

**Bruce E. Johansen  
Adebowale Akande**

# **GET YOUR KNEE OFF OUR NECKS**

**From Slavery to  
Black Lives Matter**

 **Springer**

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Bruce E. Johansen • Adebowale Akande  
Editors


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From Slavery to Black Lives Matter

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*Editors*

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# Introduction

From different interdisciplinary angles, this scholarly collection's central theme examines a rising wave of White supremacy and racism inundating all facets of American life from the slaves' first landings at Jamestown (1619), to the murder of George Floyd in 2020, and beyond. We focus on contemporary murders in the United States, often of Black men by police, along with historical context that ties these murders to past practices, such as lynching

Each murder is an example of what has come before, and after. It is the "why" that we are after. Why, for example, was Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man out for a jog, shot to death by whites? They had assumed that he had robbed an empty (under construction) home that he had jogged through. Many such deaths occur because of whites' negative (and usually mistaken) stereotypes of Blacks. Once such a blunder has been made, it takes on a life of its own. For Arbery (as well as Floyd, and many others) an assumed act of petty theft, or even merely running from an officer, can make a Black man liable for summary execution. These are not incidental incidents. On an average of one a day, a Black man or woman has been shot to death by police in recent years.

We dissect the recent history of Black–White relationships in the United States. For example, in Chap. 1, "‘I Can’t Breathe’: Dying While Black in America: Today’s Lynchings and Ending the Heritage of Slavery," We begin on the streets of America's inner cities, with its jails and prisons, where, nearly without fail, young men come into contact (some for extended periods of time) with a vast criminal "justice" complex, the heritage of slavery. The slaves, one learns, were legally freed in 1865 by Abraham Lincoln. However, in our time, there are more young Black men in prisons and jails than in colleges and universities, in a country that incarcerates, by proportion of population, more

people (mainly, but not all, men) than any other national jurisdiction on Planet Earth, half or more of whom are Black, Latino, or Native American.

We analyze a wave of Black shootings by police during 2020 and 2021, the most publicized of which was the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Floyd's murder was followed by a month of mass marches that involved about a million people in the United States and other countries, the largest civil-rights marches in U.S. history. We analyze these events in the context of dozens of other shootings of similar characters. The service revolver has become the new lynching rope. The assassination of young Blacks continued long after Floyd was murdered, and his murderer, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted and sentenced. Following much talk about police reform, very little has changed.

The murder of Floyd was not unique, even in 2020, even in its horrific brutality. What *had* changed was the ability of modern communication's technology to place in the hands of ordinary people small, portable machines that may be used to capture the images and sounds of a Black man's neck being crushed by an ample knee belonging to a Minneapolis police officer, then send those images around the world to similar machines in a fraction of a second. One wonders how history might have been changed if these machines had been available during lynchings centuries ago, as the first slaves were being forced ashore along what is now the United States East Coast, or as Native American hunting lands were being converted to cotton fields harvested by Black slaves, during the battles over Reconstruction and Jim Crow, the growth and the genocidal nature of White nationalism through the Ku Klux Klan, the Dixiecrat movement. How did people in other nations (Europe and Africa) see Blacks' oppression? Welcoming arms were extended from Africa even as Adolph Hitler used the United States' oppression of freed slaves and Native Americans as examples for the "Jew codes" of the Third Reich. Your Mississippi will be our Volga! Hitler proclaimed.

Be prepared to be surprised and sometimes shocked by a new narrative that will challenge previous interpretations of color lines in American history to the present day: The opening of the South after the U.S. Civil War, the U.S. political parties' Southern Strategy as formulized by an ever-more conservative Republican Party, W.E.B. DuBois' Black reconstruction, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the civil rights movements during the 1950s and 1960s, desegregated schools, Richard Nixon's groundwork for Donald Trump versus the Democratic Strategy (Jimmy Carter to Bill Clinton), cumulating to this day, with a massive racist reaction against Barack Obama's presidency, From lynching, "rape as a badge of slavery," systematic exclusion, and southern oppression, discrimination in employment, education to voter



suppression, against police abuses of power, the struggle continues a century and a half after the abolition of slavery, into the Black Lives Matter and the #Me Too movements. Our contributors dissect the social construction of whiteness and racial domination around race, gender, and class in American politics.

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In **Chap. 1**, we dissect the recent history of Black–White relationships in the United States in “*I Can’t Breathe:’ Dying While Black in America: Today’s Lynchings and Ending the Heritage of Slavery.*” We begin on the streets of America’s inner cities, with its jails and prisons, where, nearly without fail, young men come into contact (some for extended periods of time) with a vast criminal “justice” complex, the heritage of slavery.

On the street, among the half of Black men who are not serving time, prudent young people are having “the conversation” with their parents, which boils down to this: do *not* give the police any lip. Never run, no matter what the circumstances or temptation, because, in so doing, you may become a rabbit giving a bad cop a moving target. A quick sprint away from an officer may become an on-the-spot assumption of guilt and an instant sentence of execution, often carried out by a shot in the back or, once captured, by the fatal crushing of a thorax. In many such cases, the service revolver or the crushing knee may again become today’s hanging rope. It is more productive to *march* with many thousands of people of all races around you.

By the early years of the twenty-first century, such deaths had become so frequent that, like dry tinder, they were waiting for a spark. This chapter describes the popular uprising that followed the killing of George Floyd, in Minneapolis, as his neck was crushed on nearly live television provided by a civilian with a cell phone. This was, of course, not the first time, and it was not the last, but the brutality was so unforgiving, and so lacking in provable criminal intent on Floyd’s part, that the tinder was lit around the world. Tens, then hundreds of thousands of people, Black, White, Brown, and Red, coursed into the streets of the United States and many other countries. After almost a month of marches, it became the largest display of demonstrations and demands for basic change in United States history.

In **Chap. 2**, “*The Perils of Populism, Racism, and Sexism: The Trump Lesson Plan for African Americans and Women.*” By Mamie E. Locke, Ph.D. of Hampton University, examines the motives of Donald J. Trump, including racial overtones. The indifference shown to women and African Americans is part and parcel of the Trump lesson plan as he has preyed on the

anxieties of his base to make anyone who disagrees with him so-called “enemies of the American people.” Using the politics of insecurity and insult, Trump mobilized his base to undermine the political and socioeconomic voices of African Americans and women, especially women of color. Donald Trump used nationalistic rhetoric, insults, and foul language to create a frenzy with his base to instigate backlash against those he considered to be enemies of the people.

