



170 Bikers Charged in Melee With Roots in '60s

This is actually the title of an article* that [the New York Times](#) used to discuss the death of 9 people during violent gang warfare between rival motorcycle gangs. They have actually used the word 'melee' when prosecutors will be charging 170 with 'engaging in organised crime linked to capital murder'.

Whilst there is no victim blaming in the coverage of this riot, all media has used inappropriate and misleading language to obfuscate the fact that violence associated with motorcycle gangs is both real and on the rise in the US and Canada. The coverage is rooted in racism, classism and a continuing North American fascination with motorcycle gangs as outlaws - a modern day version of the cowboy. These white men, and motorcycle gangs are almost all white males, are considered folk heroes for raising money for charity (despite the fact that much of their income is through illegal drugs and arms trade).

Media coverage of white male on white male violence is sporadic at best, usually viewed as justified or caused by distress or alcohol. We do not see white male gang activity labeled thugs as we do with Black men (including those whose only crime is to be playing at the park whilst Black). We do not see white men held accountable for the violence they commit. This level of obfuscation is also seen in coverage of domestic and sexual violence and abuse: the "[Dupont Heir](#)", as [Robert H. Richards IV](#) is known in the media, was convicted of raping a toddler but given an 8 year suspended sentence as the judge thought "he wouldn't fare well in prison" - because he was rich and white. [Ethan Couch](#) was sent to rehab instead of prison for killing 4 people whilst driving drunk because he suffered from "influenza" - no one had told him killing people was wrong. How often do we hear the media discuss Sean Penn as a perpetrator of domestic violence? And, has Charlie Sheen ever been held accountable for domestic violence against multiple partners?

9 people are dead and 18 more injured: but this is only a 'melee'. Because the media refuses to recognise white male violence for what it is: systemic violence. We need to challenge all misleading and minimising language from the media because it doesn't exist in a vacuum.

*The heading of the online version has now been changed to: 170 Bikers Charged in Waco, in a Rivalry Rooted in the 1960s