

Political Violence and the United States

by

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# Chapter 1

## What is Political Violence

Political violence, according to Cindy A. Sousa, is “the deliberate use of power and force to achieve political goals.”(Sousa 1) There are different types of political violence. Sousa mentions that “that political violence is characterized by both physical and psychological acts aimed at injuring or intimidating populations. Examples include shootings or aerial bombardments; detentions; arrests and torture; and home demolitions.”(Sousa 2) Things like police brutality, acts of terrorism (state-wide and nationwide), rioting, and war are all acts of political violence. Political violence is a global phenomenon that has grown as time and people have evolved. In today’s world, people have become a bit more comfortable with expressing their political beliefs and views. Along with this comes people trying to impose their political beliefs and ideologies onto others. The message that I hope to get across within this project is to inform readers of what political violence is, where it comes from, who it comes from, and how it can affect us as citizens of the United States.

If political violence in the United States isn’t addressed properly, then people will continue to suffer, not just in the U.S., but possibly around the world, due to the effects that political violence has on people. Political violence has become some sort of norm, especially in the United States; it’s been around for years. Some might even say that it’s gotten to a point where people feel like they might have to watch what they say because they might not want to offend anyone or have

anyone take things the wrong way. The fact is that political violence can come in different forms. Within those forms, it can come from people that are supposed to protect and serve us, such as the police, or even people in higher positions of power like elected officials. The truth is that political violence has other underlying effects that not many people know about. People can suffer within themselves and even suffer from others due to the underlying effects of political violence. And believe it or not, these potential effects can change someone's life for the worse.

## Chapter 1.1 “The Who”

Now, the first question becomes “Who created political violence?” or “Who started it?”.

Well, the answer to that is, WE did. The citizens of the United States and our elected officials.

We are the creators of our own issue because we are the people who elect candidates for higher positions, and they are ordinary people just like you. Ordinary people with a sense of what they believe this country should be and stand for; an opinion. But what I want to discuss is who political violence affects. And the answer to that question is the US. The citizens of the United States. We created this problem, and believe it or not, we have enough power to try and fix the problem.

## Chapter 1.2 “The What”

When we talk about political violence, there are a few questions that come up. Two of which being “what causes political violence?” or “what's driving political violence in the U.S.?” These two questions are some of the most important because they allow us to gain some insight

into where political violence stems from. Let's talk about what causes political violence. As mentioned earlier, political violence is violence used to achieve some type of political goal. But in this case, I want to discuss what is driving people to express their political views through violence. Authors, Zaid Jilani and Jeremy Adam Smith speak about two individuals who helped further a study on what is possibly driving political violence in today's world. The two individuals that explain this are Dr. Lilliana Mason and Nathan Kalmoe. They express the main reasons as to what makes people express their political views with violence. They state that "While the association between political rhetoric and violence is not perfectly understood, researchers are starting to map the social and psychological forces that seem to be driving pugnaciousness between groups of Americans"(Mason and Kalmoe, 1). This is true in the sense that while there is no direct correlation between violence and people's political beliefs, there are things that are now being discovered that seem to be adding to correlations between politics and violence. In making this known, both Mason and Kalmoe begin to list a few things that constitute the problem.

The first on the list was aggression. Both Jilani and Smith talk about Dr. Mason's and Kalmoe's work and say "Mason and Kalmoe identified three degrees of violent attitudes: Some people hold views that rationalize harm towards political opponents, others express happiness toward their deaths, and still others endorse outright violence against them. Put together, these are the components of lethal partisanship." (Jilani and Smith, 2018) Now, in-depth, they then try to explain what might be perpetuating the three attributes mentioned above by stating the following..."Demographic categories such as gender, age, and education didn't matter. Contrary to what some liberals might expect, in these surveys, positive feelings towards President Trump

didn't predict more violent attitudes.”(Jilani and Smith, 2018). They go on to say “By far the biggest predictor of lethal partisanship across the board was having aggressiveness as a personality trait.”(Jilani and Smith, 2018). Aggression alone isn't good or bad; we all can become aggressive when we are approached with an immediate threat. But aggression, much like other things, has limits as well.

Going into the neurological aspect, both Jilani and Smith talk about the work that Mason and Kalmoe did from that side of the spectrum, and they wrote “In neurological studies, more aggressive people tend to show less activation of the default mode brain network, which is associated with empathy and emotion regulation, which in turn helps suppress aggressive impulses. The authors mention how psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman notes in *Scientific American*, “aggressive people are more likely to retaliate when treated unfairly by others, which is not necessarily a bad thing (“although they tend to care much less about whether *others* are treated unfairly”)(Jilani and Smith, 2018). In most cases, it's normal to act in aggressive ways. But now we look at how aggression can play a role in politics and how it can shape political outcomes.

Jilani and Smith quoted Kalmoe when he wrote “Politicians who are more antagonistic get more media attention and are more often elected than more agreeable politicians,” he writes. “In the general population, antagonistic people are more likely to distrust politics in general, to believe in conspiracy theories, and to support secessionist movements.” (Jilani and Smith, 2018) Kamloe is quoted again when he talks about a series of experiments that were published in 2014 and is quoted saying “that exposure to mildly violent political metaphors such as ‘fighting for our future’ increased general support for political violence among people with aggressive

personalities.”(Jilani and Smith, 2018). Aggression may be a personality trait that we all have and it’s something that we may not be able to get rid of. However, it does play a role when some social situations are considered to trigger aggression as opposed to other situations.

The next factor on the list was considered to be called Intense Partisan Identity. Mason and Kalmoe identify Intense Partisan Identity or Partisan Identity Strength to be how much being a Democrat or Republican means to the individual, and they both consider it to be one of the most important factors in endorsing violence. In a world where we are encouraged to vote and speak our minds and let our voices be heard, that sometimes ties back to our political party affiliation. In today’s world, you’re either a Democrat or Republican, and most of the time, the two parties don’t always agree. Jilani and Smith state “There are many studies—mostly from political science and sociology—showing that more Americans are using their political party affiliation as a source of meaning and social identity, with these identities linked to differences in “leisure activities, consumption, aesthetic taste, and personal morality,” as Daniel DellaPosta and colleagues write in their 2015 paper, “Why Do Liberals Drink Lattes?” (Jilani and Smith, 2018) and to make matters worse, Jilani and Smith point out the fact that “the Republican Party has become whiter in recent decades, while the Democratic Party has become more racially diverse—which could be intensifying party antagonism.”(Jilani and Smith, 2018). Now, the difference between the two parties is, that one party is going to want what's best for the government and everything political, and the other party is going to want what’s best for the country and its people. Both may think they have a common goal, but not everyone feels the same way, and now, someone’s political affiliation has become a form of expression and it allows people to discuss and express whatever politics they want to express freely.