Trump’s non-stop political campaigns demonstrated a continuation of a race-based, nationalistic appeal that began as far back as the mid-nineteenth century in various iterations, which continued with Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 and resurfaced with former presidential candidate and Alabama Governor George Wallace in the 1960s and 1970s. An underlying theme of this ideology is the designation of a common enemy that must be castigated in order to uplift the purveyor of the message. The difference was that Roosevelt and Wallace were not able to solidify the popular appeal in such a way to propel themselves to the White House (although Roosevelt had previously served two terms as President as a Republican). Donald Trump, with no political experience, found himself on the stage in Cleveland, Ohio accepting the Republican nomination for President in 2016. Trump is remarkably ignorant of history, including his ideology’s roots and past practice. Once, taken to Pearl Harbor, having witnessed a ceremony, Trump asked his staff what was so important about Pearl Harbor, anyway.

This chapter explores Trump’s racist and nationalistic messaging, not only during his 2016 and 2020 campaigns, but also within his overall history, his administration, and his politics of changing the narrative rather than engaging in public policy. Given that Trump has mastered this lesson plan of criticism by insult, he has reshaped the Republican Party, leaders, and members such that his is the voice that dominates and controls Republican ideology. By 2020, with a new election looming, along with the killing coronavirus, economic depression, and mass protests, the question became: could Trump’s old tactics survive fast-moving events? Trump and his obvious racism lost, but he maintained victory, right down to an armed trashing of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

In **Chap. 3, “Penal Populism: The End of Reason,”** John Pratt (Professor of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand) and Michelle Miao, (Assistant Professor of Law, The Chinese University of Hong Kong), analyze the phenomenon of “penal populism,” which was first identified as characteristic of English-speaking Western democracies around the end of the twentieth century—specifically, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Since that time, however,

various strands of it—the exact form that it takes and the impact it has vary from society to society—have been identified in a diverse range of countries. Generally, it demands a much more punitive approach to law-breaking. This has been manifested in the form of dramatically rising imprisonment rates, as in the Anglophone world; but it has also led to clamorings for a more vigorous use of the death penalty in some Asian societies, particularly Japan, or chemical castration of child sex offenders, as in South Korea and the Czech Republic.

With each society that it touches, it is as if penal populism undermines the very kernel on which modern punishment had been built: the way in which, from the time of the Enlightenment, science, rationality, and expert knowledge were expected to outweigh emotive, uninformed common-sense, thereby ensuring that reason outweighed anti-reason in the development of penal policy. Now, however, slamming the door in the face of reason, penal populism drives up imprisonment rates when the detrimental effects—social and economic—of imprisonment are well known; or it reaffirms the place of capital punishment in modern penal systems when it is well known that there is no conclusive evidence about its deterrent effect; or it targets the bodies of offenders, in a reversion to punishment of the pre-modern era, rather than compelling them to forfeit time or money in line with the expectations of punishment in the modern world.

Most analyses of these developments have treated penal populism as a kind of localized event within the social body, as an aberration from the direction of punishment in modern society, as an infection that can be diagnosed, provided with treatment and exorcized: at which point, it is thought, the voice of reason will once again be allowed to drive modern penal arrangements in a progressive, humane direction and away from such excesses.

This, however, is a matter of little consequence to populism and its forces. What drives it is not any legacy of reason and the Enlightenment, but anger, resentment, and the construction of a magical politics around these emotive forces that promises to eliminate at a stroke all of the demons and devils it identifies. Intaking back control, in making a nation (such as the United States) great again, who then needs former President Barack Obama's commitment to tolerance, compromise, and our common humanity, the values of liberal democracy.

Who needs evidence, rationality, facts, science, and all the other attributes on which modernity itself has been built? Yet, as Jonathan Freedland writes, evidence, facts and reason are the building blocks of civilization. Without them we plunge into darkness. And as this darkness falls, so it brings with it the end of Reason and all its light.

**Ronald E. Goodwin** (Prairie View, Texas A&M University), in Chap. 4, **“White Supremacy and the Politics of Race,”** writes that “Many in our society believed Barack Obama’s first election as United States president in 2008 was a sign that it had finally evolved beyond its racist past.” Sadly, writes Goodwin, this was not the case: “White supremacists continue to use racially influenced political policies to maintain their particular view of society: a view in which people of color are relegated to the margins.” As a result, racial politics continue to undermine the theoretical principles of democracy by advancing the goals of specific groups over others.

According to Goodwin, U.S. history has been marked by many instances of racial politics. Four hundred years after captured Africans arrived on the banks of the James River and “more than two hundred and thirty years after the Founding Fathers conceded to Blacks being considered less than a whole person,” he writes. “Some still regard the Black community as inferior and endorse policies that reinforce these absurd notions of race. After Jim Crow, after the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, after enduring segregation, and police shootings, and extreme right-wing persecution, so it remains in some political circles today, among Donald Trump and his base. Trump purposefully spoke to this group like two old friends over a game of dominoes,” says Goodwin. He was seeking to expose that part of conservatism that could easily be confused with racism. Even though the Republican leadership saw Trump as merely a political neophyte, his acumen in riling his audiences during rallies could not be ignored, nor could his appeal to White nationalists. Trump’s White nationalistic rhetoric intensified along with his primary victories. Soon, signs touting White nationalism were appearing prominently at rally after rally. Instead of racial stereotypes portraying Black men as lazy except for mainly imagined violence toward whites (often women), Trump’s twenty-first-century southern strategy emphasized rhetoric that disparaged Muslim and Latino immigrants. His claims that Mexico would pay for a wall along the Mexico—United States border sent his “base” into a frenzy, although only a small fraction of his precious wall was built, and Mexico paid for none of it. Racial politics was suddenly front-and-center again as he pummeled Barack Obama.

Goodwin concludes that, by definition, a post-racial society is one in which the racism that once defined American society would no longer exist. Racist policies used to benefit one group over another will have been eradicated. Symbols of race-based hate will no longer appear in public. And, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, a post-racial society is one where everyone would be judged by the content of character over the color of skin.

