

## Two views of the US gun issue

Editorial, The Australian, 11 July 2016

*(Editor's note: this editorial is followed by comments disagreeing with the stance. It should also be noted that the many US gun statistics are invariably at variance with each other, suggesting cherry-picked information that supports the view of whoever commissioned the stats. Another issue not canvassed below is the US Administration's desire to remove civilians' guns to reduce their ability to defend themselves in the event of major civil unrest. A further issue is the extent that various groups in (and outside) the US intentionally stir up problems to further a malicious agenda. )*

It is a tragic irony that the deepening racial divide in the US comes at a time when Barack Obama, the nation's first black president, is approaching the end of eight years in the White House. Mr Obama, an avowed unifier, pledged to heal the divide. But as he prepares to leave office, hopes and expectations have been dashed. The US appears even more polarised politically and racially than it was eight years ago. Some commentators are warning the country is facing a new era of Jim Crow racialism, "flirting dangerously" with a return to the mayhem of the 1960s and 70s when Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground and the Black Liberation Army responded violently to perceived police brutality.

Last week's bloodbath in Dallas, in which five policemen died and others were wounded, showed the depths of the problem when a black former US soldier who served in Afghanistan went on a rampage to "kill white people, especially white (police) officers". His motive was revenge for the deaths of black Americans who died in controversial police killings in Louisiana and Minnesota.

Last week's events also highlighted Mr Obama's failure to persuade a stubborn US Congress to legislate gun control measures that would curb the 350 million lethal weapons in private hands in the US, a number that is increasing rapidly. The military-style automatic assault rifle used by Dallas gunman Micah Johnson was the type of easily acquired, over-the-counter weapon of choice used repeatedly in mass shootings across the US. Even some protesters taking part in a "peaceful" demonstration as Johnson launched his attack were black civilians openly carrying similar weapons, as Texas law permits.

Race killings have been in the spotlight in the US since 2013 when neighbourhood watch co-ordinator George Zimmerman was acquitted over the fatal shooting of black teenager Trayvon Martin. More recent incidents have included last year's shooting of nine black parishioners at a church in Charleston, South Carolina. Mr Obama, denouncing the Dallas killings, conceded "there's a big chunk of our citizenry that feels as if, because of the colour of their skin, they are not being treated the same — and that hurts".

Black Americans are 30 per cent more likely than whites to be pulled over and searched by police. Last year, blacks were shot by police at more than twice the rate of whites. Race is central to the crisis surrounding the Dallas massacre, with a recent poll showing 88 per cent of

black Americans believed the US still had a long way to go to achieve equal rights. Just 53 per cent of whites agreed. This is clearly not the legacy Mr Obama wanted. Nor should it be a scenario acceptable to either of his putative successors, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. But a deepening racial divide and hundreds of millions of lethal weapons in private hands is an incendiary mix.

---

**Comments:**

As a recent immigrant to Australia from the United States I find this editorial way off the mark. I would assume the Australian has a research department. I grew up in the state of Texas where owning a gun was as natural as breathing. The majority of people in the state owned a gun. Parents taught their children how to use a gun and how to be safe with the weapon. I have four younger sisters who are excellent marksmen to this day. The writer of this editorial implies the proliferation of guns are the problem. The writer also implies that the racial divide is the problem. Nothing could be further from the truth. Guns are not the problem nor is race. The majority of blacks and whites live together peacefully. The overwhelming majority of gun owners never use the weapon in a malign manner. The problem is the culture. If this writer is so ignorant or corrupt to parrot the usual political correct nonsense that permeates this article, then how does he propose to get to the root of the problem? Answer: he doesn't. It saddens me that the writer of this article, who has a wonderful opportunity thru this paper to tell a hard truth about gun violence in the US chooses to take the easy way out.

The writer should have written how the culture in the US is so enamoured of this political correct attitude that one shouldn't judge a person's behaviour even though that behaviour is deplorable. That if one has victim status that in itself is an excuse for violent or deplorable conduct. The continuing and irresponsible and I might say cruel attitude of not holding these supposed "victims" accountable for their actions. These attitudes do a disservice to the people the PC crowd intends to help and does a greater disservice to the culture as a whole.