Being that parties are becoming more diverse, it does sometimes pay a price. For example, both authors mention a study of survey data that a political scientist by the name of Diana Mutz, found that “nothing predicted support for Donald Trump more than a feeling of threatened status among white Christians—an insight ratified by several studies from Robb Willer at Stanford University and the Public Religion Research Institute.”(Jilani and Smith, 2018) This statement may be very biased but it does show correlation. White Christians became fearful of others who did not agree with their political or religious views, and chances are, those who didn’t agree with these white Christian individuals were people of color or people who have a religion that they believe in. What’s being implied is that it’s not just people having a difference of opinion when it comes to politics, but now that one’s political affiliation is part of who they are, they feel threatened when someone disagrees with their political party. Jilani and Smith mentioned that Mason and Kalmoe wrote “The relationship between ethnocentrism and violence is abundantly clear cross-nationally and historically,”(Jilani and Smith, 2018) and Jilani and Smith mention that “It could be that the problem isn’t partisanship, exactly—instead, the truly dangerous ingredient could be the racialization of party affiliation.” and this statement alone speaks volumes because in most cases, one thing has nothing to do with the other. In this case, race shouldn’t have anything to do with what one believes in politically. However, when someone holds prejudice towards someone else and that person looks different, then the situation is now amplified. Moreover, this is an underlying issue that a lot of people may overlook.

The next on the list was Anger, Contempt, and Disgust, which are some of the emotions that are sometimes tied to political violence. These are some of the emotions that came up when Milano and Smith mention a study that was done in 2015 called “*The Role of Intergroup*



*Emotions in Political Violence*,” and researchers tried to figure out which emotions can drive violence from one group to another. Jilani and Smith quoted the researchers when they said “amount of anger, contempt, and disgust expressed nonverbally by violent-group leaders correlated significantly only when they referenced the opponent outgroup; they did not correlate when the violent-group leaders referenced something other than their opponent outgroup,”(Jilani and Smith, 2018). Some may think that these emotions may tie into aggression, but sometimes, it goes much deeper, especially when it can be against a specific group of individuals.

Next on the list of what could be the reasoning behind what is driving political violence is Moralization and Moral Convergence. In 2015, there was a man by the name of Freddie Gray that had died in police custody. After the incident occurred, protests were held due to the situation and some of these protests even became violent. While this may not be in direct correlation to political violence and its definition, this event resulted in a study being done in 2018 on another potential driving point for political violence. In 2018, five researchers searched the popular social media platform Twitter to find tweets regarding the Baltimore protests. The purpose behind this was so they can investigate “moralizing” tweets, which are tweets that viewed the protests as a moral issue rather than a political disagreement. For example, a “moralizing” tweet might refer to the people as “disgusting”, “evil”, but in fact, Jilani and Smith did find a positive association between the number of moral tweets and the amount of violent protest when they find that co-author and University of Southern California Ph.D. student Joe Hoover wrote “The days in which there were violent protests, we saw that there was a lot more moral language being used,” (Jilani and Smith, 2018)and Jilani and Smith write this in their article. Both authors also mention that the research team ran another experiment using another

prominent protest marred by violence which was the far-right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017. Jilani and Smith mention that respondents were asked to what extent they thought protesting against the far-right demonstrators was a moral issue. They were then asked how acceptable it was to use violence against these far-right activists and what they found was that people were more likely to embrace violence the more they saw it as a moral issue. Both authors also mention that the research time found that “moralization predicted violence only when participants perceived that they shared their moralized attitudes with others.” In other words, when it comes to violence, there is correlation and validation along with safety in numbers.

Researchers deemed the phenomenon of “moral convergence” to be when many people come together around a strong idea of what’s right and what’s wrong. They wrote the “risk of violent protest, in other words, may not be simply a function of moralization, but also the perception that others agree with one’s moral position, which can strongly be influenced by social media dynamics,” (Jilani and Smith, 2018).

Last on the list was Group Leadership. When it comes to violence and where violence is directed, leadership plays a big role. Multiple studies show that when leaders engage in violent acts or rhetoric, their followers follow as well. As well as when leaders preach calmness, their followers follow as well. Research has also shown what the power of words can do and how they can impact behavior and beliefs. Jilani and Smith provided the example of when there was a study done in 2017 that found “frequent and repetitive exposure to hate speech leads to desensitization to this form of verbal violence and subsequently to lower evaluations of the victims and greater distancing, thus increasing outgroup prejudice.” (Jilani and Smith, 2018) Part of the study also had participants be surveyed for how often they experienced hate speech against

refugees, and they found those who were exposed to hate speech were more prejudiced towards the group and were more accepting of restrictive immigration policy. So just like people have the power to direct anger and hate within their speech, there should be someone that can direct peace and calmness within their words as well.

This list just goes to show that political violence isn't just people fighting and screaming at one another based on their political affiliation. It goes much deeper and this list was able to provide the context which some people may not see. Things like aggression and disgust are basic, yet familiar, in the sense of what we see when we encounter acts of violence occurring. But Jilani and Smith were able to talk about how one's political affiliation or standpoints can be a root cause behind political violence or even something as such group leadership, which is something that people may forget about. Thanks to the work that Jilani and Smith did, as well as Mason and Kalmoe, we may now have a clearer sense of what constitutes political violence.

## Chapter 1.3 “The When”

Political violence doesn't have a specific time or place. There's no date on a calendar that says “Political Violence Day”. But there are times when we see political violence occurring and even hear political talk more at one time than another. And as far as when political violence can occur, it can happen at any time, but when we hear and see politics take a big toll is around election years. When it is time to elect a new official, people, especially the youth, are pushed to express their political affiliation and beliefs by voting. And around this time is when people try to have political conversations. Political debates and candidates are broadcasted all over social media and the news so it's very hard to get away from politics at certain times during the year,

especially around election year. Aside from this, there have been times when political violence has been very present in today's society and it has taken a turn for the worse.

For example, a man by the name of George Floyd was killed on May 25th, 2020 due to a police officer kneeling on his neck for approximately 9 and a half minutes. The death of George Floyd drew widespread outrage across the nation after a video circulated of Officer Derek Chauvin pressing his knee on Floyd's neck as he gasped for air. George Floyd's death sparked nationwide protests against police brutality and had a massive impact on things from public monuments to sports teams' names. However, during these protests, law enforcement was criticized for how they had responded to these protests. Some were peaceful, but according to The New York Times, some were peaceful with force "by spraying tear gas and shooting rubber bullets at protesters, and conducting mass arrests." (Tim Arango, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Audra D. S. Burch, Maria Cramer, John Eligon, Manny Fernandez, Christine Hauser, Neil MacFarquhar, Kwame Opam, Derrick Bryson Taylor, Lucy Tompkins and Neil Vigdor, Times, 2022). On account of the police, the situation was not handled correctly. The realization is that it was handled inappropriately by the people that are sworn to "protect and serve" us. This is just one of the times when violence has occurred at the hands of those who are sworn to represent us.