Many thought this society had evolved to that point with Obama’s election as president in November 2008. Sadly, this was not the case. In the

presidential campaign of 2016, the politics of race that many thought no longer existed returned with a vengeance. Two hundred and twenty-one years (2652 months) after the Founding Fathers compromised with their slave-holding contemporaries to limit Blacks to a status of three-fifths of a White man, a Black man was elected to the presidency of the United States. The political backlash of this event was vicious. As a result, Goodwin closes, the politics of race continue to be a defining feature of this republic—to a lethal point where the police service revolver can become a new lynching tool.

In **Chap. 5, “*The Civil Rights Movement in Urban Microcosm: Omaha, Nebraska*,”** we face another widespread stereotype: that Nebraska comprises nothing except corn, beef (e.g., “Omaha Steaks”), pigs, and White farmers. How could a vibrant Black community exist in a place such as this? While the state *does* have plenty of corn, beef, hogs, and White farmers, Omaha, its largest city (metropolitan population about 800,000), also contains a long-enduring Black community, the birthplace of such historic figures as Malcolm X and Ernie Chambers. Omaha also includes a rapidly growing Latino community, with a renovated main shopping street. Meatpacking, once Omaha’s staple industry has since moved out of the city. Most of the Blacks and Latinos have remained.

Relatively small Midwestern cities that include Black communities such as Omaha’s, offer some unusual distinctions. Omaha hosted some of the United States’ first lunch-counter sit-ins and bus boycotts before this civil-rights tactic became better known in the South in the 1950s. It also has been home to Ernie Chambers, probably the longest-serving Black member of a statehouse in the United States. In 2020, Chambers had served 50 years, interrupted only by a term-limits law.

Another such city is Tulsa, Oklahoma, which contained a mostly Black business district that came known as the “Black Wall Street,” until it was burned out by mainly White mobs.

The Tulsa race massacre took place there on May 31 and June 1, 1921, as at least 300 Blacks were killed, and the area was bombed from the air, the earliest (and very likely *only*) airborne gutting of American people, their homes, churches, and businesses by other Americans within the United States.

Like Tulsa and other turn-of-the-century working-class cities, Omaha’s history also has been marred by eruptions of anti-Black racial violence. In 1890, several hundred European Americans formed a mob that seized Joe Coe, a Black worker, from a jail cell after he had been accused of kidnapping a five-year-old White child. Coe was killed and lynched as thousands of whites danced with glee. The same city, however, was the home of Ernie Chambers,

a state legislator who became the longest-serving person ever to serve in its Unicameral (statehouse), and a city institution.

**Chapter 6, in “*Black-facing, White Shaming, and Yellow Journalism: A Jaundiced View of How Contemporary ‘Political Correctness’ Erodes First Amendment Principles.*”** Kenneth Lasson, Professor of Law, University of Baltimore School of Law, dissects conflicts concerning different interpretations of free speech. “In a world of rapidly changing norms, standards, and sensitivities,” writes Lasson, “it has become increasingly difficult to state one’s opinions without fear of repercussion. The idea that what happened years ago can so easily come back to haunt current status and career ambitions is troubling on a number of levels, not the least of which is the danger it poses for traditional American notions of due process and civil liberties.”

Lasson continues by saying that the twenty-first century has presented new challenges to the traditional ways that free speech in America has been encouraged and protected. This is particularly so on college and university campuses, the very places that pride themselves as being relatively open forums for ideas. Numerous campus speech codes substantially limit First Amendment rights. They come with new catch-phrases like “trigger warnings,” “safe spaces,” and “cultural appropriation”—all calculated in one way or another to shelter students and others from the honest give-and-take of discussion and debate about topics that might be controversial. Lasson asserts that those with opinions that might challenge campus orthodoxies are rarely invited, and sometimes disinvited after having been scheduled, or even shouted down or otherwise disrupted. According to Lasson, when protestors disrupt campus events, administrators often choose to look the other way, and students rarely face disciplinary actions.

Lasson writes that the latter-day dilution of free speech has been generated at least in part by the rise of postmodernism—generally defined as skepticism, irony, or distrust toward traditional narratives, ideologies, Enlightenment rationality, perceptions of human nature, morality, social progress, objective reality, absolute truth—in short, the whole concept of reasoned discourse.

On the other hand, postmodernism itself is difficult to define because to do so would violate its proponents’ premise that there are no definite terms, boundaries, or absolute truths. During the past few years, scholars have come to espouse distinctly opposing views regarding the rights and responsibilities of colleges and universities toward their students regarding freedom of speech on campus. “Nationalism” has become a byword that divides. So has the term “identity politics,” which has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theory based on the shared perceptions of injustice toward members of certain social groups.

Of the many examples that can be cited to illustrate the somewhat bizarre manifestations of liberal angst are the phenomena of “Blackfacing” and “White shaming.” Citing U.S. founder James Madison, Lasson says that every American has his or her right to say, write, and read what he or she wants. Opinions conflict, of course, and on person’s truths may be another’s “alternative facts.”

“Don’t be misled,” said Scott Pelley, a CBS News anchor, “Any constraint on ‘the press’ applies to every citizen’s voice.” Is this the voice on an “enemy of the people,” in ex-President Trump’s (or Josef Stalin’s) phrase? We are the American people. Journalists bring vitality to the national conversation. We bridge differences, serve public safety, expose corruption, constrain power and give voice to the voiceless. As Madison might say today, freedom of the press is the right that guarantees all our other rights. Or, as Thomas Jefferson, writing to Edward Carrington in 1787, with elegant phrasing much beloved by newspaper editors and journalism professors: “The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, [its] very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.” Or, writes Lasson, “No mail bomb, no president, no Congress, can alter one enduring fact of freedom—there is no democracy without journalism.”

However, in the real world, there exists no such thing as completely unbiased news. One’s truth may be another’s “fake news.” As Lasson writes: “Even if a journalist tries to report only facts, he or she must still decide which ones to include and in what order. Phrasing also differs subjectively.” And: “Consumers of news should seek opposing points of view and draw their own conclusions. They should recognize that many of today’s media outlets rely on a business model that encourages them to sensationalize news; they rely on advertising, which pays more money when they get more viewers or clicks. These types of outlets should be used only to *confirm a source*. **They should understand that the sole purpose of many** sites is to amass viewership and profits. And, yes, some seek to spread false information for political purposes. Journalists and editors are not unlike anyone else, but they are subject to pressures that confine their narratives and reporting. Would objective and ethical news coverage yield better results?”

