

Analysis: The Red Scare and Black Scare

Editor's Note: As Black History Month begins, we invite our readers to reflect on two panics that emerged in the United States in the early twentieth century. The Black Scare was rooted in white Americans' fear of Black Nationalism and dread at what social, economic, and political equality of Black people might entail. The Red Scare, sparked by communist uprisings abroad and subversion at home, established anticapitalism as a force capable of infiltrating and disrupting the American order. In her new book, Black Scare / Red Scare, Charisse Burden-Stelly meticulously outlines the conjoined nature of these state-sanctioned panics, revealing how they unfolded together as the United States pursued capitalist domination. Beginning her account in 1917, Burden-Stelly traces the long duration of these intertwined and mutually reinforcing phenomena. She theorizes U.S. Capitalist Racist Society, a racially hierarchical political economy built on exploitative labor relationships, as one base of the Black Scare / Red Scare. In opposition, Radical Blackness embodied the government's fear of both Black insurrection and Red instigation. The state's actions and rhetoric therefore characterized Black anticapitalists as foreign, alien, and undesirable. This adapted excerpt — from the book's third chapter, which lays out the three genres of radical Blackness that were targeted by the U.S. government — details the case of Angelo Herndon, a Southern Black communist who was a victim of the Black and Red Scares. His portrait appears on the book's cover.

There is a lot of reality denial, as well as gaslighting, around the subject of the "Red Scare," as well as the "Black Scare." Here is a write-up that blame-shifts Whites for their fear rather than acknowledging the truth of the situation. The experience is that Whites are always to

blame and that all else are the “forever victim,” even when they are the ones creating the harm and instilling anti-values against American culture and people.

This experience is not new. Northern Americans have a long history of competing interests with the South. We had our own battles up north, for one, Whites endured the hardship of the winters, and they recovered from their own wars, slaveries, and genocides without ever really knowing a Black person, a Russian person, a Mexican person or a Chinese person, it was not until the waves of later immigrants came to America. Our Native society was quite isolated for many centuries.

Still, our society up north is generally still “White,” and we have remained quite supportive of all other races, considerably supportive. Our states have historically voted in ways that created equality, supported other races, and we often put ourselves last. We are also known for supporting women’s rights and Native rights, but this is much a part of the society that we are from historically, as many communities in Northern New England are Franco-Americans, with Acadian ancestry and Native relations.

One thing is for sure, we always knew by our heritage and deep respect for our Native friends that colonialism is hurtful and that mass migration harms us. This is why we have never really been huge proponents of it, as we ourselves were severely harmed also. Maintaining American culture is very important to us, and we are a very rich American culture with deep love for what America stands for.

When we recognize a new normal of “beating up Whites,” beating up Americans, trying to steal, loot, or take land, and we see foreign flags hoisted, red flags hoisted, rather than the American flag that we hoist so proudly, we recognize this horrifying reality for what it is. Yes, it is scary, and it is scary when people join a foreign war against our own people, attempt to claim our territory as something it is not, and try to rewrite American history and values so that they look alien and unrecognizable. This is scary.

We also recognize that the same Red Scare experience that occurred in previous wars is occurring once again today. It is the social torment, the crimes against humanity, the racial targeting of Whites, the grabbing at us in all ways possible, the harms, the assaults, and then the blame-shift, the reality-warping, and the gaslighting. Wow, what evil, what atrocities, what crimes have been committed against vulnerable American people.

Yet it is a movement, and it just moves on, right? Americans are a little more aware today, and with the internet, which they did not have during previous Red Scares, every single detail of what is currently occurring, who is being targeted, and what is happening in reality is all there. History has very much already been made for all of the world to witness, those hoisted hellish red and black colors arranged in a line by a group of people who have relentlessly targeted the American people.

You, modern communists, have not only made history, you have made a war. A war against your very own people, against a place that we all share, home, a beautiful, most perfect society. We had it all, the American Dream, and we shared, but that wasn’t enough.

The modern Red Scare, you just had to attack the American people. A silent war, a cold underground war, you worked in the shadows for so long, targeting Americans by the “sickle’s grazing.” Just a gentle war, an attack here and an attack there, subtle, just a little off the top.

But once the pandemic occurred, you ran, you ran for that land with your red and black flag in hand. You thought the pandemic was a time for hunting, a time to prey on the American homeland. You pitched your stake, here, it’s mine, I will take it all.

You were hungry. But even that wasn’t enough. You turned to communism, you turned to slavery, exploitation, socialism, every bit of American freedom, you stood firmly against. You attacked all that was beautiful about the American people and culture over and over and over again.

Well, it’s all there, for all to see. No more blame-shift, no more gaslighting, no more false stories and fictitious realities. There is no denying reality this time, but we’re going to fill you in, we sure are going to face it. Front and center, all eyes on you.

A foreign and domestic enemy. The U.S. military is facing you now, modern Red Scare. No longer operating in the shadows, the evidence is everywhere, and we can see you very well. What remains is a soulless, red and black, dark and empty shell where an American used to be.