## Chapter 1.4 "The Where"

Political violence doesn't have any particular time and place. It can happen almost anywhere. The most prominent place where this type of violence is occurring is in our backyard. Political violence isn't new; it's been around for as long as we can remember. But it has now become more prominent due to all that is occurring in the world. People dying at the hands of the

police, riots, protests, et cetera; are all things that occur a day to day but it hasn't been more prominent than how it has been over the past 3 years. Especially after what happened to George Floyd, there were numerous protests and riots of people trying to voice their emotions on something that has impacted not just one person, but millions of people. There's no one specific place where political violence or violence in general but while the George Floyd incident was still present, there were a lot of protests being held in places like Minneapolis, which is where George Floyd tragically lost his life. Other cities like Brooklyn and Los Angeles, among other cities, held their rallies and got together in hopes of letting their voices be heard.

## Chapter 1.5 “The Why”

This now leads me to one of our last points, which is “why?”. Why is political violence occurring and why does it still occur? These are questions that remain unanswered. While there are significant and justified reasoning behind why political violence may be occurring, it doesn't excuse the fact that we have to be the ones to deal with what comes along with political violence. Why do we have to be the ones to suffer at the hand of political violence? This will probably be a question that goes unanswered for a very long time.

## Chapter 1.6 “The How”

Earlier, we spoke about what causes political violence and what's the potential reasoning behind political violence, but we didn't mention how political violence can affect us. It's still an ongoing question in need of answering, but there are cases where political violence can get the better of some people. Especially those with possible underlying health conditions. We talk about

the effects that political violence can have on us, physically and emotionally, but one aspect we don't talk about enough is how political violence can affect us mentally.

For example, Cindy A. Sousa dives into political violence and the correlations it can have to mental health. The research shows how political violence can weigh on those who have mental health issues such as PTSD, depression, and/or anxiety. Now, although there may be limited scholarship between political violence and mental health, Sousa tries to express her narrative review and show how it uses "a multi-level, social, ecological framework and enhances current knowledge about the ways that political violence affects health" (1) Sousa mentions that over 50 studies were analyzed and used to develop a model that demonstrates how political violence can threaten the three inner-related levels of functioning. The three levels that were focused on were Individual Functioning in relationship to their Environment, Community functioning and Social Fabric, and Governmental Functioning and Delivery of Services to Populations.

When talking about individuals functioning in the individuals' environment, according to Sousa, "Political violence undermines individuals' ability to engage with, and have confidence in, social and political life by contributing to individuals' isolation and withdrawal from society; deteriorating individuals' trust in others, justice, and government entities and democracy itself; and lessening individuals' abilities or willingness to engage in political activities." (Sousa, 2013, pg. 169-97) which makes sense because a lot of people would rather keep their political views and opinions to themselves due to how they may be perceived amongst people around them. Sousa also goes on to mention how things like Distrust, Isolation, and Withdrawals are results of political violence as well. Although we are not psychologists, studies are being done on how political violence does have other effects that are more just physical and emotional.

When talking about community functioning, communities are based on who and what you know. Communities are defined by connections that are made, and they are centered around a physical location that shares the same beliefs and has some of the same relationships. When political violence is at a high point, the things that make up our communities, like relationships and beliefs, begin to deteriorate. Sousa backs this by saying “Political violence not only lessens individuals’ abilities to act within their communities, but it also undermines the social foundations of a society, rupturing social fabric, and often engendering collective senses of fear” (Sousa, 2013, pg. 169-97). She references the studies that were done and one of the studies tells how political violence deteriorates communities and the social fabric within those communities by “: (1) damaging community as a shared physical location of people, culture and identity through mass killings and displacement, destruction of meaningful places, and control of space and movement and (2) changing the overall climate and functioning of communities through the installation of collective fear and terror, destruction of networks, and diminishment of community organizing activities.” (Sousa, 2013, pg. 169-97).

Now, we need to discuss Political Violence and Government Functioning. Sousa mentions how we depend on governmental structures to provide opportunities so we can participate and fulfill basic requirements of health and well-being by mentioning things like emergency response, sanitation, public health, and even schooling. Sousa continues by saying “Political violence is intimately related to several areas of governance, including leadership, freedom of the press, and accountability by governments for atrocities”(Sousa 5) followed by “literature suggests that political violence deteriorates the functioning of governments and its consequent ability to support the populace in three ways: (1) by deteriorating government

systems necessary for daily living, (2) by weakening the public sector, and (3) by destroying democratic processes.”(Sousa, 2013, pg. 169-97). These are just some of the areas in which political violence has a significant effect from a governmental aspect. When political violence interferes with daily life and deteriorates certain areas of life, that’s when it becomes a big issue.

The “how” aspect is something that many people may tend to bypass. We see things on the news and in the media that could be considered political violence and the one aspect of the situation that may be skipped over is how political violence can affect those who experience it and go through it on daily political violence isn’t something that i the world, “The Who”, “The What”, “The When”, “The Where”, “The Why”, and “The How” are major topics of conversation when the subject of political violence comes about. All that has been mentioned above is just scratching the surface on the topic.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Examples of Political Violence**

Political violence has been around for a very long time. Being that it has been around for so long and it isn’t new to society, there have been times when political violence has been very blatant and in our face. As mentioned above, acts of terrorism are a form of political violence, alongside the motivations. Some of these acts have led to a massive change in our nation’s history. From Black Church Bombings to 9/11, there have been times when political violence has put its name in history books and it hasn’t been for the best. There have been certain points in our nation’s history that have now been considered to be anniversary dates of such horrible



incidents because these incidents put such a stamp on history and have changed people's lives. These moments in history should never go unnoticed.

## Chapter 2.1 “January 6th, 2021”

For now, let's keep things fairly recent. 2020 was a very tough year for most individuals. Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic taking such a massive toll on all our lives with mandates, rules, and regulations being put into effect left and right. But 2020 was an important year for a few things. One was that it was an Election Year. 2020's election year was historic for a few reasons. One is that we got to witness the first female vice president of the United States Kamala Harris, who is not only a woman but a black woman as well. And it was a year where the Youth vote seemed to have had more value in this primary election as opposed to the value it had in the past. In a nutshell, Joe Biden has one the election, and Donald Trump wasn't too happy about it being that he lost to Biden himself.

After the elections were over and everything had settled down for a bit, it was time to wait for President Biden to be inaugurated in January of 2021. At the beginning of the month, something catastrophic occurred.

On January 6th, 2021, A session was set to take place in the U.S. Capitol to validate and certify Joe Biden's electoral vote win. As this was set to occur, thousands of Donald Trump supporters gathered in front of the White House to hear Donald Trump speak that same afternoon. What ended up happening during this rally was Donald Trump trying to influence his supporters to help justify his reasoning to still be the President of the United States. According to a writer at NPR.org, Kat Lonsdorf, Trump made remarks such as "We're going to the Capitol," he

says. "We're going to try and give them [Republicans] the kind of pride and boldness that they need to take back our country."(Lonsdorf, 2022). He even tried influencing Mike Pence, who was the Vice President under Trump's term in office, by saying "Mike Pence, I hope you're going to stand up for the good of our Constitution and the good of our country," Trump says. "And if you're not, I'm going to be very disappointed in you."(Lonsdorf, 2022).