Politics always involves causes and comparisons of policies and personalities—but fairer coverage would mean more healthy debate—and perhaps a better outcome for the nation and its collective psyche. And debate, most assuredly, is what Lasson finds on his scholarly tour of journalistic fits and misfits.



In Chap. 7, “*U.S. House of Representative Ilhan Omar: Fighting Nativism and White Supremacy in the Spirit of Queen Araweelo*,” Dorian Brown Crosby, assistant professor, Department of Political Science, Spelman College, places a newsworthy spotlight on Ilhan Omar, the first Somali refugee elected to the U.S. Congress. She is also one of the first two Muslim Congresswomen. Before heading to Washington, D.C., she became the first of two Somali women elected to a state legislature, winning the Minnesota House of Representative seat vacated by Keith Ellison, an African American, and a Muslim. While her elections on state and national levels of government “were cheered by Somalis in the United States and on the Diaspora, this news was less than welcomed by resentful White supremacists and nativists. Some outright hated her,” writes Crosby. “Anti-refugee, anti-Somali sentiments and stereotypes of Somalis.” “Some as terrorists in Europe and around the globe are the same negative narratives and images produced in the United States to fuel resistance to resettling Somali refugees.”

Omar’s elections also were a case in point in an amazingly polarized United States, where *E Pluribus Unum* (“Out of many, one,” the United States’ traditional motto) has been tested in practice nearly every day in our national conversation. While such a conversation may have been (slightly) more genteel in the past, today, writes Crosby, “Such conflict underlies social attitudes, immigration, as well as foreign and domestic public policies.” “Exhibit A” may be [or have been] behind ex-President Trump’s unvarnished favoritism toward one side of the spectrum, on which Omar Ilhan found herself on the other side. One can hardly imagine Trump quoting that motto as he orders the locking Latino children in cages, away from their parents, awaiting deportation.

Trump’s Tweets and rhetoric against Representative Omar are indicative of White supremacists’ and nativists’ rejection of her as a person and as an elected official. Thus, this essay is a political-sociological analysis of the attacks that House member Ilhan Omar endures from President Donald Trump. It explores the fact that her racial, gender, religious, ideological, and class identities do not represent whom nativist and White supremacists envision as an American and power player.

“Currently,” Crosby writes, with unusual insight, “the United States is structured to operate as a liberal democracy. It strives to uphold its ideals of freedom, equality, and justice for everyone. However, it fails miserably in many instances, especially regarding citizens pushed to the periphery of society. Previous presidents—regardless of their political ideology and their shortcomings—have always upheld the United States as a democracy. Under President Donald Trump, however, these principles are being tested. It is safe



to say that for the first time in history, Americans are experiencing an aggressive, unapologetic, move away from liberal democracy toward authoritarian rule.”

The legend of Queen Araweelo dates back centuries in Somali history. For men, she represents agitation against a patriarchal society. For women, however, she is the epitome of the strength and intellect a patriarchal system dismisses or restrains. There are different versions of her story. The most often recounted one places her in early Somalia around the fifteenth century. As the oldest of the king's three daughters, she automatically assumed the throne. As a child, she rejected Somalia's socially constructed gender roles. She wanted the same opportunities to gain an education as Somali boys.

In **Chap. 8, “Tainted Blood: Scientific Racism, Eugenics and Sanctimonious Treatments of Aboriginal Australians: 1869–2008,”** Australian scholar Greg Blyton writes that the Eugenics movement that emerged in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a continuance of European scientific racism sustained by a flotilla of political and academic ignorance that defined human credibility by hereditary traits, including color and race. The movement may be defined as a European intellectual promotion to scientifically improve western societies through state systems that regulated human reproduction.

In Australia, the foundations of the eugenics movement were heavily influenced by two former Cambridge University students, English scientists, Sir Francis Galton (1822–1911) and Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882). It was a case of intellectual imperialism with colonial policymakers in Australia willingly adopting eugenic ideologies from their two English tutors. However, it would be unfair to blame a single man for the sanctimonious ways his concepts and theories were applied in policy and practice in relation to the treatment of Aboriginal Australians by Australian federal and state governments. The exploitable resources here were an entire continent and its resources, as well as the human capital of its indigenous peoples. Even more tempting to the invaders were natural resources such as coal, the world's main source of climate change, and, well into the twentieth century, uranium.

There appears to be a strong tendency to downplay the influence of the Eugenics movement in Australian history with a counter-claim that policymakers were motivated by humanitarian reasons regarding the governance of Aboriginal Australians. This well-meaning cliché is also found in histories in countries outside Australia where draconian measures were used to manage indigenous and other minority group populations. Despite many negative impacts of Eugenics, policymakers believed they were doing the right thing when the movement started, “...in the early part of the twentieth

century by seemingly well-intended scientists and policy makers, particularly in the United States, Britain, and the Scandinavian countries.”

In **Chap. 9, “Brazil and Australia: The Fires This Time,”** Bruce E. Johansen combines the science of climate change with the insidiousness of racial and cultural conquest that propels national borders. In this case, the causal agent is intense wildfire, which victimizes the entire living array in Australia and Brazil—plants, animals, indigenous peoples, and (mainly) European immigrants. While everyone and everything suffers from this apocalyptic amalgam, the longest-lived plants, creatures, and human beings are among the first in line to be extinguished by the ruination of the environment by fire.

In 2019, 2020, and 2021, the signature malady of the global climate crisis became raging wildfires. They occurred with previously unknown size and ferocity in California, the Amazon Valley, and Australia (as well as many other places, from Chile, to Siberia)—and even, perhaps as an indication of things to come, along the west coast of Greenland. In each of the wildfires’ major sites, environmentalists have run smack into political systems dominated by established nationalistic interests with mindsets (whether the U.S.A.’s Donald Trump, Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, or Australia’s Scott Morrison) at least a century and a half old—which is to say able, with straight faces, to deny that greenhouse gases are a problem at all. In each case, this denial has been fed by copious amounts of political cash from established interests that have become very good at combining oil, gas, and coal to produce corporate profits. If carbon dioxide had a sense of irony (or even a sense of humor), it would have been roaring with laughter. As it is, in our world, greenhouse gases have no political preferences, no emotions, no envy, and no sense of guilt about ruining Planet Earth. All they do is hold heat.

