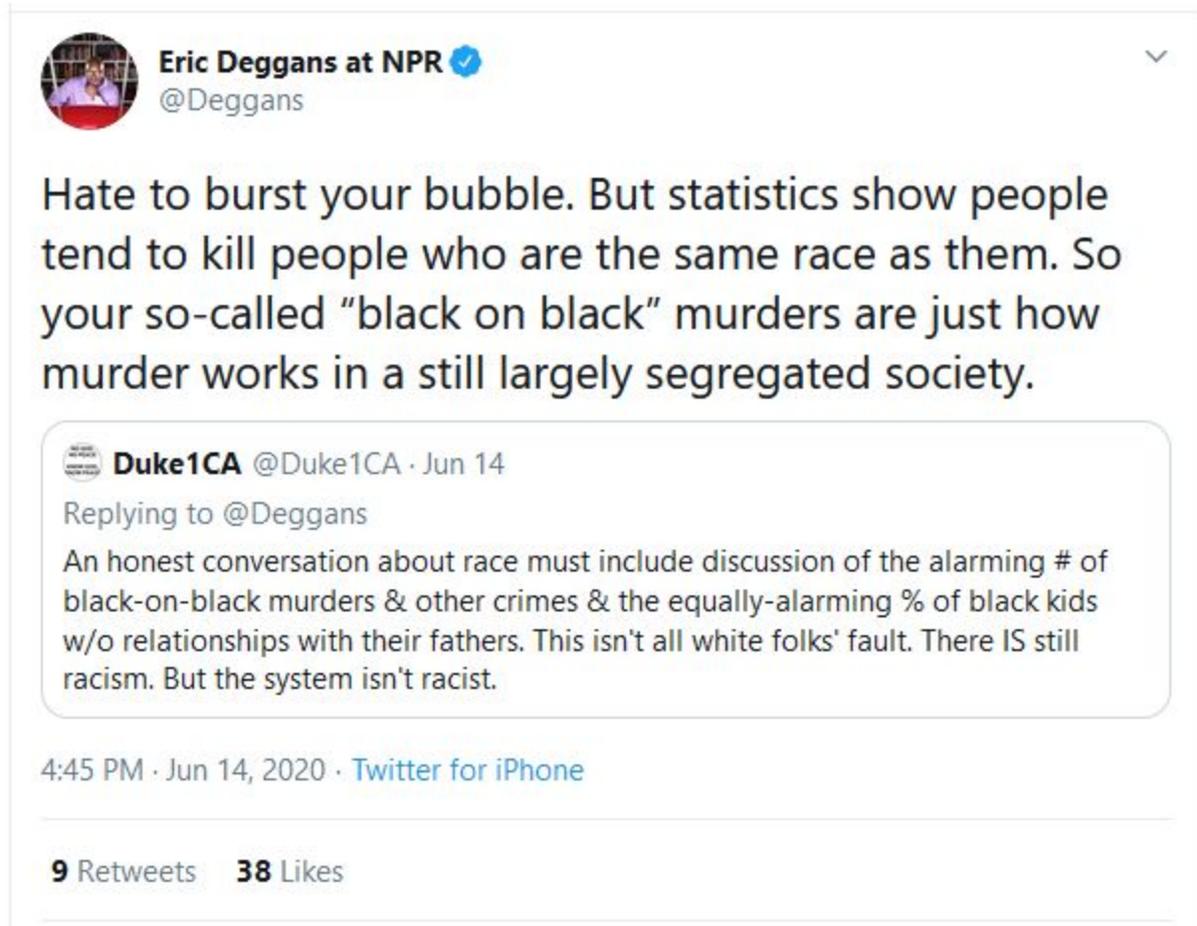


# PolitiFact and the myth of black-on-black crime?

On Twitter, I noticed an NPR journalist, Eric Deggans, dismissing an argument about black-on-black crime by noting that murderers tend to kill people of the same race.



[Deggans](#) worked for the Poynter-owned St. Petersburg (later Tampa Bay) Times before signing on with NPR.

I could not help but notice that Deggans had produced a very weak argument. People of the same race killing each other does not burst any bubble unless the number of black-on-black murders is roughly proportional. I pointed that out to Deggans, albeit [to the wrong thread](#), but [Deggans rolled with it](#).