After these remarks were made, thousands of Trump supporters took it upon themselves to go to the U.S. Capitol and side with their leader. These people marched down to the Capitol building and began clashing with police trying to get their way into the building. They eventually got through police barricades and were able to get into the building. Massive vandalism occurred with windows being broken, doors being smashed, and even looting occurred. As well as people ransacking congressional offices as well. While this was going on, both the Senate and the House of Representatives were in the middle of a debate as far as a Republican objection to the electoral votes from Arizona. That had to be adjourned due to what was occurring. People were posing for pictures, vandalizing, and destroying what was left of the Capitol building. All because a man felt that he should have still been in a seat that was won by someone else.

A week later, Trump was impeached for incitement of insurrection. Trump had been impeached in the past, but this time, 10 House Republicans joined Democrats in favor of Trump being impeached. Trump then was found not guilty during the trial that was held by the Senate, even though 7 Republican voters joined Democrats in favor of convicting him.

This just goes to show how a person's words and beliefs can influence others for good or bad. Words can be just as strong and violent as physicality can be, and in this case, Trump tried

to use the influence he had on his supporters to try and get his way so he can try and remain President of the United States.

## Chapter 2.2 “The KKK”

Let's dive back into history for a bit. A long time ago, there was a group that went by the Ku Klux Klan, also known as the KKK. The KKK was founded in the 19th century, in 1865, and the group extended to multiple southern states by 1870. And according to editors at History.com, the group became a “vehicle for white southern resistance to the Republican Party's Reconstruction-era policies aimed at establishing political and economic equality for Black Americans.”(History, 2009). Later on, in the 1860s, Black participation in public life, particularly in the south, was one of the most radical aspects as part of the reconstruction period at the time. And the reason for this was because of the fact that black people won elections to southern state governments and to the U.S. Congress as well. At this point, the KKK dedicated themselves to perpetuating violence against Republican leaders and voters, who happen to be white and black, to try and reverse the policies of “Radical Reconstruction” and restore white supremacy in the southern parts of the U.S.

In 1871, Ulysses S. Grant used the expansion of federal authority to help crush KKK activity in the south. Such as South Carolina and other areas of southern-outraged democrats and this even had republicans in areas become alarmed on what was going on. During this time, and going forward, white supremacy reasserted its hold on the south as support of the reconstruction diminished. And by the time 1876 came around, Democratic rule was in full effect one more.

Now, we get to the 1900s, specifically 1915, when the KKK was revived by white Protestant natives near Atlanta, Georgia. This revival of the KKK was not only anti-black, but they were against Roman Catholics, Jews, Foreigners, and organized labor. And according to the editors at History.com, this was fueled by “growing hostility to the surge in immigration that America experienced in the early 20th century along with fears of communist revolution akin to the Bolshevik triumph in Russia in 1917.”(History, 2009).

Now, the Great Depression helped deplete the number of members that tried to be a part of the Klan, and the Klan was disbanded temporarily by the year 1944. Then the civil rights movement that occurred in the 60s sparked up Klan activity once more with activities such as bombings, beat downs, and even shootings occurring towards the black community which is what we will be talking about next.

## Chapter 2.3 “Black Church Bombings”

There were multiple black church bombings that occurred while the KKK was at its peak. But the one that is spoken about the most is the bombing that occurred in Birmingham, Alabama. This church was one with a predominantly black congregation and this church served as a meeting area for civil rights leaders. On September 15th, 1963, four young girls were killed and many other people were injured. The level of outrage and hurt that came with the incident and the violence between protestors and police helped draw attention to what happened to the rights that African-Americans fought so hard to try and gain.

The city of Birmingham was first founded in 1871, which is a couple of years after the KKK was founded and around the same time where the KKK began to expand. Birmingham

became Alabama's most important industrial and commercial center and that happened at a very rapid pace. But once the 1960s began to roll around, Birmingham, Alabama became one of America's most racially discriminatory and segregated cities. People who had some political status in Alabama at the time, such as George Wallace, who was the Governor of Alabama, and even the police commissioner of Birmingham, Eugene Connor, were people who didn't help attribute to the cause of desegregation in Alabama. These men were in favor of the brutality and segregation still being around as a whole, and at this time, the KKK was in full effect for the second time since they had been founded. At this time, this was the strongest and most violent we had ever seen the KKK.

The reason why the 16th Street Baptist Church may have been a target is that, according to the editors at History.com is because "Many of the civil rights protest marches that took place in Birmingham during the 1960s began at the steps of the 16th Street Baptist Church, which had long been a significant religious center for the city's Black population and a routine meeting place for civil rights organizers like Martin Luther King Jr."(History, 2010) and with this happening, the KKK would routinely call in bomb threats to disturb civil rights meetings along with services that were going on at the church. But on the 15th of September in 1963, a threat became a reality. 4 dead, many injured.

The aftermath of the bombing led to thousands of angry black protestors coming together at the scene of the bombing. Not only were they there mourning the loss of 4 little girls and devastated for the lives of others that the bombing affected, but they wanted to make a statement. Shortly after, Governor Wallace sent down police to break up the protests that had been

occurring in front of the church. Soon after, violence ensued throughout the city, many were arrested, and two black were men killed, one of which occurred at the hands of the police.

Dr. King later then spoke to nearly 8,000 people across 3 services that were held for the little girls that died in the bombings. The family of the fourth girl held a smaller service in private. But this then began fueling public outrage that had now gone nationwide.

Although white supremacists had already been suspected of the bombing, editors at History.com said “repeated calls for the perpetrators to be brought to justice went unanswered for more than a decade. It was later revealed that the FBI had information concerning the identity of the bombers by 1965 and did nothing.”(History, 2010) For a tragic event to occur and not one thing to be done about it, especially by those who are supposed to be the ones to help us, is not only unprofessional, but it's clear that there was a different agenda behind not helping. And the agenda was that J. Edgar Hoover, who was the head of the FBI at this time, was not in favor of the civil rights movement. So now, in today's world where we have more rights and segregation isn't as volatile and pronounced as it once was, why should we still have to deal with people who are supposed to protect us and support us turning their backs on us?

## Chapter 2.4 “9/11”

Now, we talk about a part of history that has affected everyone in our nation's history, especially those who live in New York. On September 11th, 2001, on a beautiful day, it seemed like any other day. People making their way to work, and everyone just going on with their day. At approximately 8:45 A.M, an American Airlines jet loaded with 20,000 gallons of jet fuel crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in the heart of New York City. The

impact of the crash left a burning gaping hole in the building that instantly killed hundreds of people and left hundreds of others trapped on the upper levels of the building, leaving them struggling to escape.