Similarly, when the worldwide COVID virus crisis exploded in March 2020, Bolsonaro extended his adamant denial to it, comparing the disease that already had killed tens of thousands of people to the common cold. Bolsonaro also said that anyone who took a COVID-19 vaccine would turn into a crocodile. Was Bolsonaro exercising a warped sense of humor, or displaying the intelligence of a peanut when he said that Brazilians had a unique ability to resist the virus because they had been steeped in prayer and sewage. Soak them in enough sewage, and they will survive anything, he inferred. “God is Brazilian!” he told supporters. “The cure is right there”. When vaccines became available, Bolsonaro turned them down, asserting that they would turn his compatriots into crocodiles. This is not stand-up comedy. Bolsonaro is the elected leader of one of the Planet’s largest national entities,

one who makes Donald J. Trump look like Albert Einstein. One supposes that the crocodiles should be consulted.

Many Brazilians rose *en masse*, pounding pots and pans in the streets to oppose what they regarded as insane statements by Bolsonaro. An impeachment movement grew apace. Several state governors instituted stay-at-home orders. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram deleted Bolsonaro's rants against social distancing as a threat to public health. In the *favelas* (slums) of Rio de Janeiro, drug gangs and community leaders imposed nighttime curfews and urged residents to restrict outdoor movements to essential tasks. Bolsonaro accused the news media of inciting panic to undermine his influence. By May 2020, the undertakers could not commission burial places fast enough to accommodate the dead who were collapsing in the hundreds per hour.

And, summoned by their respective dry seasons, as in both Brazil and Australia, the wildfires turned increasing swaths of both countries into piles of ashes as the wealthy continued old habits, such as turning coal, uranium, and oil into profits. All over the earth, it seemed that the cultural pull of old habits was running head-on into a brick wall of urgent necessity, old assumptions against new realities that will not be optional for our planet, or its peoples.

In Chap. 10, Barbara Alice Mann, a professor of Honors at the University of Toledo, traces the history of slavery in the United Kingdom, which also is outlined in its seminal *Mansfield* decision. Briefly stated, the holding of slaves was (and remains, of course) illegal there. Slaves did stop in British ports, locked below decks in ships making the infamous trade triangle between Africa, Europe, and North America where the market in human beings provided the second-largest class of asset, after the trade in land. The trade in slaves was such an attractive asset despite the fact that about a quarter of them died, their lifeless bodies thrown overboard.

Having read this book, we have an intellectual exercise to propose. What would have happened if Great Britain's *Mansfield* decision also had covered the Americas? This short question could elicit some long answers.

Omaha, NE  
Cape Town, Union of South Africa (USA)  
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# 1

## ***"I Can't Breathe:" Dying While Black in America: Today's Lynchings and Ending the Heritage of Slavery***

Bruce E. Johansen

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the ensuing trial of Derek Chauvin almost a year later rubbed raw the bloodiest stain on the United States' history and its world reputation. The 9 minutes and 29 seconds during which Chauvin's knee crushed the spark of life out of Floyd was not unusual in the history of the United States. Before the U.S. Civil War, disobedient slaves were routinely beaten to death for evading orders or for running away, then lynched.

At that time, human beings, as a group, comprised the second most valuable class of assets in the soon-to-be severed United States of America. The most valuable class of assets was land. As a large-scale owner of both these assets, president-to-be Andrew Jackson sometimes bet the lives of slaves in poker games. In almost two centuries after Jackson's two terms as U.S. president, Blacks have achieved nominal freedom but as this chapter and expert essays that follow indicate, it is a freedom that has been conditional on inequity of wealth, social, and legal discrimination.

The strength and severity of this repressive system are not well known by most European American people. The USA has by far the largest incarceration system of any country on Earth. Taken as a percentage of population, Black, Latino/as, and Indigenous peoples (especially men) make up a large majority

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of prisoners, who often are held for minor crimes for which many whites would not be arrested. The lynching rope has often been replaced by the service revolver. None of this is new in the United States; what is new is the number of people rising up in protest, a figure in the millions around the world after Floyd's murder. Even with so many miles marched and voices raised, life-threatening crimes against Blacks and other minorities *increased* in the United States after Floyd's murder. On average, three people have been dying per day (2019–2021) in police shootings within the United States.

If you are doing time in New Orleans, or many other of the United States of America, you are very likely Black, more often than not crowded into prisons and jails overloaded beyond capacity, without adequate air flow or air conditioning during some of the hottest, most humid summers on Earth. As a prisoner, you are very likely taking medications for psychiatric conditions (22%), or hypertension (18%); you may have asthma (18%), or diabetes (6%). All of these medical conditions make people more vulnerable to heat (Prison Policy, 2018). You are also in a prime location for pandemic diseases, such as COVID-19. "For a large number of inmates," according to one expert observer, "prison terms became death sentences" (Aviv, 2020, p. 56).

Cummins Unit, a penitentiary in southeastern Arkansas, was not unusual when, by April 25, 2020, test results indicted that 826 inmates of about 3000, as well as 33 staff members, tested positive for COVID-19, less than 2 months after the first death occurred in the United States (Aviv, 2020, p. 59). By August 2020, San Quentin prison in California reported more than 2200 cases and 25 deaths among a prison population of 3265. In Arkansas, hospitals outside prison walls at Cummins Unit refused to treat dying inmates, who often died in their beds in makeshift wards. Staff and government officials routinely under-reported deaths. Dozens of inmates who had died were reported as having recovered. At one point, the governor of Arkansas was told that Cummins had only 12 positive cases (Aviv, 2020, pp. 62–64).

In 2018, the United States had the highest incarceration rate in the world, at about 700 per 100,000 people; Russia had about 400 behind bars; the United Kingdom had 139 inmates, Canada, 114; France, 102; Italy, 96; Norway, 74; Germany, about 70; the Netherlands, 59; Denmark, 59, and Iceland, 38. Louisiana, at 1050, was consistently among the highest in the United States, along with Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Georgia, and Oklahoma. African Americans were incarcerated in the United States at more than five times the rate of whites. Louisiana was one of 12 states in which more than half of state inmates were Black. Around the world, per 100,000 people, The United States makes up about 5% of the world's population but had 21% of the world's prisoners (Prison Policy, 2018).

The prisons in Louisiana are among the most notorious in the U.S. South. Their "alumni" include Archie Williams, who served 37 years of a life sentence for a murder he did not commit. He was exonerated with DNA evidence and help from the Innocence Project. After his release, Williams became nationally famous for singing on "America's Got Talent," and also as an inmates' rights activist.

