

# A Time of Shame and Sorrow: When It Comes to Political Violence, We All Lose

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*"Whenever any American's life is taken by another American unnecessarily—whether it is done in the name of the law or in the defiance of law, by one man or a gang, in cold blood or in passion, in an attack of violence or in response to violence—whenever we tear at the fabric of life which another man has painfully and clumsily woven for himself and his children, [the whole nation is degraded](#)."*— **Robert F. Kennedy on the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (1968)**

There's a subtext to this [assassination attempt on former President Trump](#) that must not be ignored, and it is simply this: America is being pushed to the brink of a national nervous breakdown.

More than 50 years after **John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy** were assassinated, America has become a ticking time bomb of political violence in words and deeds.

Magnified by an echo chamber of nasty tweets and government-sanctioned brutality, our politically polarizing culture of callousness, cruelty, meanness, ignorance, incivility, hatred, intolerance, indecency and injustice have only served to ratchet up the tension.

Consumed with back-biting, partisan politics, sniping, toxic hate, meanness and materialism, a culture of meanness has come to characterize many aspects of the nation's governmental and social policies. "Meanness today is a state of mind," writes professor Nicolaus Mills in his book *The Triumph of Meanness*, "the product of a culture of spite and cruelty that has had an enormous impact on us."

This casual cruelty is made possible by a growing polarization within the populace that emphasizes what divides us—race, religion, economic status, sexuality, ancestry, politics,

etc.—rather than what unites us: we are all Americans, and in a larger, more global sense, we are all human.

This is what writer Anna Quindlen refers to as “the politics of exclusion, what might be thought of as the [cult of otherness](#)... It divides the country as surely as the Mason-Dixon line once did. And it makes for mean-spirited and punitive politics and social policy.”

This is more than meanness, however.

We are imploding on multiple fronts, all at once.

This is what happens when ego, greed and power are allowed to take precedence over liberty, equality and justice.

This is the psychopathic mindset adopted by the architects of the Deep State, and it applies equally whether you’re talking about Democrats or Republicans.

Beware, because this kind of psychopathology can [spread like a virus](#) among the populace.

As an academic study into pathocracy [concluded](#), “[T]yranny does not flourish because perpetrators are helpless and ignorant of their actions. It flourishes because they actively identify with those who promote vicious acts as virtuous.”

People don’t simply line up and salute. It is through one’s own personal identification with a given leader, party or social order that they become agents of good or evil. To this end, “we the people” have become “we the police state.”

By failing to actively take a stand for good, we become agents of evil. It’s not the person in charge who is solely to blame for the carnage. It’s the populace that looks away from the injustice, that empowers the totalitarian regime, that welcomes the building blocks of tyranny.

This realization hit me full-force a few years ago. I had stopped into a bookstore and was struck by all of the books on Hitler, everywhere I turned. Yet had there been no Hitler, there still would have been a Nazi regime. There still would have been gas chambers and concentration camps and a Holocaust.

Hitler wasn’t the architect of the Holocaust. He was merely the figurehead. Same goes for the American police state: had there been no Trump or Obama or Bush, there still would have been a police state. There still would have been police shootings and private prisons and endless wars and government pathocracy.

Why? Because “we the people” have paved the way for this tyranny to prevail.

By turning Hitler into a super-villain who singlehandedly terrorized the world—not so different from how Trump is often depicted—historians have given Hitler’s accomplices (the German government, the citizens that opted for security and order over liberty, the religious institutions that failed to speak out against evil, the individuals who followed orders even when it meant a death sentence for their fellow citizens) a free pass.

*This is how tyranny rises and freedom falls.*

None of us who remain silent and impassive in the face of evil, racism, extreme materialism, meanness, intolerance, cruelty, injustice and ignorance get a free pass.

Those among us who follow figureheads without question, who turn a blind eye to injustice and turn their backs on need, who march in lockstep with tyrants and bigots, who allow politics to trump principle, who give in to meanness and greed, and who fail to be outraged by the many wrongs being perpetrated in our midst, it is these individuals who must shoulder the blame when the darkness wins.

“[Darkness cannot drive out darkness](#); only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that,” Martin Luther King Jr. sermonized.

The darkness is winning.

It’s not just on the world stage we must worry about the darkness winning.

The darkness is winning in our communities. It’s winning in our homes, our neighborhoods, our churches and synagogues, and our government bodies. It’s winning in the hearts of men and women the world over who are embracing hatred over love. It’s winning in every new generation that is being raised to care only for themselves, without any sense of moral or civic duty to stand for freedom.



John F. Kennedy, killed by an assassin’s bullet five years before King would be similarly executed, [spoke of a torch that had been “passed to a new generation of Americans](#)—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.”

Once again, a torch is being passed to a new generation, but this torch is setting the world on fire, burning down the foundations put in place by our ancestors, and igniting all of the ugliest sentiments in our hearts.

This fire is not liberating; it is destroying.

We are teaching our children all the wrong things: we are teaching them to hate, teaching them to worship false idols (materialism, celebrity, technology, politics), teaching them to prize vain pursuits and superficial ideals over kindness, goodness and depth.

We are on the wrong side of the revolution.

“If we are to get on to the right side of the world revolution,” advised King, “we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. [We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society.](#)”

Freedom demands responsibility.

Freedom demands that we stop thinking as Democrats and Republicans and start thinking like human beings, or at the very least, Americans.

JFK was killed in 1963 for daring to challenge the Deep State.

King was killed in 1968 for daring to challenge the military industrial complex.

Image: Robert F. Kennedy giving his speech on the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (Licensed under Fair Use)



Robert F. Kennedy offered these remarks to a polarized nation in the wake of King’s assassination:

“In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. [Y]ou can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization...filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort ... to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love... [What we need in the United States is not division](#); what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black.”

Two months later, RFK was also killed by an assassin’s bullet.

Fifty-plus years later, we’re still being terrorized by assassins’ bullets, but what these madmen are really trying to kill is that dream of a world in which all Americans “[would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.](#)”

We haven’t dared to dream that dream in such a long time.

But imagine...

Imagine what this country would be like if Americans put aside their differences and dared to stand up—united—for freedom.

Imagine what this country would be like if Americans put aside their differences and dared to speak out—with one voice—against injustice.

Imagine what this country would be like if Americans put aside their differences and dared to push back—with the full force of our collective numbers—against government corruption and despotism.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), tyranny wouldn't stand a chance.

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