Evacuation procedures began in both buildings and as this was occurring, television cameras broadcasted the devastation that was occurring. At first, to some this seemed to be a freak accident, but to others, it was something much greater than that. Approximately 18 minutes after the first plane crashed, a second plane made a sharp turn into the South Tower of the World Trade Center, leaving others trapped as well. With both collisions, it led to massive explosions that showered burning debris over surrounding buildings in the vicinity and spilled onto the streets. With all that went on, it was evident that America was under attack.

With everything going on in New York, a plane hovered over Washington, D.C., and at around 9:45 A.M, the plane crashed into the military headquarters of the Pentagon. The jet fuel caused a fire that led to a portion of a concrete building collapsing, which happened to be the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense. This led to 125 military personnel and civilians being killed in the Pentagon, along with 64 that were on the plane. Right after this happened, back in New York, the South Tower building collapsed 15 minutes after the attacks on the Pentagon, leaving behind a trail of dust and smoke.

These structures were built to withstand massive winds and conventional fires, but they couldn't withstand the monstrosities that occurred on September 11th. Shortly after the South Tower collapsed, the North Tower suffered the same fate. Only 6 people survived at the time of both towers collapsing and almost 10,000 others were treated for injuries, many of which were severe.

The people that decided to attack the U.S. on 9/11 were Islamic terrorists from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. To quote the editors at History.com, “reportedly financed by the al Qaeda terrorist organization of Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden, they were allegedly acting in retaliation for America’s support of Israel, its involvement in the Persian Gulf War, and its continued military presence in the Middle East.”(History, Feb. 2010). This attack was something that was calculated and planned because the editors mention that “Some of the terrorists had lived in the United States for more than a year and had taken flying lessons at American commercial flight schools. Others had slipped into the country in the months before September 11 and acted as the “muscle” in the operation.”(History, Feb. 2010). This day was a very hard and traumatic day for the entire country. And after the worst of the attacks were over, America responded.

George W. Bush, who was the President at this time, had been in Florida at the time the attacks had happened and had been moving around the country and due to safety and security concerns, he made his way back to the White House. Later that night, he delivered a televised message to the entire nation. And shortly after the attacks of 9/11, the U.S. declared Operation Enduring Freedom, which editors at History.com say was “the American-led international effort to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and destroy Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network based there”(History, Feb. 2010) and that began on October 7th. And within two months of the operation beginning, U.S. Forces were able to remove the Taliban from operational power. The war would continue however and U.S. and Coalition forces attempted to dismantle an insurgency campaign based in Pakistan that would be ignited by the Taliban.



It would be a long time until we were able to track down the mastermind behind this horrific attack. Osama bin Laden remained at large for a while up until May 2nd, 2011, when he was tracked down and killed by U.S. Forces at a hideout in Pakistan. Former President Barack Obama had declared bin Laden terminated and in June 2011, began large-scale troop withdrawals from Afghanistan. It would take up until August of 2021 for all troops to return home.

9/11 had a large impact on the country and on the world. Many lives were lost. Vigils and flower tributes were made, and even the names of the thousands of lost lives were engraved in stone to remember all the people impacted by this tragic attack. 9/11 was a day that will never be forgotten in our nation's history.

Events like 9/11, the January 6th Riots, the war on Ukraine, et cetera; are all based upon one thing, Power. People trying to gain power and achieve the goal of being better than the next person. These events, along with others, have left scars on us and our country. These events have shaped our country for what it is. For better, but believe it or not, for worse at times as well. Some of these acts have been ways to try and get the other person down so that person can be brought up. Some of these attacks have been perpetrated by certain individuals so power and order can be restored to how they see fit. And unfortunately, we've all been impacted by some form of political violence. Whether it be police brutality, terrorism, or war, we've all been impacted in some way and events like 9/11 and the War on Ukraine have cost the lives of millions of people. So where does it end?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Political Violence Today**

We talked about what political violence is, how it occurs, and why it occurs, and we dived back into history to shed light on former acts of political violence. But what about the things that are happening today? What about the things that happen on a day-to-day basis? What about the people that have to experience political violence in their own neighborhoods or at work? What about political violence that is shown on social media or on the news? These are questions that occasionally go unanswered, yet they can affect everybody up until they are answered.

## Chapter 3.1 “Political Violence in the Workplace”

Political violence is something that doesn't have many limits. When it comes to the workplace, political discussions and debates can take place and can lead to severe results, such as physical altercations. Adam Jacobson of Risk Management Magazine, speaks on political violence and how it can defuse political conflict in the workplace and as of February 1st, 2021, he wrote “Although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced employees to work from home, limiting the chances of altercations in the office, even less intense incidents among staff can impact employee morale, teamwork, and productivity.”(Jacobson, 2022) and follows up by saying “And with the escalating tensions around the pandemic, the U.S. presidential election and subsequent events like the January 6 riot and invasion of the U.S. Capitol, these incidents may pose a bigger risk to office cohesion and productivity.”(Jacobson, 2022) Now, although this article was written over a year ago, it is still fairly relevant today because politics is always a topic of conversation and we are still going through the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this article being written,

tensions were pretty high enough to where Jacobson felt the need to mention how the presidential election of 2020 affected people in their work environment.

Him mentioning this, he mentions that in November of 2020, The Pew Research Center reported that “supporters of Joe Biden and Donald Trump differed significantly on which issues they thought were important. For example, 82% of Biden supporters ranked the COVID-19 pandemic as “very important” to their presidential election vote, compared with just 24% of Trump supporters. This also extends to issues like health care (82% and 44%, respectively) and climate change (68% and 11%). Perhaps most illustrative of this divide: when asked about the other candidate’s backers, 80% of Biden supporters and 77% of Trump supporters said that they not only had “different priorities when it comes to politics, but we fundamentally disagree about core American values.”(Jacobson/Pew Research Center 2). There has been research that has been done that shows how politics have affected people working with one another in their respected working environments.

With all the bad that can come from political disagreements in the workplace, some good can come out of it at the same time. Jacobson mentions the fact that employers and employees have a responsibility and an incentive to create a safe, and comfortable working environment for one another. And he mentions that “In an effort to improve workplace cohesion, some employers go beyond setting and reinforcing workplace conduct standards by training their workers to discuss controversial topics in constructive and meaningful ways.”(Jacobson, 2022) With certain protocols that can potentially be put in play, it can limit the number of workplace confrontations that come about when political discussions take place

Political Violence in the workplace is something that can affect employees along with employers due to everyone having their own political opinions and affiliation. But it's one thing to have your own opinions and views and not let them get in the way of everyday life. And then it's another thing when your political views get in the way of you doing your job to your fullest potential. One's political views and opinions should not interfere with the working environment and relationships amongst coworkers. And that goes to show that Political Violence has no limitations. Not even in the workplace.