A high incarceration rate inflicts widespread societal damage. As David Leonard and Yaryna Serkev wrote in the *New York Times* (2020): "Time in prison casts a long shadow, leaving people with lingering health problems as well as permanently damaging their ability to find decent-paying work. Mass incarceration is a major reason that, even before the [COVID] pandemic hit, about 30 percent of middle-aged Black men were not working in a typical week. Many of them do not count as unemployed because they are incarcerated or because they have stopped looking for work."

By July 2021, when the Coronavirus killed more than 600,000 people in the United States (600,000 as of June 3), jails and prisons were identified as one of its major vectors, with Blacks and Latinos its major victims. Because of the swift nature and speed of COVID-19 infection and spread, Eric Reingart, a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at Harvard University, found that "for each person cycled [arrested, charged for a minor, non-violent crime], and released from the Cook County Jail [in Chicago] an additional 2149 cases of COVID-19 appeared in their ZIP code within three to four weeks after the inmate's discharge...Cook County Jail cycles about 100,000 people through its doors every year, approximately 75 percent of them Black" (Reinhart, 2020, p. A-19). All in all, 94% of offenders at the same jail were booked for non-violent offenses.

## **Quit Harassing Black People "for Petty-Ass Shit"**

Typically, the inmates are Black, young men or women, who are found guilty for a string of minor offenses and lack the money to post bail, stuck in a maze of legal bureaucracy, losing their families as they are shuffled around a network of Louisiana or other state prisons. *The New Yorker* personalized these elements with the life of Roslyn Crouch, mother of 12, who was living in New Orleans with six of her children and her mother; one of her children had sickle-cell anemia. Crouch, age 42 in 2020, had chronic bronchitis and was very afraid that she would get coronavirus. Her neighborhood had little competent medical care; while Blacks made up about 30% of Louisiana's population, they suffered 60% of the state's documented coronavirus deaths

(Stillman, 2020, p. 16). In late March 2020, Louisiana was experiencing the highest coronavirus infection rate in the world; the state also had the highest incarceration rate in the United States (Stillman, 2020, p. 16). The crowded and rarely sanitized prisons and jails had become sinks for the coronavirus.

On March 14, 2020, with coronavirus endemic all around her, Crouch drove to a dollar store with her 2-year-old son, Kyi, to stock up on canned food and toilet paper so that she could shelter in place. She ran a stop sign, and was pulled over by a police officer, who ran a rap sheet on his cruiser's computer, and found a string of minor offenses, including lack of registration for the car, driving with a stolen license and a 9-year-old warrant for possession of marijuana (Stillman, 2020, p. 16). Crouch was hauled off to the Jefferson Parish Jail while her daughter Tae took Kyi. The New Orleans police had not yet adopted an experiment in "decarceration" which advised judges to vacate minor warrants against hundreds of non-violent inmates, especially in California, to reduce exposure to coronavirus, as well as to reduce crowding and expense.

## A Family's Story

Meanwhile, in New Orleans, Crouch's children had raised enough money to bail her out, and the family celebrated. They thought that Mom would be home for dinner. The police then refused to release her for reasons that no one in her family understood. Later, Thomas Frampton, a public defense lawyer, found that police were acting on the basis of a 4-year old material witness warrant to extend Crouch's incarceration. Such a warrant is issued on people who may have no charges levied against them (or may even be victims of a crime) to insure that they will be available to testify (Stillman, 2020, p. 19).

Appeals for Crouch's release went unanswered as the number of coronavirus cases rose, and prosecutors told judges that public defenders were using the disease as an excuse to get their clients out of jail. The police continued to arrest mainly Black young people for minor crimes, crowding them into prisons and jails that were already overcrowded and rife with coronavirus. People familiar with the prison system recalled Hurricane Katrina, in 1995, when the prisons' staffs abandoned the 6500 inmates, who remained locked in their cells without food, water, or ventilation as dirty water rose around them (Stillman, 2020, p. 19). After the hurricane passed, Human Rights Watch reported that more than 500 inmates had not been accounted for; children being held in the prison found some soggy dog food and ate it (Stillman, 2020, p. 19).



In 2020, what ravaged the Orleans Parish Jail was not a hurricane, but a rising tide of coronavirus. More than 100 inmates became sick with the virus, and two sheriff's deputies died. Crouch herself experienced aches and shivers, as she lost her sense of smell, a hallmark symptom of the virus. Frampton, meanwhile, confronted police and judges, and, on March 19, won Crouch's release. She walked out of a jail filled with hundreds of people, mainly Black, who could not afford bail, raked by the virus. She felt immensely lucky to be free—and alive.

She told Sarah Stillman of *The New Yorker* (2020, p. 120) that if she ever crossed paths with the Orleans Parish district attorney, she would tell him (or her): "I want to thank you for getting me out of the dog cage. But, Lord, there are other things for you to worry about right now rather than harassing people for petty-ass shit."

## Blacks and Mass Incarceration

Beginning in the 1970s, "the United States undertook a national project of over-criminalization that has put more than two million people behind bars at any given time, and brought the U.S. incarceration rate far above that of any other nation in the world. A closer look at which communities are most heavily impacted by mass incarceration reveals stark racial and ethnic disparities in U.S. incarceration rates in every region of the country." (Wagner & Sakala, 2014). As of April 18, 2020, Blacks, 13% of the population, made up 40% of the jail and prison population, according to the U.S. Census. Latinos, with 16% of the population, had 19%; whites had 64% of the population and 39% of inmates according to the Census Bureau's correctional facility data, which includes individuals incarcerated in federal prisons and detention centers as well as in state and local facilities.

According to the [US Department of Justice](#), African Americans accounted for 52.5% of all homicide offenders from 1980 to 2008, with Whites 45.3% and "Other" 2.2%. The offending rate for African Americans was almost 8 times higher than Whites, and the victim rate was six times higher. Most homicides were intra-racial, with 84% of White victims killed by Whites, and 93% of African American victims were killed by African Americans (Sakala, 2014a). In addition, in New York City, police kill Blacks at 7.8 times as many as whites on a per capita basis; in Chicago, this figure is 27.4; in St. Louis, it is 14 times, according to a database compiled by Mapping Police Violence (Finnegan, 2020, p. 51). The figures are averages for 5 years ending in 2019,



Then there is the sheer cost of incarceration, which has been accelerating. In Juvenile Hall, the cost of a room is about as much as a very fancy suite in a luxury hotel. “The average state cost for the secure confinement of a young person is now \$588 per day, or \$214,620 per year, a 44 percent increase from 2014” (Sticker Shock, [2020](#)).

