


This week, we will celebrate (or mourn) Halloween. We will unmask the issues behind certain Halloween costumes. Thereafter, we will weigh affirmative action on the scale of justice.

Word

Create a mind map for the term “thug.” What do you think a thug is? Consider a thug’s appearance, behavior, interests, motivations, occupation, persona, and any other characteristic.



Define thug in a sentence.

Read the following article on the etymology of “thug.”

“The History of the ‘Thug’” by Megan Garber

The surprisingly ancient and global etymology of a racially charged epithet

Last night, as Baltimore erupted with riots and violence and anger, the city's mayor, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, took to Twitter to share her thoughts on the events sweeping the city. The mayor talked about "the evil we see tonight." She promised that "we will do whatever it takes" to stop the destruction and restore "the will of good." Because "too many people," she said, "have invested in building up this city to allow thugs to tear it down."

"Thugs." "Thug." The derision here—dismissive, indignant, willfully unsympathetic—is implied in the sound of the word itself. Spoken aloud, "thug" requires its utterer first to sneer (the lisp of the "th") and then to gape (the deep-throated "uhhhh") and then to choke the air (that final, glottal "g"). Even if you hadn't heard the word before, even if you had no idea what it meant, you would probably guess that it is an epithet. "Thug" may have undergone the classic cycle of de- and re- and re-re-appropriation—the lyric-annotation site *Genius* currently lists 12,590 uses of "thug" in its database, among them 19 different artists (Young Thug, Slim Thug, Millennium Thug) and 10 different albums—but the word remains fraught. In a series of interviews before last year's Super Bowl, the Seattle Seahawks' Richard Sherman—who had been described by the media as a "thug," and who is African American—referred to "thug" as an effective synonym for the n-word. And in Baltimore over the past few days, the term has been flung about by commenters both professional and non-, mostly as a way of delegitimizing the people who are doing the protesting and rioting. To dismiss someone as a "thug" is also to dismiss his or her claims to outrage.

In all that, the history of “thug” goes back to not just the hip-hop scene of the 1990s—to Bone Thugs-n-Harmony, to Tupac Shakur and the "Thug Life" tattoo that stretched, arc-like, across his abdomen—but back, also, to India. To the India, specifically, of the 1350s. "Thug" comes from the Hindi *thuggee* or *tuggee* (pronounced "toog-gee" or "toog"); it is derived from the word ठग, or *thag*, which means "deceiver" or "thief" or "swindler." The Thugs, in India, were a gang of professional thieves and assassins who operated from the 14th century and into the 19th. They worked, in general, by joining travelers, gaining their trust ... and then murdering them—strangulation was their preferred method—and stealing their valuables.

The group, per one estimate, was ultimately responsible for the deaths of 2 million travelers. Mark Twain, reporting on the Thugs in his book *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, called the collective a "bloody terror" and a "desolating scourge":

In 1830 the English found this cancerous organization embedded in the vitals of the empire, doing its devastating work in secrecy, and assisted, protected, sheltered, and hidden by innumerable confederates—big and little native chiefs, customs officers, village officials, and native police, all ready to lie for it, and the mass of the people, through fear, persistently pretending to know nothing about its doings; and this condition of things had existed for generations, and was formidable with the sanctions of age and old custom.

The Thugs, indeed, ran rampant in India until the British colonial period, when the governor-general, Lord William Bentinck, heard of them and made a concerted effort to prevent them from

operating along India's roadways. According to this fantastic overview of Thuggee history from NPR's *Code Switch* blog, "nearly 4,000 thugs were discovered and, of those, about 2,000 were convicted; the remaining were either sentenced to death or transported within the next six years." The British overlords had successfully eradicated the network; as William Sleeman, Bentinck's deputy in charge of the effort, proudly declared: "The system is destroyed, never again to be associated into a great corporate body. The craft and mystery of Thuggee will not be handed down from father to son."