## Chapter 3.2 “Political Violence in the Media”

We live in an age where the internet and technology are everything. People use it every day as a way to communicate, a way to learn, and even as a way to make a living. In today's world, everything is broadcasted and filmed even when we don't notice it. The media has become a social phenomenon that has impacted this generation and many others, and it's become part of everyone's day-to-day life. With this, comes everything being publicly posted and broadcasted, and with all these different media outlets, things are posted and exposed on and for a bunch of different reasons and platforms. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram, and other apps that most of this generation uses today, have a way of spreading news and spreading it fast. News media outlets like CNN and FOX NEWS do the same. When something is of such a high magnitude, the media has its way of releasing news in seconds, even things that we may not be allowed to know.

Incidents like the George Floyd incident took the media by storm. Especially in an era where everything is videotaped. And because something like that was posted on a public media

outlet, it became public knowledge to the world. After the incident occurred, everyone had something to say. And even though things like this date back many years, people feel comfortable enough addressing political issues through social media. Even at times when issues have become sensitive, the media makes things hard to get away from due to the media having so much power, and the level of accessibility that the media allows is far greater than any other. The power that the media has when it comes to influencing and having people believe certain things are true is part of the reason why the internet and the media can be dangerous things. We see people doing things and acting out in their way and some people believe it to be the right thing just because it's "verified" or because of the number of likes it gets and so on. Elected officials even use the media to help forward their campaigns, due to the power that the media can help bring them. That's how strong the media can be.

The media is powerful and it does have its benefits, but when one takes the media and tries to involve politics and involve politics or political issues for the wrong reasons, that's when the media is now being used as a weapon rather than a social tool. The January 6th riots were broadcasted. 9/11 was broadcasted. George Floyd's death was filmed, Osama bin Laden sent encrypted messages via recording and it made it to the media. These are a culmination of things that have made it to the media and have put us in a state of unrest and one time or another. Although it may be impossible to avoid, politics and political violence should not correlate with the media, and we should not be influenced via the media

## **Chapter 4**

### **The interviews**

I had the honor and the privilege of interviewing a few people to get their views on what political violence is and if they have ever experienced political violence. These subjects have had a role in government or have had a job related to the government in some way, shape, or form. These interviews allow us, readers, to gain perspective from those who may have experienced political violence personally, or have been witnesses to it. I was able to sit down with a current U.S. Army soldier and a former correction officer and hear their voice and let their opinions be shared.

## Chapter 4.1 “Interview 1”

For our first interview, we sit down with Specialist Urbaez and let her voice be heard from a soldier’s perspective and the perspective of a woman.

Me: “What do you think Political violence is?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Political violence is caused by those in power in our government system.*

*Political violence is when people use violence towards others to make a point in our government system.”*

Me: “Have you ever experienced political violence and in what form?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I haven't personally experienced it but I've seen it. I've seen it like in the news, in the form of police brutality. As a person who is in the military, I might not have experienced this personally, but I have seen things that might be considered to be political*

*violence. For example, higher-ups are considered to be more powerful than regular soldiers. And sometimes they make certain decisions that can affect other soldiers.”*

Me: “Why do you think Political violence comes about?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Political violence occurs because people let the power that they possess go to their heads and they decide to abuse that power. For example, Police officers. Why do they feel entitled to hit someone when all they have to do is handcuff them? It’s not fair that just because they are wearing a uniform and because they have a badge they can abuse the power that they feel is given to them. It makes me feel unsafe. It makes me feel like I can't trust anyone who works for the government.”*

Me: “How do you think Political violence can change in this country?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I feel like I would ask the citizens of this country what they feel about political violence and what they have experienced pertaining to political violence and use that to help rid them of their fears and concerns when it comes to political violence in this country.”*

Me: “From a civilian standpoint, How does political violence affect you as opposed to the soldier standpoint?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“From the civilian standpoint, I’m seen as a regular person. On top of that, I’m also a female so I might be seen as an easy target. But on the other hand, as a soldier, I’m viewed with more respect because of the uniform that I wear.”*

Me: “How does it make you feel that you might only be respected as a soldier and not as a civilian?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“It makes me feel like this uniform is something I need to wear on a regular basis just so I can have respect as a regular civilian and I don’t think it’s fair that the uniform is supposed to replace the respect I’m entitled to as a regular civilian.”*

Me: “Do you feel cheated in that sense?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Yes because why should I have handed my life away to the military and the only thing that’s giving me respect is my uniform.”*

Me: “With our new president in office, do you hope for progress and hopefully change within the next four years with Joe Biden as our president?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I don’t think political violence will change because it’s been going on for years now and I don’t believe that just because we have a new president, that this will all go away. I also feel that the president can only do so much to stop or minimize the issue because, at the end of the day, he’s not the one who’s facilitating training and seeing what some of these higher-ups are doing.”*

Me: “Now we talked about your views on Political violence from a soldier's perspective. Now, tell me how you view political violence from a civilian or citizen standpoint.”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I feel like it’s the same. I am someone who wasn’t born here. I’m currently applying for citizenship myself. I do have a Visa and Green card. Yet I have a great opportunity*



*and the privilege of working for the United States military and being that I came here from DR, I still realize that I can be a victim of political violence at any time.”*

Me: “I’m informed that as a career, you want to be an FBI Agent. If you do become an FBI Agent, Do you think you can make change, and how so?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Well, I do feel like I can make change because as a person who has been seeing the way some people abuse their power, as someone who will eventually be in a position of power, I feel like I can make a difference in a positive way and use my power for good and not bad.”*

Me: “In this society, being a woman of color is kind of like holding a double-edged sword. So as an FBI Agent, how do you plan on making that change and making history as a woman of color?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I feel like I can make a change by protecting those that are viewed as a target. For example, being that I would first have to be a police officer, I feel like I will take that time to see and understand why police officers act the way they do sometimes, but instead of doing the same, I’m going to stand up for myself and my society. What I mean by this, is if I’m partnered with someone who may not share the same views that I do when it comes to police brutality or political violence in general, and we are encountered with a situation in which the person feels the use of force is necessary, I would intervene and deescalate the situation from going downhill.”*

Me: “We recently just got the verdict on the trial of the man who killed George Floyd, Derek Chauvin. Given what you know about the tragic event, do you feel justice was served?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Uhhhh that’s a really interesting question. But my answer is yes. I do believe justice is being served not to the fullest just yet but there are things happening.”*

Me: “What do you consider justice being served to the fullest?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Life sentence. Or the death penalty. Because no one has the right to take someone's life without a valid reason. They shouldn't have taken their lives away.”*

Me: “Well we don’t know what he’s being sentenced to just yet, but I do agree with what you’re saying. I’m the type of individual who believes that no one should take someone else’s life and if they do, they deserve the harshest of penalties.”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Exactly”*

Me: “But knowing that a cop like this is off the street, and most likely off the force, do you see room for other cops to be treated the same way if they decide to go the route that Derek Chauvin did?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Well, I believe that no officer should follow those steps, but if it does happen they should be treated as what they are.”*