## Torture by Temperature

Air conditioning has become nearly universal across the U. S. South during the last 30 years, with one exception: in prisons. Although 95% of households in the South use air conditioning, including 90% of households that make below \$20,000 per year. The reason for this is heat and humidity during summer months that have been aggravated by global warming. Conditions can become lethal. In Texas, a state that has air conditioning for all inmate housing areas in only 30 of its 109 prisons, a high percentage of incarcerated people are particularly vulnerable to heat. “The lack of air conditioning in Southern prisons creates unsafe—even lethal—conditions. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can cause dehydration and heat stroke, both of which can be fatal. It can also affect people’s kidneys, liver, heart, brain, and lungs, which can lead to renal failure, heart attack, and stroke” (Jones, [2019](#)). “Conditions such as diabetes and obesity can limit people’s ability to regulate their body heat, as can high blood pressure medications and most psychotropic medications (including Zoloft, Lexapro, Prozac, Cymbalta, and others but excluding the benzodiazepines). Old age also increases risk of heat-related illness, and respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, such as asthma, are exacerbated by heat,” said one analysis (Jones, [2019](#)).

The structure of prisons and prison life can also make incarcerated people more vulnerable to heat. Prisons are mostly built from heat-retaining materials that can increase internal prison temperatures. Because of this, the temperatures inside prisons can often exceed outdoor temperatures. Moreover, people in prison do not have the same cooling options as people on the outside. As *Prison Legal News* [disclosed](#) in a 2018 article on prison air conditioning litigation, “People outside of prison who experience extreme heat have options that prisoners often lack—they can take a cool shower, drink cold water, move into the shade or go to a place that is air conditioned. For prisoners, those options are generally unavailable.” Even fans may be inaccessible. For example, despite the fact that incarcerated people in Texas are [not paid](#) for their labor, a fan in the Texas prison commissary costs an unaffordable \$20.

The lack of air conditioning in prisons has already had fatal consequences. In 2011, an exceptionally hot summer in Texas, [10 incarcerated people died](#) from heat-related illnesses during a month-long heat wave. (It is not only incarcerated people who get sick from the heat in the state's prisons. In August 2018, [19 prison staff and incarcerated people](#) had to be treated for heat-related illnesses.) As David Fathi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project, [explained to \*The Intercept\*](#), "Everyone understands that if you leave a child in a car on a hot day, there's a serious risk this child could be injured or die. And that's exactly what we're doing when we leave prisoners locked in cells when the heat and humidity climb beyond a certain level." An incarcerated man in Texas described how torturous heat becomes in prisons: "It routinely feels as if one's sitting in a convection oven being slowly cooked alive. There is no respite from the agony that the heat in Texas prisons inflicts" (Jones, [2019](#)).

Refusing to install air conditioning is a matter not only of short-term cost savings but of appearing tough on crime. State and local governments go to astonishing lengths to avoid installing air conditioning in prisons. In 2016, Louisiana spent more than [\\$1 million in legal bills](#) in an attempt to avoid installing air conditioning on death row, an amount four times higher than the actual cost of installing air conditioning, according to an expert witness (Jones, [2019](#)). Similarly, in 2014, the people of [Jefferson Parish](#) (New Orleans) voted to build a new jail only after local leaders promised there would be no air conditioning.

With air conditioning nearly universal in the South (as are brutally hot and humid summers), it should not be considered a privilege or amenity, but rather a human right. States and counties that deny air conditioning to incarcerated people should understand that, far from withholding a "luxury," they are subjecting people to cruel and unusual punishment, and even, in effect, handing out death sentences. Courts in Wisconsin, Arizona, and Mississippi have ruled that incarceration in extremely hot or cold temperatures violates the Eighth Amendment. However, these court cases have not had a national impact on air conditioning in prisons under the federal aegis.

Inmates and staff are living in an environment that is a petri dish for the spread of disease, most notably easily transmitted maladies such as the coronavirus that began to ravage not only prisons, but also meat packing plants, U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, and nursing homes by March of 2020. Within less than three months, more than 100,000 people had died of coronavirus in the United States, many in nursing homes, packing plants, and prisons. Some states by May 22, 2020, had expedited releases for non-violent inmates due to the corona virus. Examples included:

- Massachusetts jails in Plymouth and Norfolk counties reduced their prison populations by around 20%.
- County jails in Colorado and Florida are reporting population decreases by over 30% over a few months.
- On May 19th, a federal judge ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to “expedite the release” of 837 people.
- Only three states had not suspended medical co-pays for people in state prisons: Nevada, Hawaii, and Delaware.
- Prisons and jails are [amplifiers of infectious diseases](#) such as the coronavirus, because social distancing is impossible inside and movement in and out of facilities is common. But criminal justice officials have the power to prevent coronavirus deaths.
- Some state and local governments have been taking meaningful steps to protect people behind bars (and the general public). “We’ve also published a [detailed guide to what the criminal justice system should be doing](#), as well as [several other resources](#) about the coronavirus in prisons and jails,” according to one source (Responses, [2020a](#), [b](#)).

## Prejudice May Wear a Black Robe

- An investigative series in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* said that: “Justice has never been blind when it comes to race in Florida. Blacks were first at the mercy of slave masters. Then came Jim Crow segregation and the Ku Klux Klan. Now, prejudice may wear a black robe. Half a century after the civil rights movement, trial judges throughout Florida sentence Blacks to harsher punishments than whites. They offer Blacks fewer chances to avoid jail or scrub away felonies. They give Blacks more time behind bars—sometimes double the sentences of whites accused of the same crimes under identical circumstances” (Salman et al., [2016](#)).
- The same report found that Florida judges were sentencing Black defendants to far longer prison sentences than whites for the same offenses. For the same drug possession crimes, Blacks were sentenced to double the time of whites (Salman et al., [2016](#)) Blacks were given longer sentences in 60% of felony cases, 68% of the most serious first-degree crimes, 45% of burglary cases, and 30% of battery cases. For third-degree felonies (the least serious types of felonies in Florida), White judges sentenced Blacks to 20% more time than whites, whereas Black judges gave more balanced sentences (Salman et al., [2016](#)). One judge responded by noting that about 98% of sentences are the result of plea-bargaining and that sentencing is a compli-

cated issue given the various facts involved, thus no two cases can be compared (Salman et al., 2016). Some attorneys note that poorer defendants often rely on public defenders who often receive less favorable plea offers than defendants with private counsel because private attorneys have lighter case loads, are less likely to go to trial with prosecutors, and defendants with means are more likely to present mitigating factors (Williams, n.d.).

