



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on August 18, 2011

Social Degeneration: Creating an “Aggrieved” Class

That includes a pattern of violent attacks on whites in public places in Chicago, Denver, New York, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Kansas City, as well as blacks in schools beating up Asian classmates — for years — in New York and Philadelphia.

These attacks have been accompanied by explicitly racist statements by the attackers, so it is not a question of having to figure out what the motivation is. There has also been rioting and looting by these young hoodlums.

Yet blacks have no monopoly on these ugly and malicious episodes. Remarkably similar things are being done by lower-class whites in England. Anybody reading “Life at the Bottom” by Theodore Dalrymple will recognize the same barbaric and self-destructive patterns among people with the same attitudes, even though their skin color is different.

Anyone reading today’s headline stories about young hoodlums turning the streets of London into scenes of shattered and burning chaos, complete with violence, will discover the down side of the brotherhood of man.

While the history and the races are different, what is the same in both countries are the social policies and social attitudes long promoted by the intelligentsia and welfare state politicians.

A recent study in England found 352,000 households in which nobody had ever worked. Moreover, two-thirds of the adults in those households said that they didn’t want to work. As in America, such people feel both “entitled” and aggrieved.

In both countries, those who have achieved less have been taught by the educational system, by the media and by politicians on the left that they have a grievance against those who have achieved more. As in the United States, they feel a fierce sense of resentment against strangers who have done nothing to them, and lash out violently against those strangers.

During the riots, looting and violence in England, a young woman was quoted as saying that this showed “the rich” and the police that “we can do whatever we want.” Among the things done during these riots was forcing apparently prosperous looking people to strip naked in the streets.

The need to bring people down in humiliation that marked the mass violence against the Armenians in Turkey nearly a century ago, and that later marked the Nazi persecutions of the Jews in Germany, is still alive and well in people who resent those who have achieved more than they have.

A milder but revealing episode in England some time back involved burglars who were not content to





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simply steal things but also vented their hostility by scrawling on the wall: "RICH BASTARDS."

In the United States, young black thugs attacked whites with baseball bats and took their belongings in Denver, while voicing their hatred of whites. But it is all a very similar attitude to what has been found in other countries and other times.

Today's politically correct intelligentsia will tell you that the reason for this alienation and lashing out is that there are great disparities and inequities that need to be addressed.

But such barbarism was not nearly as widespread two generations ago, in the middle of the 20th century. Were there no disparities or inequities then? Actually there were more.

What is different today is that there has been — for decades — a steady drumbeat of media and political hype about differences in income, education and other outcomes, blaming these differences on oppression against those with fewer achievements or lesser prosperity.

Moreover, there has been a growing tolerance of lawlessness and a growing intolerance toward the idea that people who are lagging need to take steps to raise themselves up, instead of trying to pull others down.

All this exalts those who talk such lofty talk. But others pay the price — and ultimately that includes even those who take the road toward barbarism.

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