Me: “Which is?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Murderers”*

Me: “Okay that’s fair enough. I do want to touch on the topic of immigration though. And I promise to tread very lightly. Now I know that sometimes, people who are immigrants come here to find a new life and begin a new journey. Some people feel that it isn’t fair or view it as wrong and have negative opinions towards immigrants. What do you say to those people who view immigrants in a negative light?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“That we are humans and have feelings as well. We don't do anything wrong other than come here and work as hard or even harder than those who were born here. I might not be from the United States but I for sure make a status for myself, by this I mean I try to better myself not to meet the standards that many want me to meet but those that I set for myself. And honestly whoever has something to say about immigrants should analyze their lives. Because they aren't special. We are all humans!! All the same. A paper shouldn't categorize me.”*

Me: “It’s interesting that you say that because, technically it is illegal to come to another country and try to live here without any papers or anything like that, but to me, I feel like if you’re an honest person, if you are a person that wants to live a normal life and work and have a family and live the “American Dream”, then you should be able to do that and not be viewed as a criminal. On the flip side, there are people who come to this country, hide, cause crime, and don’t do anything very positive. Then I feel circumstances might be different in having to handle someone like that.”

Specialist Urbaez: *“Yea I see what you're trying to say but I believe people deserve second chances. Now by this, I don't mean that if you're here not being productive and you're just*

*committing crimes then they shouldn't be here. They should be the first ones to be sent back instead of those that are actually working hard for their family. Now let me ask you this, let's say there's a hard-working family and one of their kids is a criminal do u believe he deserves to get sent back? Because technically speaking his family is contributing to this country."*

Me: "You see, I feel like people should at least get a chance and try to gain citizenship or some type of solace. I wouldn't want my child to be ripped away from me. I would do everything humanly possible to not only gain citizenship for my child, but I'd make sure he doesn't have to experience what millions of other people experience when trying to gain citizenship. I feel this country, for as great as it is, has its faults. Our country is not perfect by any means. Which in this case means that certain things should change and certain things should be enforced."

Specialist Urbaez: *"Okay now you see your kid will never have to go through any of that bc you're a citizen. He/she will get citizenship automatically. But now explain to me what you believe should change?"*

Me: "Well yes, if I'm in the United States and decide to have a family, my children will be citizens. But there are kids who face having to be ripped away from their families due to immigration issues and I feel that we should at least give those people a chance to receive some type of solace before being taken away from their families. But then again, I don't make the rules. But I do have a ton of sympathy for people that go through situations like this because it is a traumatic experience that nobody should go through."

Me: “Now I just have one final question before we end this. And I want you to give me your best answer. Given all that you’ve been through in your life and all that you’ve experienced, you’ve overcome a lot. You’re going to school, you have a contract working for the military, you have great opportunities ahead of you. With regards to our country, what do you hope changes for the better, and what advice or wise words do you have for the people who might hear your story and your views?”

Specialist Urbaez: *“I hope us “people ” get treated with rights that's all I wish, equally and fairness. My advice would be never give up, no matter how hard things might look, no matter how many doors close in front of you there's always one that will change your life forever. To always do what's right, and to make themselves proud!”*

Me: “Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you.”

Specialist Urbaez: *“You're very welcome.”*

## Chapter 4.2 “Interview 2”

For our second interview, I got to sit down with a former correction officer who worked for the NYC Department of Corrections for over 10 years. His views and his opinion will be coming not just from a correction officer, but from a father and a husband as well.

Me: “What do you think political violence is”

*Officer Miranda: "In my opinion, I think it's a way of life in which criminals are empowered to do and commit crimes because they feel that political agendas supersede that of what law enforcement officials can and can't do."*

Me: "Okay so on another note, what does political violence mean to you, aside from the definition, which is violence ensued to gain some type of political goal, What does political violence mean to you?"

*Officer Miranda: "I think political violence, to me, is a government's agenda that's spearheaded on trying to control people with their policies."*

Me: "How do you think Political violence comes about? What do you think causes some of these government officials to make some of these decisions that affect the citizens of the U.S.?"

*Officer Miranda: "Money. Strictly Money. It's whoever has the deeper pockets that gets things done."*

Me: "How do you think political violence can change this country? Whether it be for better or for worse, what is your opinion on how political violence can have an effect on the country?"

*Officer Miranda: "I think the way things are going, politicians are empowering criminals more and stripping away law enforcement of their official duties to gain votes and stay in office."*

Me: "Okay. So to my understanding, you were a correction officer for over 10 years, is that correct?"

*Officer Miranda: "Correct"*

Me: "So now, in your time of being a correction officer, have you ever experienced some type of political violence in a way? Whether it be from a higher-up trying to do something that affected, not just you, but the people around you?"

*Officer Miranda: "Every day. We saw violence every day and when I started this job, the word "Correction" meant something. Inmates would comply. They would follow rules, if not they had to be corrected and placed in segregated housing. Now, an inmate can stab an officer or even another inmate, and they won't even get a ticket because they feel that restrictive housing is inhumane. But the fact that there's another victim who was assaulted or stabbed, they could pretty much care less about how that person feels. I guess that is inhumane to them. It's as if the criminal has more rights than anyone else."*

Me: "Okay. So I'm going to do my absolute best to refrain from using anybody in particular, whether it be someone that you worked with, just for the sake of confidentiality. How does political violence affect you from a civilian standpoint as opposed to what you used to do as a correction officer? Do you feel like now that you're retired, it weighs on you a little bit more? Or does it have some type of different effect as opposed to when you were in the uniform? How do you feel about political violence now that you've been retired for a little while?"

*Officer Miranda: "I think it's worse because, to give you an example, if I'm licensed to carry a personal protection firearm and I'm in the supermarket purchasing my groceries and a man walks in and he's waving a knife at me and I discharge my firearm, more than likely I'll be judged harsher than the fact that he was the aggressor and, you know, waving the knife, so*

*they're going to say "Why'd you have to shoot him?". I shouldn't have to wait to get stabbed before I discharge my firearm to defend myself. So I think that people, by and large, are more in danger now than they were 10 years ago."*

Me: "Okay so, Officer Miranda, we're going to go in a bit of a different direction here. So, with our new president in office, do you hope for progress and hopefully, things will change within the next 4 years with Joe Biden as president?"

*Officer Miranda: "No. I think people are under this illusion that the president controls the narrative on crime. It's the actual local politicians who run that individually in every state. So, they can run on whatever platform they want, promise you the world, and tell you "I'm going to be tough on crime". They can't do anything when it comes to that. You can sign a bill saying "If I catch you with a gun, you'll get X amount of penalty" but realistically, I don't see that changing. You have more ghost guns now than ever, at least in New York City. Crime has gone up ridiculously as far as firearms and violence against the police. So, I don't see Joe Biden doing anything."*

Me: "Okay. So was being a correction officer the dream? Was that the initial occupation you wanted to pursue? Or was there something else that you wanted to pursue but you decided "I'm going to be a correction officer instead.?"

