Dying of Whiteness. How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America’s Heartland.

by Johathan M. Metzl

The book was written in three sections: 1) Gun Control - Missouri  2) Health Care -Tennessee 3) Education - Kansas.

Metzl interviewed white men in groups of similar income, and separately, black men, likewise in homogeneous groups.

Part 1
In Missouri the primary victims of gun mortality are not criminals or inner city gang members, rather they are more often whites who are killed by gun related suicide, partner violence and accidental shootings. From 2008 to 15 there was $223 million in lost work and 10,506 years lost in productive white male life due to gun related deaths.

Part 2
Tennessee is a state that refused to expand Medicaid. The average cost to white residents was 14.1 years of life. There is a long history of people supporting politicians whose policies are likely to hurt them. For example, Trevor, a low income white man, who is dying of hepatitis, would rather die than take government assistance. In his mind the government spends lavishly conferring benefits to “welfare Queens” and he did not want to sink to their level. Even as he suffered from lack of access to life saving procedures, he clung to the dogma about “lazy minorities: who game the system. He did not want to be “one of them”.

Part 3
In Kansas, the government made the largest income tax cut in state history, reducing a surplus to a deficit. There was a “firestorm” when it hit suburban white schools. The state went from having one of the highest ratings for its school systems to one with an increase in dropouts and a drastic lowering of test score. Dropping out of school correlates with years of lost life expectancy.

Submitted by Susan Lammer (October 2019)