The Western fascination with the criminal collective, however, was only beginning. Through Twain's writings about them, and through 1837's vaguely anthropological *Illustrations of the History and Practices of the Thug*, and through Philip Meadows Taylor's 1839 novel *Confessions of a Thug*, "thug" entered the English language and the British and American consciousness. It came, through the authors' portrayals of systematized violence, to take on the connotation of "gangster"—a sense of the word that would get another moment of life in the popular culture through 1984's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, which finds its hero rescuing a group of children who have been abducted by thugs.

Given all that: Who is a thug? Who is *not* a thug? "The thug," the Brown University professor Tricia Rose writes in her book *The Hip Hop Wars*, "both represents a product of discriminatory conditions, and embodies behaviors that injure the very communities from which it comes." Thugs, in this conception, are both victims and agents of injustice. They are both the products and the producers of violence, and mayhem, and outrage. So it is fitting that, as the word's history suggests, there is—contrary to Mayor Rawlings-Blake's claims last night—a kind of universality to thuggery. Thugs are not necessarily "evil"; thugs are not necessarily opposed to "the will of good"; thugs are not necessarily unsympathetic. Which is another way of saying that thugs are human. And, being such, they evolve. Mark Twain, in *Following the Equator*, noted that all of human history, on some level, has found "Thugs fretting under the restraints of a not very thick skin of civilization."

He continued:

We have no tourists of either sex or any religion who are able to resist the delights of the bull-ring when opportunity offers; and we are gentle Thugs in the hunting-season, and love to chase a tame rabbit and kill it. Still, we have made some progress—microscopic, and in truth scarcely worth mentioning, and certainly nothing to be proud of—still it is progress: we no longer take pleasure in slaughtering or burning helpless men. We have reached a little altitude where we may look down upon the Indian Thugs with a complacent shudder; and we may even hope for a day, many centuries hence, when our posterity will look down upon us in the same way.

Answer the following questions on Garber's article.

1. What is thug synonymous with? List 2 synonyms.

2. What is the effect of labeling someone as a thug?

3. Has thug retained its original connotation? Explain.

4. Who is a thug? Who is not a thug?

5. How are thugs “both victims and agents of injustice” and “both the products and producers of violence, and mayhem, and outrage”?

6. In what ways is there “universality to thuggery”? Paraphrase the passage from Mark Twain’s *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*.

7. In groups, collectively create a new mind map for thug. Compare and contrast your group’s mind map with your personal one.

Thug Life

Watch a clip of Tupac's 1994 MTV Interview (from 11:43 to 13:28): <https://bit.ly/2WXAqyv>

How does Tupac define thug? List a few defining features.

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Changes

Listen to "Changes" by Tupac featuring Talent, and analyze its lyrics: <https://bit.ly/1t0zjYT>.

Come on, come on
I see no changes, wake up in the morning and I ask myself
Is life worth living, should I blast myself?
I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm black
My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch
Cops give a damn about a negro
Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero
"Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares
One less hungry mouth on the welfare!"
First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers
Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other
"It's time to fight back," that's what Huey said
Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead
I got love for my brother
But we can never go nowhere unless we share with each other
We gotta start makin' changes
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers
And that's how it's supposed to be
How can the devil take a brother, if he's close to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids
But things changed... and that's the way it is

That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww, yeah
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww, yeah

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
One better place, let's erase the wasted
Take the evil out the people they'll be acting right
'Cause mo' black and white is smokin' crack tonight
And only time we chill is when we kill each other
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other
And although it seems heaven sent
We ain't ready, to see a black President
It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks
But some things will never change
Try to show another way but you stayin' in the dope game
Now tell me, what's a mother to do?
Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you
You gotta operate the easy way
"I made a G today," but you made it in a sleazy way
Sellin' crack to the kid
"I gotta get paid!" – well hey, well, that's the way it is

That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww, yeah
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is, aww, yeah

We gotta make a change
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes
Let's change the way we eat
Let's change the way we live
And let's change the way we treat each other
You see, the old way wasn't working
So it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive

