonds of affection. But there were seldom such bonds to ameliorate the treatment of enslaved people. The middle passage and the treatment of the enslaved people once they reached the Caribbean or the American Colonies was so brutal that those involved convinced themselves that Africans were not fully human. Thus, they didn't have to be treated humanely. After all, a man who worked a horse to death would be considered stupid for destroying a valuable asset. By consigning black slaves into the same category as livestock, they could be treated accordingly.

That attitude didn't change with the end of the Civil War. It just transformed into other ways of maintaining white supremacy, but like slavery, the new ways were based on violence induced terror.

The targeted mass killings are an extension of that mindset. Every society through time has had disaffected young men who had trouble finding or making their place in their society. White young men who have absorbed from birth that they are the elite of society can't reconcile their situation with their expectations. They feel cheated and angry. They see themselves in a zero-sum situation. If Blacks and other people of color or LGBTQ's or Jews or even women are treated fairly and given equal opportunities, then it must mean that their status is diminished. It is so psychologically important to them to feel superior that they will sacrifice their economic and physical well-being for it. They will even kill for it.

And that brings us full circle. In a culture steeped in violence, one that glorifies violence as the way to solve problems, killing those whom you perceive as having robbed you of your birthright seems logical and a way to vent all their pent-up rage.

Martin Luther King, Jr. spent his life trying to get white Americans to recognize that White Supremacy is a moral problem that requires a change of heart to overcome. Until that happens, we are doomed to a continuation of this level of violence.