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Megan Zandsoltani
Seattle University

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On American soil, is the color of your skin a terrorist act?

Megan Zandsoltani, Staff Reporter

The killing of Black Americans in police custody has left communities of color wondering how terrorism is truly defined and who benefits from terrorism. Why are some cases labeled as “terrorist attacks” while others are labeled as “peaceful protests?” Although there are dictionary definitions on the subject, the law and how enforcement acts in America contradict each other.

The murder of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman who was shot and killed by Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) officers during a raid on her apartment, is just one of America’s racial reckonings on Black lives. Law enforcement believed her home was being used as a place to stash money and drugs, leading to a ‘no-knock’ warrant. In self-defense, Taylor’s boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired a shot that left one officer wounded.

Under federal law, the term domestic terrorism is defined as any “violent or criminal act(s) committed by individuals and/or groups stemming from domestic influences, such as political, religious, social, racial or environmental nature.”

In Taylor’s case, no charges were pressed against the officers until nationwide attention grew which led to thousands of Americans expressing their sorrow and frustration in the form of protests. Even then, only one officer was charged with wanton endangerment for firing into a neighbor’s apartment.

When someone is charged with wanton endangerment, they engage in conduct, which creates a substantial danger of death or serious physical injury to another person. Moreover, a person is convicted of a Class D felony, facing one to five years in prison.

In Taylor’s case, LMPD said Brett Hankison, the officer involved, “wantonly and blindly” fired into Taylor’s apartment, shooting 10 rounds. Shooting 10 rounds is not an act of blindness—it is murder. The police report shows Americans the charges brought in this case were from a white neighbor, not Taylor’s apartment. The irony of this case is based on the color of one’s skin.

Black America faces a genocide. Taylor’s story amounts to the disrespect and injustice of Black people killed by police brutality. Repeatedly, the system fails to support and treat Black people with the same dignity and respect as a white person would receive in the court of law.

In a system that is deeply rooted in racism and the promotion of only a select grouping of people, it is difficult to say that the United States has been anything but this due to its basic foundations.



Trump supporters marched into the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6 first-hand displaying what white privilege looks like on live television. Stealing and vandalizing Capitol property and carrying heavy weaponry, including guns, we would expect the police to have used aggressive force as they did during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. Instead, Trump supporters were caught smiling on camera with stolen furniture.

To define an act as terrorism, Americans should be able to identify and determine it as such on a scale that gives justice and equality no matter one's race, religion or gender. However, that's not the case. Communities of color are not asking police officers to shoot white people like they shoot Black people. They are asking enforcement to not shoot Black people based on the assumption of their skin color.

Former President Donald Trump's reaction towards the invasion of the Capitol was encouraged by a previous rally he held blocks away from where the riots would start. Addressing his rioters with a statement proclaiming his love was not just outlandish, but embarrassing.

In response to the attack on the Capitol, Trump did not shy away from expressing his appreciation for his supporters.

"I will say, the people that are following me are very passionate. They love this country, they want this country to be great again," Trump said.

On the other hand, Trump labels BLM protestors, who tend to be mostly Black and from other communities of color, as rioters and terrorists. Nonetheless, he describes them as a "symbol of hate" and their beliefs as "toxic propaganda".

If LMPD had introduced themselves at the footsteps of Taylor's home with judgement established on the basis of the situation not the color of her skin, her death would have looked different. Yet again, Black people in America can only dream for it to be that way.

BLM supporter Annie Reneau expressed her thoughts on gun rights advocates in this case.

"Where are the gun rights activists defending Breonna Taylor's boyfriend?" Reneau asked.

Time after time, Americans see the justice system explain the alienable right to bear arms and the right to shoot in self-defense when in reality the system only caters to white people. It is clear to see that the consequences one faces in the United States is dependent on the color of their skin.

While the legal definition of terrorism is vague, in America it does involve a person's race. If Americans are going to combat terrorism successfully, we need to first agree on who is affected by the term and who is not. The police, the justice system and everyone in between must be held accountable for their actions. If what happened on Jan. 6 is acceptable and BLM protests are not Trump and his supporters must be removed with arrests as if they were a person of color.

On American soil, a nation that claims to be the land of the free and home of the brave, American unity is a fantasy. When the color of one's skin determines life or death when they are pulled over by a police officer, walking from a convenient store, or playing in the park, there's no such thing as justice for all. In a country that is divided by the color of one's skin from their own leader only solidifies who benefits from the term "terrorism" in America. The power in whiteness creates political and societal acceptance, no matter the circumstance, which must be recognized.