

*Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland* by Jonathan M. Metz, notes by Marcia Bailey

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## **Overview**

A host of complex anxieties prompt increasing numbers of White Americans to support right wing politicians and policies. Trying to maintain an imagined place atop a racial hierarchy harms Whites.

Racial discrimination was associated with poor health. Racially driven policies functioned as mortal risk factors for *all* people in these states. Many Whites voted against their own interests.

Racial folklore fuels racial ideologies that open the White working class to economic exploitation by ruling-class Whites. The systems of inequality our nation builds and sustains aren't benefiting anyone.

## **Missouri**

- Missouri had among the strictest handgun laws in the nation. In 2010s it gave citizens the right to have guns to defend themselves and carry concealed weapons, eliminated training about guns and gun handling, and background checks, and issued permits to open carry and stand your ground. Most deaths by guns happened to Whites: suicides, partner violence, and accidental shootings.
- In suicide research, RISK is the greatest focus, and guns are the most common method used to kill oneself.
- The *New England Journal of Medicine* published a study showing that the ready availability of guns increased the risk of suicide. The visual of a shooting victim shows blood and guts everywhere.

- Gun company ads link gun ownership with privilege and race. White men in Missouri were seven times more likely to turn guns on themselves than to be fatally shot by intruders or assailants.

## Tennessee

- Tennessee didn't participate in the ACA or Medicaid Expansion.
- Black men supported the ACA; White men did not.
- Tennessee has just enough medical coverage to keep them from being eligible for Medicaid. The ACA mandated preventive healthcare with no lifetime limits and expanded Medicaid.
- Southern White men seek the material gains of modern America while believing that government healthcare is socialism or communism, costs them, and links them to Mexicans.
- Men who depended on medical assistance were decrying the networks that provided it: "live free and die sooner."
- Whites have defined themselves by what they have and claimed POC want what belongs to Whites. Blacks were not burdened by staying on top and thought everybody benefitted from the ACA.
- Many people file for bankruptcy because of inability to pay for medical costs. Healthcare for everyone lowers a variety of costs and promotes social cohesion. Voters and politicians who claimed to bolster White privilege turned Whiteness into a statistically perilous category.

## KANSAS

- Kansas' largest income tax cut in history saw White students experiencing flattening test scores and rising high school dropout

rates. Dropping out of high school in the U S correlates with nine years of lost life expectancy.

- In May, 2012, Governor Sam Brownback opened gun carrying, cut Medicaid expansion, defunded state government, and reduced taxes on the top brackets, moving the money from the many to the few.
- Tax cuts increased taxes on the bottom 40% by hiking sales taxes and eliminating tax credits that benefitted low-income families.
- Turning white voters away from policy preferences that harm their own wellbeing won't be easy if they are not tied to deep awareness of the measurable effects of such policies. (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas\\_experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_experiment) for the many serious consequences.)
- Education sows intellectual, financial, communal, and political rewards for the future. But in Kansas, where 80% of the population is non-Hispanic whites, 58% of Republican voters saw college as negative.
- Nothing trickles down. Wealth condenses and the system repays the shareholders rather than the consumers.
- Twenty years without good education means you don't have doctors, lawyers, or teachers. Businesses avoided Kansas because there were not enough highly skilled, highly trained employees or STEM qualified workers-science, technology, engineering, and mathematics- there.

## **Conclusion**

The construction of whiteness as a castle under siege empowers people to carry guns in public, while it ignores the plagues inside the castle

walls. More guns, tax cuts, education cuts, and health care system rejections weaken the foundation and heighten the risks threatening all citizens.