And still I see no changes, can't a brother get a little peace?
There's war in the streets and war in the Middle East
Instead of war on poverty
They got a war on drugs so the police can bother me
And I ain't never did a crime, I ain't have to do
But now, I'm back with the facts givin' 'em back to you
Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up
Crack you up and pimps smack you up
You gotta learn to hold ya own
They get jealous when they see ya, with ya mobile phone
But tell the cops, they can't touch this
I don't trust this, when they try to rush I bust this

That's the sound of my tool, you say it ain't cool?
 My mama didn't raise no fool
 And as long as I stay black, I gotta stay strapped
 And I never get to lay back
 'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the pay backs
 Some buck that I roughed up way back
 Comin' back after all these years
 "Rat-a-tat, tat, tat, tat," that's the way it is

That's just the way it is
 Things will never be the same
 That's just the way it is, aww, yeah
 (You're my brother, you're my sister)
 That's just the way it is
 Things will never be the same
 That's just the way it is, aww, yeah

Some things will never change

Identify issues raised by Tupac and Talent in "Changes."

Social Issues	Lyrics	Improved or worsened? How?

Flagged

What does a flag mean?

Read the following excerpts from an article on the confederate flag.

“Confederate flag; what is it and why is it controversial?” by Barney Henderson
Charleston shooting sparks calls for Confederate battle flag, widely associated with racism and hatred, to be taken down for good.

What is the Confederate flag?

The Confederate flag – the 13-star saltire in red, white and blue – has come to be recognised as a symbol of the American South. It came into use at the time of the American Civil War, from 1861-65, which was triggered by the issue of slavery. Seven southern states rebelled over President Abraham Lincoln’s anti-slavery legislation and declared secession from the United States.

The Confederate flag was first adopted as a battle flag by the army of Northern Virginia. It was never officially adopted as representing the Confederate States of America (CSA) – also known as the Confederacy – but came to be known as a symbol of the American South.

Despite the defeat of the CSA, the Confederate flag - also known as the rebel flag, the battle flag, the Dixie flag, and Southern cross - continued to be flown. In the Second World War, Southern military units flew the flag. During the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, the flag became a symbol of segregation and was adopted by the Ku Klux Klan. It has also appeared in countless popular culture references.

Why is it controversial?

Supporters of the flag view it as a symbol of ancestry and heritage. To them it represents a distinct cultural tradition of the South that is very different from the rest of the United States. It is tied to the representation of states’ rights against what they see as over-bearing federal jurisdiction.

However, for many Americans, the flag is a representation of slavery, hatred and white supremacy. Matthew Guterl, professor of Africana and American studies at Brown University, told

the Washington Post: “When people say ‘heritage not hate,’ they are omitting the obvious, which is that that heritage is hate. When someone says it’s about history, well, that particular history is inseparable from hate, because it is about hate. It’s about racism, and it’s about slavery.”

Why is it in the news?

The Charleston shootings of nine black people in a historic church in South Carolina has sparked calls for the flag to be banned in the state and beyond. The flag still flies high and proud outside South Carolina’s state house in the state capital Columbia.

While the US and South Carolina flags were lowered in mourning after the massacre last week, the Confederate flag remained at full height outside the legislature.

Dylann Roof, the 21-year-old white male suspected of carrying out the Emanuel African Episcopal Methodist Church massacre, was one of many southern Americans who identified with the Confederate flag.

Several photographs have emerged of Roof posing with the flag. In one, he sits astride a 1990s Hyundai sedan that bears a "Confederate States of America" ceremonial bumper tag that prominently features the flag.

Should the Confederate flag be banned? Use the article and your own opinion to complete the chart.

Arguments For	Arguments Against

Just Us Please

What is your initial opinion of affirmative action?

Which is more fair, weak or strong affirmative action?

Read the following article on the results of affirmative action in colleges across the United States.

