

The Psychology of Mob Mentality and Violence

By Dr. Wendy James, PhD.

One dog may bark at you but it's more likely that a pack will attack you.

We are not exempt from that behavior because we are human and not canine. As evidenced by dogs operating in a pack environment, human society is based on group dynamics.

As humans, we have instinctual responses that are exacerbated by group influences.

What we might not do as individuals we may do as part of a group. People may lose control of their usual inhibitions, as their mentality becomes that of the group.

You have never heard of a peaceful riot. Riots are by definition violent in nature.

All a riot is, is violent group behavior. The larger the group the greater the amplification of that group behavior. If the group behavior is peaceful, exemplified by Martin Luther King and Ghandi, the group behavior is peaceful and orderly.

If the group behavior is violent, the larger the group the more magnified the violence.

A mob mentality phenomenon has occurred throughout human history, whether witch burning, religious zealotry, political protests or reaction to perceived racial micro aggressions.

Three psychological theories address crowd behavior.

First is Contagion Theory, proposes that crowds exert a hypnotic influence on their members that results in irrational and emotionally charged behavior often referred to as crowd frenzy.

Second is Convergence Theory that argues the behavior of a crowd is not an emergent property of the crowd but is a result of like-minded individuals coming together. If it becomes violent is not because the crowd encouraged violence yet rather people wanted it to be violent and came together in a crowd.

Third is Emergent-Norm Theory that combines the two above arguing that a combination of liked-minded individuals, anonymity and shared emotions leads to crowd behavior

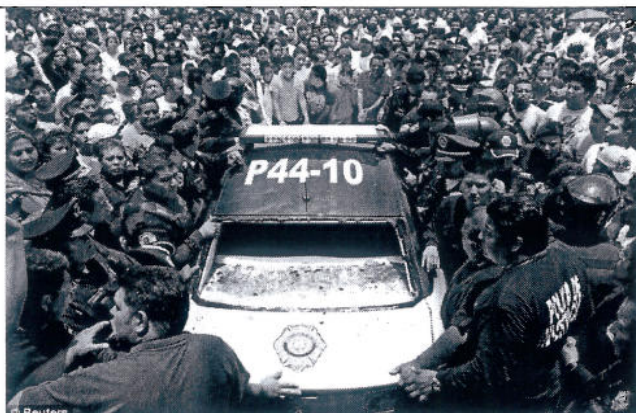
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<http://www.drwendyjames.com/the-psychology-of-mob-mentality-and-violence/>

Mobs and Courthouse Chaos



Former Penn State football coach Jerry Sandusky's lawyer Joe Amendola stands in the center of media circus in front of Centre County Courthouse.



Lynch mob: Furious residents surround a police car carrying four suspected thieves in the crime-ridden village of San Lorenzo Acopilco on the outskirts of Mexico City.



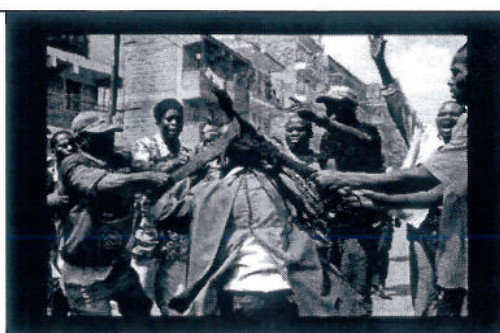
Showdown: Riot police clash with residents as they hurl bricks and stones towards the police car carrying the suspected thieves.



The Kalenji warriors have caught an "enemy lookout" in Chepilat. The aggressive fighters want to kill him immediately.



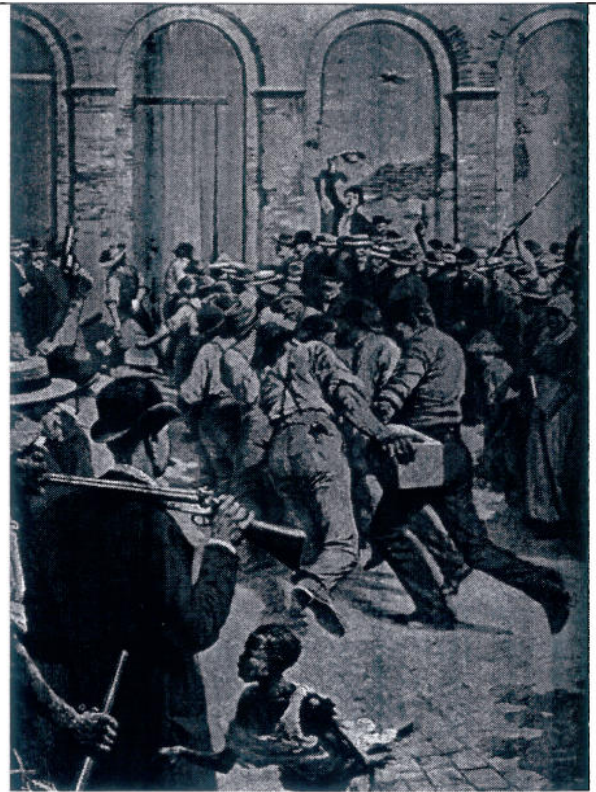
Baying for blood: a lynch mob prepares to attack African immigrants in South Africa's continuing xenophobic attacks. Poor South Africans accuse foreigners of taking their jobs.



An angry mob of Luos attack a Kikuyu man in Mathare North slum whom they accuse of a crime.



Fans of Michael Jackson react outside the courthouse in Los Angeles. (Conrad Murray trial)



Lynch mob



Lynch mob



George Zimmerman trial



Mob



Black Friday stampede



Black Friday stampede



Black Friday



Black Friday stampede