But Deggans' response emphasized a seemingly irrelevant proportionality. He wrote that the percentage of blacks killed by blacks is roughly the same as the number of whites killed by

whites.

But what if whites killed every white person and enough of other races to roughly match the percentage Deggans cited? Wouldn't that demonstrate a big problem for whites? I suggested to Deggans that he was looking at the wrong proportion. If blacks represent 14 percent of the U.S. population then blacks' share of intraracial murders should fall somewhere near that 14 percent ballpark.

Deggans let the conversation drop for a time. While waiting for his response, I grew curious whether and how PolitiFact had treated the topic.

To my small surprise and great amusement, PolitiFact did [a fact check](#) and [a follow-up explainer article](#) in 2015 that dovetailed almost perfectly with Deggans' argument, while completely ignoring the fact that the 14 percent of blacks in the U.S. population commit over 40 percent of the intraracial murders logged by the FBI's crime statistics.

Missing that fact in both articles counts as fact-checking malpractice. Blaming the omission on the guidance of the cited experts serves as a poor excuse. The statistic fairly leaps off the pages PolitiFact cited. Here's an example, with red ovals to highlight the elephant in the room.

## Expanded Homicide Data Tak

### Murder

Race and Sex of Victim by Race and Sex of Offender, 2009

[Single victim/single offender]

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Race of victim	Total	Race of offender			
		White	Black	Other	Unknown
White victims	3,518	2,963	454	40	61
Black victims	2,867	209	2,604	13	41
Other race victims	181	50	26	104	1
Unknown race	65	27	22	1	15

Proximity no doubt helps explain why about 90 percent of murders by blacks involve black victims, just as it helps explain the similarly high percentage of whites murdered by whites. But it fails to serve as an adequate explanation for black intraracial murders making up over 40 percent of total intraracial murders. A fact check of the topic simply cannot fail to include this information, yet that's exactly what happened. No reader would know about it from the text of PolitiFact's stories. Instead, PolitiFact offered its readers the same insufficient explanation Deggans offered.

PolitiFact, with its reporting, has helped encourage the notion communicated to me by Deggans and one other who joined the conversation, that *[there is no such thing as black-on-black crime](#)*.

That notion may satisfy the mission of political ideologues. It does not satisfy the mission of an organization claiming to give people the facts they need to govern themselves in a democratic society.

The one-sidedness of PolitiFact's stories paints it as partisan, regardless of the intent of the author and editors who approved it or the experts who contributed to the findings. PolitiFact should let the experts try to reasonably explain the numbers instead of simply omitting all mention of them.

This case shows an abject failure of non-partisanship and fairness. And unless PolitiFact revises its stories to supply the missing information, it will also count as another failure of PolitiFact's adherence to an honest and open policy on corrections.

Some background information on black-on-black murder PolitiFact might have cited:

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John\\_Humphrey4/publication/237967726\\_Race\\_Sex\\_and\\_Criminal\\_Homicide\\_Offender-Victim\\_Relationships/links/53dbcf740cf216e4210c0184.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John_Humphrey4/publication/237967726_Race_Sex_and_Criminal_Homicide_Offender-Victim_Relationships/links/53dbcf740cf216e4210c0184.pdf)

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Darnell\\_Hawkins/publication/258129073\\_Black\\_and\\_White\\_Homicide\\_Differentials\\_Alternatives\\_to\\_an\\_Inadequate\\_Theory/links/55e6616308aecb1a7ccd6a19/Black-and-White-Homicide-Differentials-Alternatives-to-an-Inadequate-Theory.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Darnell_Hawkins/publication/258129073_Black_and_White_Homicide_Differentials_Alternatives_to_an_Inadequate_Theory/links/55e6616308aecb1a7ccd6a19/Black-and-White-Homicide-Differentials-Alternatives-to-an-Inadequate-Theory.pdf)

[https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/28007/Lewis\\_DissertationBody.pdf?sequence=1](https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/28007/Lewis_DissertationBody.pdf?sequence=1)

<https://www.hoplophobia.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2018-African-American-Crime-Rates.pdf>

This source is not recommended, as it follows the absurd pattern Deggans and PolitiFact took of simply ignoring the inconvenient statistics.

<http://arizonajusticealliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/for-the-record-unjust-burden-racial>

[-disparities.pdf](#)

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Bryan W. White  
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