

TRUTH IN LOVE

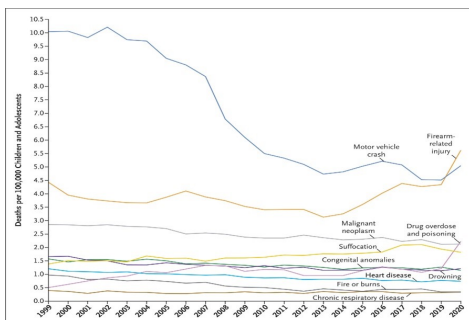
Deaths and Necropolitics

By Parris J. Baker
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Editor's note: Following is the last of a five-part series addressing a growing culture of incivility and contempt in the United States.

Firearms,^[1] people with firearms, and people who suffer with a mental illness while also possessing firearms are at the center of our national discussions on gun violence, mass killings, and school-related shootings. At the heart of this distilled debate between gun-control advocates and Second Amendment defenders is the legislative ease or inconvenience created to access firearms. For context, there isn't a magic bullet; no single solution that will fix this very complex problem.

Some of the prevailing common sense arguments from gun control advocates are: ban assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines, require background checks for all gun sales, and fund research on gun violence as a public health issue.^[2] The opinion of the NRA-ILA^[3] is that gun controls don't work, that gun controls overburden law-abiding citizens and these controls would significantly restrict their ability to buy, own, or use firearms. Most gun-owning advocates believe that greater attention should be devoted to the enforcement of existing laws for criminals who carry and use firearms in the commission of a crime and the reduction of serious mental illness.



The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Gun Violence Archive report that firearms kill more children and adolescents in the United States than any other cause of death. The United States has more guns and more gun-related deaths than any other country in the world. Over the last three years there have been more than 600 mass shootings (killings),^[4] nearly two per day. Nearly 124 people per day are killed due to a firearm-related incident.^[5]

In the United States we have serious gun violence issues, and we also have serious mental illness issues. These issues are, unfortunately, conflated. Mass

shootings are not linked to severe mental illness; suicide is. Approximately 54% (24,292) of the reported 45,222 gun-related deaths in 2020 were suicides.[6] The body politic of America has grappled and resisted for over two centuries with necropolitics. The necropolitical perspective “stands for organized destruction, for a sacrificial economy, the functioning of which requires, on the one hand, a generalized cheapening of the price of life, and on the other, a habituation to loss.”[7] The overarching determinant of necropolitics is the power certain people and systems have to assign value to life and, based on that ascription, decide who lives, who dies, and who is allowed to die. According to Mbembe, in a society in which one’s social value is determined by others who have sovereign power, all extant and future social bonds are extinguished. Creating real or perceived enemies (the others) rationalize and normalize the idea that power can be acquired, exerted, and justified for making life and death decisions regarding the lives of others.

From the inception of our democracy to our nation’s present political positions, the necropolitical struggle continues. From a racial perspective, the creation of slave plantations and indigenous peoples reservations, “separate but equal” racially segregated spaces, restricted environments designated by “for whites only” signage, the formation of racial covenants and redlining, and the procedure of gerrymandering provide vivid illustrations of the structural and institutional construction of necrospace where black, brown, and red bodies could live and die. The massacres in Rosewood, Florida and Tulsa, Oklahoma; visiting family in Money, Mississippi, purchasing Skittles in a Sanford, Florida gated community; jogging in a suburban neighborhood in Brunswick, Georgia; bird-watching in Central Park, New York, and accidentally going to the wrong address to pick up siblings in Kansas City, Missouri offer numerous examples where an individual or groups determined that black bodies were expendable, disposable, or unworthy to live.

Apostle Paul provides a timely warning: “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a substantial number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”[8] The necropolitical debates are as important now as they have ever been. That time has come!

Ideological zealots with life-time appointments and corruptible ethical codes, those who don black robes and darker secrets have been elected by constituents who have abandoned or replaced their conscious, morality and shame. Their purpose is to coercively control and reshape our society.

The cookie cutter method to achieve compliance is to introduce fear, threats of retribution, jail, and isolation, or just the act of calling you an “idiot!” Our nation has reached a tolerance for the pursuit of surfeited selfishness for avarice and sovereignty by tyrants, autocrats, and political bullies.

The choice: save our children or protect our right to more guns. Why is this such a difficult choice? We need to use our common sense.

[1] Firearm refers to a rifle, pistol, revolver, or handgun. A gun refers to any weapon used to shoot a projectile, such as a firearm, but include cannons, missiles, or mortars.

[2] Between 2004-2015, reprehensibly, gun violence in the U.S. was the least researched cause of mortality.

[3] Nation Rifle Association-Institute for Legislative Action. [Here](#).

[4] Mass shooting (killing), defined by the FBI, U.S. Department of Justice, is a single incident or event where three or more individuals are killed. This definition comes from the Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012.

[5] Center for Disease Control and Prevention. [Here](#).

[6] Center for Disease Control and Prevention. [Here](#). Gramlich, J. (February 3, 2022). What the data say about gun deaths in the U.S. *The Pew Research Center*. [Here](#).

[7] Achille, M. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 38.

[8] 2 Timothy 4: 3-4 New International Version.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Parris J. Baker is an Associate Professor at Gannon University, where he is the Social Work, Mortuary Science and Gerontology Program Director. An alumnus of Gannon, Baker received his graduate degree from Case Western Reserve University, Jack, Joseph, & Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and his doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work. Presently, Baker serves as the Senior Pastor of Believers International Worship Center, Inc. He is married and has five children.



Dr. Baker can be reached at: baker002@gannon.edu.

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