“Even With Affirmative Action, Blacks and Hispanics Are More Underrepresented at Top Colleges Than 35 Years Ago”

by Jeremy Ashkenas, Haeyoun park, and Adam Pearce

Even after decades of affirmative action, black and Hispanic students are more underrepresented at the nation’s top colleges and universities than they were 35 years ago, according to a New York Times analysis.

The share of black freshmen at elite schools is virtually unchanged since 1980. Black students are just 6 percent of freshmen but 15 percent of college-age Americans, as the chart below shows.

More Hispanics are attending elite schools, but the increase has not kept up with the huge growth of young Hispanics in the United States, so the gap between students and the college-age population has widened.

The Times analysis includes 100 schools ranging from public flagship universities to the Ivy League. For both blacks and Hispanics, the trend extends back to at least 1980, the earliest year that fall enrollment data was available from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

Blacks and Hispanics have gained ground at less selective colleges and universities but not at the highly selective institutions, said Terry Hartle, a senior vice president at the [American Council on Education](#), which represents more than 1,700 colleges and universities.

The courts have ruled that colleges and universities can consider race or ethnicity “as one element in a holistic admissions policy, so it’s something that can be considered, but it’s not a magic bullet,” he said.

Affirmative action [increases the numbers](#) of black and Hispanic students at many colleges and universities, but experts say that persistent underrepresentation often stems from equity issues that

begin earlier.

Elementary and secondary schools with [large numbers of black and Hispanic students](#) are less likely to have experienced teachers, advanced courses, high-quality instructional materials and adequate facilities, according to the [United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights](#).

“There’s such a distinct disadvantage to begin with,” said David Hawkins, an executive director at the National Association for College Admission Counseling. “A cascading set of obstacles all seem to contribute to a diminished representation of minority students in highly selective colleges.”

Black students make up 9 percent of the freshmen at Ivy League schools but 15 percent of college-age Americans, roughly the same gap as in 1980. (A category for multiracial students, introduced in 2008, has slightly reduced the share of black students.)

At all eight schools, white enrollment declined as Asian enrollment increased. In recent years, the growth of Asian enrollment has slowed at some schools, and some Asian-American students say they are being [held to a higher standard](#).

The number of Hispanic and black freshmen on the University of California campuses declined immediately after California’s affirmative action ban took effect, especially at the most sought-after campuses, said Stephen Handel, associate vice president for undergraduate admissions. The system put the ban in place in 1998.

Even now, both Hispanics and blacks are least represented at Berkeley, the most selective campus. On seven campuses, Hispanics now make up a quarter or more of the freshmen, but that’s still far below their share of the college-age population in the state, which is close to 50 percent.

“Despite the progress the U.C. has made in assembling a more diverse student body, a lot of work remains to be done so that all U.C. campuses reflect the true diversity of the state,” Mr. Handel said in an email.

Over all, the share of black and Hispanic students at liberal arts colleges is similar to that at other top schools. Both blacks and Hispanics have gained ground in a handful of colleges, such as Amherst and Pomona.

Blacks and Hispanics remain underrepresented at other top universities, even as the share of white students at many of these schools has dropped, in some cases below 50 percent. The largest growth has often been among Asian students.

For example, the share of white freshmen at Rice University in Houston, which was [exclusively white](#) until the mid-1960s, declined to 42 percent in 2015 from 87 percent in 1980. Meanwhile, the share of Asian students rose to 30 percent in 2015 from 3 percent in 1980.

Black students remain underrepresented in a number of flagships in states with a large share of college-age residents who are black.

For example, in Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina, blacks represent about a third or more of each state’s college-age population but less than 15 percent of the freshman enrollment at the flagship university.

At the University of South Carolina's Columbia campus, black freshman enrollment has declined significantly over the last 15 years. Students on campus have [protested racial inequalities](#).

Many public flagship universities draw students from the state or region, rather than the entire country. While black enrollment at schools like West Virginia University and the University of Nebraska is low, it is on par with the state's demographics.

What is the cause of the persistent underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics at colleges and universities?

List possible solutions to your answer to the preceding question.

Based on the statistics, what problems do you foresee for the higher education in the United States?