## The Engrained Nature of U.S. Racism

The engrained nature of U.S. racism, especially in the U.S. South, is especially evident in the names of avowed White supremacists that have been affixed to U.S. Army bases. A *New York Times* editorial (Why Does, 2020) described the deep roots of racism on the nomenclature of U.S. military history:

The White supremacist who murdered nine Black churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., [in 2015] dispensed with the fiction that the Confederate battle flag was an innocuous symbol of "Southern pride." A murderer's manifesto describing the killings as the start of a race war, combined with photos of the killer brandishing a pistol and a rebel flag, made it impossible to ignore the connection between Confederate ideology and a blood-drenched tradition of racial terrorism that dates back to the mid-nineteenth century in the American South.

Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper said he was open to discussions that could lead to name changes for ten Army bases named after Confederate generals, among them Fort Hood, Fort Lee, and Fort Bragg. *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman wrote (2020, p. A-24) "These bases honor men who stood for slavery, the opposite of freedom, and as it happens, two of the biggest bases are named for generals famed not for victories, but for defeats. Bragg, whose army suffered an epic rout at Chattanooga, was one of the Civil War's worst-regarded generals. John Bell Hood squandered his men's lives in futile attacks at Atlanta and Franklin, then led what was left of his army to annihilation at Nashville."

The "stars and bars" has come off several southern states' flags; by June 2020, the last one came down, at least for a time. A resolution to do so passed both houses of the Mississippi legislature on June 29, 2020, and later was signed by the governor, Tate Reeves, to redesign the 126-year-old flag without the Confederate battle flag symbol. "Still embraced by many White Mississippians as a proud display of Old South heritage, the flag increasingly has come to evoke segregation, racial violence, and a war that had a central

aim of preserving slavery,” Rick Rojas wrote in the *New York Times* (2020, p. A-19).

The notorious nature of police behavior in the South had some recalling that many police departments began as slave patrols. Mississippi now has the United States’ highest percentage of Black residents. The legislators took the action after a barrage of mail, phone calls, and testimony by a wide array of people of all ethnicities, inside and outside Mississippi, that the flag’s retirement date was overdue. “This entire state is screaming for a change,” said Phillip Gunn, a Republican who is speaker of the House (Rojas, 2020, p. A-17). The new design was ready in September 2020 for a popular referendum on the November ballot. Polls showed that nearly half of Mississippians still supported the old banner. In 2001, voters emphatically supported the retention of the stars-and-bars flag. Since then, many cities and towns and all of Mississippi’s eight state colleges and universities have taken the old flag down.

Confederate symbols could be found in some unusual places, and easily missed if one was not looking closely. For example, Washington, D.C.’s National Cathedral dismantled stained-glass windows displaying Confederate general Robert E. Lee (the commanding general) “in saintly poses” (Why Does, 2020). Another example is the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, which is best known today as the site of significant civil-rights marches during the 1960s. Less well known is Pettus’ biography; he was a U.S. Senator, a Confederate general during the Civil War, and a Grand Dragon in the Ku Klux Klan. Momentum has been building to rename the bridge after John Lewis, 80, the long-serving “conscience” of the U.S. House of Representatives, in which he served several terms. Lewis, who died July 17, 2020, at age 80, had his skull cracked by Alabama State Troopers as he and roughly 600 other people walked across that bridge seeking voting rights on March 7, 1965.

Lewis lost consciousness during the beating in which the troopers attacked with tear gas, bullwhips, and clubs. At that point, he later said “I thought I was going to die” (Remnick, 2020, p. 8). Lewis had been a civil-rights activist since very early in his life, raised on histories such as this: Jesse Thornton, manager of a nearby chicken farm, called a police officer by his first name, not “mister.” For that, he was pursued by a mob, stoned and shot, then lynched. Thornton’s body was dumped into a swamp, where it was found two weeks later, having been ripped apart by vultures.

## Criminalization of Black Peoples

When Blacks win release from jail or prison, they face more than the usual adjustment problems. They also face a United States where, among other obstacles to maintaining life and limb while Black, there is constant, unsolicited attention from the police. Shootings by police, often fatal, have become the new lynchings.

The day-to-day nature of anti-Black racism in the United States is not confined to the U.S. South, although it may have been most frequently displayed there. Enough Blacks (most often, but not always men) have been murdered so often by police across the country—North and South—that thumbnail sketches of each case's circumstances could fill an encyclopedia. One will recall that the following people who were assassinated, murdered, and framed during the civil-rights movement included Medgar Evers (1963, Mississippi), Hattie Carroll (1963, Baltimore), and Rubin Carter (1966, New Jersey).

Today's shootings have roots in the stark class differences of slavery, which were turned on their heads following the Civil War, under Reconstruction. Suddenly, whites who had been slave masters found themselves challenged by Blacks, who were buying farms and starting businesses. By the end of the nineteenth century, the whites were forming the Ku Klux Klan and other supremacist groups in an attempt to recapture their former status by terrorizing Blacks. During Reconstruction, an effort to constitute a multi-racial legislature in Louisiana was destroyed by an alliance of the embryonic Ku Klux Klan and other White supremacist groups, whose members "In broad daylight...stabbed or shot to death nearly two hundred Black supporters of multi-racial democracy" (Lucas, 2020, p. 74). Thus began the "Jim Crow" era (named after a genre of minstrel show in which whites smeared their faces with black color and staged demeaning skits, such as Step 'n Fetchit). As an accompaniment to "blackface," any attempt at political or economic assertion by Blacks was crushed.

From about 1880 until the passage of civil-rights laws during the 1960s, Jim Crow included a wide variety of laws (often called Black Codes) meant to deny Blacks the right to vote, hold any jobs except the most menial, get an education, or engage in many acts of personal or group improvement. Those who attempted to violate Jim Crow laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence, and death. Stereotypes of Blacks also were enhanced "as inferior, lazy, dangerous, sub-human animals, and Black men in particular as 'Black beasts,'" wrote Cynthia L. Robinson, chair of the Black Studies Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. "This narrative of Black