*Officer Miranda: "Initially, my dream job was to be an attorney. I wanted to be a lawyer."*

Me: "Okay"



*Officer Miranda: "And just life presents itself in different ways and my second option behind that was law enforcement so I applied to be a police officer. I applied to be a correction officer.*

*Department of corrections called so I took the job."*

Me: "So do you feel like with you taking this job, you were able to invoke some type of change positively? Do you feel like you could've been that one officer, aside from all the bad officers, that did something good or try to make some type of change?"

*Officer Miranda: "I think I did. I worked with a lot of adolescents many times and I said if you can reach one kid and get them to change their attitude about crime and get them to turn their life around, then Yeah I can say I've lent a positive contribution to, I hope not just one, but many of several inmates that I encountered over an 11-year career."*

Me: "Okay. Recently we got the verdict on the trial of the man who killed George Floyd, Officer Derek Chauvin. So, given what you know about the event that happened, do you feel justice was served, or do you feel something else could've been done as far as the trial went on? Do you feel something could have been different from someone who once wore a badge?"

*Officer Miranda: " I think that the officer's action on that day got him a guilty verdict and was sentenced to 20 years. As far as the incident is concerned, in my opinion, I think that the incident could have been avoided altogether had George Floyd decided to comply and just get in the vehicle. But I think his actions escalated matters and unfortunately got him killed."*

Me: "So, do you consider justice was being served to the fullest that it could've been?"

*Officer miranda: "As far as the officers being sentenced, Yeah"*

Me: “Well now, being that we got the officer standpoint, how do you feel from a now-retired civilian standpoint? How do you think things have gone since you've been retired? How do you think things will go moving forward as far as political violence goes?”

*Officer Miranda: “I think it's going to continue to get worse. While we have people in power that want to continue to empower criminals, the situation isn't going to get better. It's going to continue to get worse. I feel like I'm living back in the '80s. Only thing missing right now in the street is graffiti again on the trains.”*

Me: “One last question. And feel free to dive as deep as you want into this. If you had any type of political role, whether it be the president, the governor, whoever, how do you think you would go about igniting change when it comes to political violence? What are some of the things that you would do?”

*Officer Miranda: “If I can pick my position, I'd like to be the District Attorney of the city of New York. And what I would do to effect change is I would give police back the power that they need to take the streets back from these criminals so we can improve our quality of life and live in a better place. Rudy Guliani took this city and cleaned it up when he was mayor. After that, the last 6 or 8 years under De Blasio, it's been horrible. It starts with the DA's that have to be tough on crime and I don't care about the cost of overcrowded jails. They're not crowded, if anything they are closing them down because again, everything is about revenue. Bad people commit bad things and they should be put in a place where they shouldn't do it again. Not given 20 chances to finally get it right and I can tell you as a former officer, I've seen wrap sheets on individuals with over 50, 60, 70 arrests and they keep getting turned out. So, unless the law enforcement*

*community is allowed to correct these individuals, you're going to continue to see crime escalate.”*

Me: “Would you feel comfortable telling your story to those who want to be in uniform, whether it be a cop or correction officer?”

*Officer Miranda: “ Absolutely. I’ll tell them all, you don’t need one bulletproof vest these days. You need 2. You need 1 from the actual criminal, then you need the other one from the politicians, and the judge, and the jury, and anyone else involved in courts so that’s the best advice I would give anybody wanting to take a career in law enforcement. Be very very careful because, at least not in New York, I wouldn’t recommend anyone taking a law enforcement job in New York. Go to a Republican-based state where they allow officers to do their jobs. And I’m not speaking on behalf of Republicans because I’m not a republican but it just seems in republican states, crime is significantly less than these Democratic states.*

Me: Well that concludes this interview. For the record, this audio recording will be transcribed onto paper and then be diminished afterwards. It will be deleted. And if you would like to have access to this audio recording, feel free to contact if you would like to have it. If not, then I will disregard the recording and all we’ll have is the transcription of what you said on paper.”

*Officer Miranda: “ No problem.”*

Me: “Thank you so much”

*Officer Miranda: “Thank you for having me”*

The purpose of these two interviews was to gain perspective from two individuals who may know a thing or two about political violence through their occupations. Each subject was kind enough to allow me to hear their voice and their opinions on what happens politically in our country. While both interviews may be different in a few areas, their responses and their cooperation were nothing more than flattering. These are people who have been on the frontline and possibly been put in positions that not many of us would understand unless we were in their same shoes. Perspectives and opinions may be different, but their voices should be heard and they should matter.

## **Chapter 5**

### **A Quest for Change**

The reality is that we live in a world where certain things are very concrete and cannot be changed. Although political violence isn't new, there is a potential to change the stigma and change what we believe to be concrete. Just like things like the media and technology have the power to influence us in multiple ways, we have the power to do the same with one another. Political violence is something that has had a massive grasp on our nation's history and will continue to have that grasp up until we decide to invoke change. People dying at the hands of police and acts of terrorism have gone on long enough and we have been scarred for way too long. It is time that we ignite change, even if we have to do it by ourselves.

#### **Chapter 5.1 “Is there potential for change”**

Just like anything else, there is always the potential for change. Political violence, however, is one of those things where it can take a lot for change to be ignited. It isn't impossible, but without the proper precautions and actions put in play, it can be extremely difficult. Nathan Stock talks about this in an article, saying "There are no easy remedies for the fissures in American society, but just as we prepare for hurricanes in Louisiana or wildfires in California, communities can use conflict analysis and resilience planning to reduce the likelihood of political violence and manage it more effectively when it does break out."(Stock 1) which is saying that just like we can prepare for things that aren't in our control, we can prepare for things that are not only in our control but to where our choices matter the most. It's not irrational to think this way. It makes the most sense. If we can try and prepare for the worst when we are facing things that are out of our control, we can't prepare or even prevent, things from happening, especially if we are the ones who cause the issue.

## Chapter 5.2 "What can we do to facilitate that change?"

It's difficult to try to discuss what we may not have the power to change. But something like political violence, something that is caused by ourselves, we do have that power. We have the power to stand beside one another with a common goal of trying to make things right. The common goal of try to secure our safety, and if the people we elect can't do that, then we should be able to do it ourselves but under safe and proper pretenses. We should stay by one another and come together and put a stop to the violence that affects us a great deal. Not to mean we should be going out rioting and looting like in the past, but learn from these mistakes and work

positively to ensure change. Change is not unforeseeable. It might just take a little time. Longer than we might expect, but have some type of progress nonetheless. According to Jason Lemon, 39% of Republicans say they'd support Americans using political violence. But what about the other 61% percent? What about the people that aren't in favor of political violence. What do we say to them? Do we just push them to the side, having them remain silent? Or do we facilitate enough change to where they all can come out and speak their minds? The choice is up to us. We just have to be willing to act on that choice.

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