

Disgruntled, Hating Everything
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Perhaps one-third of our population is disgruntled (unhappy, annoyed, and angry). Disgruntled is a word that dates back to the Middle Ages and derives from "to grunt."

We daily see the film clips of the mobs who attacked Congress on January 6. Faces were angry, voices were loud, and intentions were clear: search out elected representatives and kill as many as possible. They shouted profanity and during the break-in, they urinated, smeared feces on the walls, and broke things. No, this was not "legitimate political discourse," as the Republican National Committee insisted.

Mobs are not a new phenomenon; they can be traced back to our earliest civilizations. One of the nastiest is in the Old Testament Book of Judges. It concerns a Levite from Ephraim and his concubine, who, while traveling through Gomorrah, were assailed by a mob, who wanted to gang-rape the man. He turned his concubine over to the crowd instead, and they raped her to death. Ugh.

Lynch mobs in the earlier 20th century were equally vile, aided and abetted by cheering onlookers. What makes otherwise normal human beings willing to torture and murder victims because deliberate liars stirred up the ignorant?

How many of the foul-mouthed and violent rioters on January 6 willingly believed Donald Trump that his reelection was stolen from him by fraud? What else was behind the mobs traveling to Washington to be part of this horror?

It is useful to step back and see the larger picture. Why are so many men (mostly men) in a constant state of rage? What is happening in their lives that keeps them bitter?

\225 Economic changes. Economic inequality is embittering the men who feel left behind

The entire nature of work is changing, requiring more schooling, jobs lost to automation and artificial intelligence, and perceived competition from women and immigrants. Fact check: uneducated immigrants (male and female) mostly take work that White men do not want: agricultural field work and home care. Educated immigrants are filling shortages of professionals or specialized labor (nursing and hospitality).

\225 Gender. Until the last century, women were the property of men: under the control of a father, brother, or husband. The exception was a rich heiress or widow who controlled her own wealth. Most men, throughout history, have regarded their wives as essential partners. The nobility wanted male heirs, but sometimes they got only female heiresses. Wives were prized for bloodline and ability to breed many children.

Upper-class women in the Western world benefitted from two other institutions, Christianity and chivalry. Gentlemen frowned on wife beating among their peers. But outside of the Christian and Jewish worlds, beating or even murdering wives or daughters met with no legal remedy.

Unfortunately today, wife abuse remains a global problem, worst in religious or authoritarian countries. Abusers come from all classes. Police, doctors, lawyers, and professors join the roughnecks in battering and intimidating wives. Fortunately, as western women have risen to the status of citizen, women everywhere now know that this behavior should not be tolerated.

Poorly educated disgruntled men bitterly resent their loss of power over women. This resentment is promoted by the White Religious Right and the Republican Trump cult. Also, either abusive mothers or abused mothers set the stage for woman-hating sons.

\225 Racism. The propaganda that justified black slavery still lives in the psyches of White men who resent black emancipation. They hate "people of color" (whatever that means) and do not hesitate to use insulting epithets for them.

\225 Experts, authorities, and the elite. This may be the oldest, and most

self-defeating of underclass resentments. In hating experts with valid credentials, they prefer conspiracy theories and con men who lie to them with impunity.

Hatred of government dates back centuries when government had total control over one's life and property. Representative modern democracies enjoy elections and authorities the people choose. The stupid among us so resent "being told what to do," they are ready to die rather than get vaccinated.

The disgruntled fear a changing world and imagine they can revive some imaginary past. When they destroy their democracy, what do they think they will get?

687 words

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