

Why Racial Atrocities Are Possible

We live in a world that is abundant in polarization and opposition. In our day to day lives too often we look to our fellow man and question each other's motives, credibility, and actions. To a degree this is a beneficial model, but it becomes redundant and outdated when it becomes clear that we use these questions to differentiate ourselves and create opposites and barriers between each other. Humanity as a whole lives by a code of conduct, a social contract; these are agreements that supersede individual rights that we give up to co-exist with our fellow man. In order to get along with our neighbor we avoid pillaging, raping, stealing, and murder. However, we do not share this contract with everyone. Abraham Lincoln once said in the Gettysburg Address, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." However, he failed to mention that since the beginning of the United States Government that "equality" was only accessible to rich, white, land-owning males.

As Americans we are raised to believe that we are exceptional and morally superior compared to all the other countries in the world. We revel in our government and profess the same untruths that our founding fathers did. We proclaim that we are the sole inventors of liberty and justice without disclosing the fact that our nation was built upon the backs of slaves and working men. That for every leap and bound we make there is a darker more sinister history hiding underneath our advancement. This is evident in the burial of our history such as the Greenwood Massacre, the Red Summer, and the efforts of black servicemen. There is a long sustained effort in guarding the privileges of white americans. To preserve the "American Dream" our educators and government gloss over the truth. America's curriculum still fails to encompass the complexity of the early American government.

While most educators do include the fact that our founding fathers were racist. They fail to share an unexpurgated account of our founding fathers' history. There of course, is a certain level of shame that lives within white American minds. Not many like to look over their shoulder and face the crimes their ancestors committed. However, if we are to move towards a more progressive and practical society, past mistakes and beliefs must be fully acknowledged. Those who have become footnotes or a name in a list of casualties, must be honored. There are valuable lessons to be learned from the slave trade and the supression of black people.

To this day, many are still not clear on the emergence of "race." Dorothy Roberts asserts in her book Fatal Invention, "Race is not only interpreted according to invented rules, but, more important, race itself is an invented political grouping." This assertion can be traced back to Ancient Greece. Aristotle himself believed that those who were born in areas of extreme cold or extreme hot climates were: intellectually, physically, and morally inferior. He was also responsible for naming tribes in East Africa "Ethiopian" a label that originally meant "burnt faces." This is where the problem lies and begins to build traction. Aristotle's theory created a perfect environment for racism to grow and his core ingredients were: labels, hierarchical power structure, and supremacy.