

United States: Buffalo killings reveal depth of white extremism

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Contents

- [Why East Buffalo?](#)
- [Washington Post poll](#)
- [Root cause](#)
- [Myth of mental illness](#)
- [Central lesson](#)

He was inspired by the racially-motivated massacre in New Zealand by right wing terrorist Brenton Tarrant in 2019 and white supremacists in the United States.

Federal officials said they are investigating the case as a racially-motivated hate crime.

Black people have known white terror for more than 400 years, which is growing since the rise of Trumpism and white nationalism. Millions of white people now falsely believe people of colour, and a multicultural society, are a threat to their “superior” way of life.

Why East Buffalo?

It was no accident that Gendron chose Buffalo’s East Side district for his attack. It is dense with descendants of the Great Migration: Black people who fled the South from the early 20th century to escape Jim Crow and find gainful employment.

More than six million Great Migrants who had moved north and west by 1970 were themselves descendants of enslaved people.

Black people in Buffalo and most US cities — with the help and encouragement of the federal government — have been displaced, cordoned off and forced to endure underinvestment and segregation.

Buffalo is one of the most segregated Black communities in the US.

According to the New York Times, Gendron chose the supermarket as the best spot for his attack after looking up predominantly Black ZIP codes.

He published a 180-page ‘manifesto’ on the internet before the massacre, describing himself as a white supremacist and a terrorist, and detailing his plans to kill Black people. Of the 13 people shot, 11 were Black.

In his manifesto, he implied that the mere presence of Black people was a threat to his future and that of other white people. He claimed each Black “replacer” costs each white taxpayer an average

of US \$700,000.

Washington Post poll

A new poll of Black Americans by the Washington Post reveals their fear of more white terrorism, and the expectation of little protection from the police and government.

Three-quarters of Black people surveyed were worried that they or someone they love will be physically attacked because of their race.

Buffalo resident Teeyada Cannon said: "This proved my theory that it's still out there. And it's not getting better, it's getting worse."

She said despite the conviction of police officer Derek Chauvin last year for the murder of George Floyd, she did not have hope that Black people were safe from attacks by the police or other Americans.

People surveyed saw the shooting as reflective of broader racism in the US.

A 70% majority thought at least half of all white Americans hold white supremacist beliefs, 75% said white supremacists are a "major threat" to Black people and 66% said that white supremacy is a bigger problem today than it was five years ago.

About 80% of Black people surveyed said police in their community treat Black people less fairly than white people, which grew to 88% when asked about police nationally.

Root cause

The cause of the Buffalo killings is the deep racism endemic in the US, rooted in slavery and the white justification of a false view of inferiority of Black people.

It takes the form of a new "white replacement theory" that originated with the Jim Crow segregation laws. The racist conspiracy theory claims that, globally, white people are being culturally and demographically replaced by non-white people.

Former President Donald Trump gave new life to racist replacement theory. He embraced white nationalists during his campaign and in the White House.

Racist violence steadily increased during his presidency and has continued since his ongoing effort to end President Joe Biden's presidency.

A white man with a history of antisemitic internet posts killed 11 worshippers inside a Pittsburgh synagogue in 2018, blaming Jews for allowing immigrant "invaders" into the US.

The next year, another white man shot and killed 23 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, angry about what he called "the Hispanic invasion of Texas". He told police afterwards he had sought to kill Mexicans.

Gendron said he planned to specifically kill Black people, because they came from a culture that sought to "ethnically replace my own people".

Myth of mental illness

Biden labelled Gendron's murders an act of "domestic terrorism" and talked of the need for more mental health funding. Yet Biden's main solutions are sympathy for the victims and more funding for the police.

Biden did not propose tackling extreme right wing groups' violence towards Black people and tightening gun laws.

Many politicians said the shooting was the act of a mentally-deranged person, but with no medical or scientific proof. In reality, the shooting was a premeditated act of violence by a supporter of white supremacy. It had nothing to do with mental illness, which has little to do with left or right politics.

Psychiatric studies show that people with mental illnesses are less likely to commit violence than those without.

If mental illness was responsible for political extremism and racism, including those espousing replacement theory, then a majority of Republicans and a minority of Democrats who agree with the false theory would be diagnosed with mental illness.

The claim of mental illness is used to downplay the influence of white extremism. It is a cop out and must be rejected.

Central lesson

In CounterPunch, Jeffrey St Clair pointed out the police treatment of Black people compared to white shooters.

Police murdered 12-year-old Tamir Rice, 17-year-old Laquan McDonald and 18-year-old Michael Brown within seconds of arriving on the scene, despite none of them being under suspicion of murder.

In contrast, white murderers Dylann Roof, Kyle Rittenhouse and Gendron were arrested peacefully by police following their shootings.

Gendron held his gun to his own neck after his murder spree. Two cops who confronted him did not shoot and instead talked him down. Why?

Black people are shot dead within seconds by police, even while sleeping, driving or walking down the street. The same cops later claim they feared for their lives.

The central lesson of the Buffalo massacre for Black people is a justifiable fear of extra-legal terror.

The answer to fighting white terrorism is building an independent movement, like the Black Lives Matter movement two years ago, and the women's rights movement today.

Change will not come from voting for capitalist politicians. Black people know it comes from lived experience, even if most will vote for a someone. Many will refuse to participate in electoral politics.

Creating a mass independent political movement remains a necessity.

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P.S.

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<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/united-states-buffalo-killings-reveal-depth-white-extremism>