

# **Backs Against the Wall**

**What happens when the punishment is the same for violence and non-violence?**

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17 March 2025

# Contents

What do you think will happen? . . . . .	4
Proportionality . . . . .	5
This is scary, I don't like it . . . . .	6

You're drenched in sweat, but you don't have time to think about that right now. You round the corner, almost knocking someone over who looks almost exactly like your *sweet* (but racist) old landlady.

*Actually, you realize, I think that really is my landlady.*

You give no apology, you just *run*.

Before you fully turn away, you see her face begin to take on the expression of something *unnatural*. Something *vicious*.

Running again, you don't look back, but you can sense others rounding the corner, and you expect she's joined the mob, along with so many that you know, and so many more you don't. They yell that *they are going to murder you*. Every single one *screams* it at you.

They're not *zombies*. They're just people. You realized they've always been this way, it's just that something has risen to the surface, something they have chosen to unmask– to unleash.

You catch up with someone else who is also running in the same direction as you. You almost trip, but they catch you. They don't know you, but they know enough to have solidarity. You wonder for a moment if the look in their eyes is a mirror of your own terror.

The *vicious* ones from behind are catching up.

You both round another corner into an alley and before you know it, you've hit a dead-end. The ground trembles and a brick wall rises forth from the ground in front of you. You turn back. *too late*

The *vicious* ones don't meet your eyes. They don't connect with your humanity. You don't bother pleading, it's long past the opportunity for that, if there ever was an opportunity, which would be difficult to discern at the best of times, let alone with your *back against the wall*.

They look the same as they always do, but they look *different*. It feels like they should have sharp teeth, but they just look *normal*. There's something increasingly discomfoting about how *menacing* they are when they just seem so *normal*.

Each one of them pulls out a knife and they collectively begin to close in.

*crash*

Fire erupts in front of the mob. You look to your new companion who is pulling a *molotov cocktail* out of a backpack that you could have sworn they weren't wearing a moment ago. It's made from a mason jar instead of a beer bottle. *That works*, you think. The wick is on the outside and the cap is on– probably so it doesn't splash *demon fire* on the thrower. They light the wick and throw it.

*crash*

The jar breaks and the wick lights the contents that have since spilled out. It's a narrow alleyway and the fire holds them back for the moment, but you know it's only a matter of time.

Someone yells that you are violent terrorists and the mob starts in on a low chant, punctuating words with knife stabs in the air, *violence never solves anything. violence never solves anything. violence never solves anything.*

One of them yells, *now we will kill you **harder** for that!*

The mob laughs.

The low chant begins again, *can't you take a joke? can't you take a joke? can't you take a joke?*

You notice for the first time that all of their knives are already smeared in blood.

Your companion lights two more *molotov cocktails* and hands you one.

You hold it. It smells like equal parts gasoline and styrofoam.

As you consider whether or not to throw it, you wonder, *is this violence?*  
You wonder, *will this ever be enough?*  
You wonder, *does any of this even matter?*  
*You wake up from the nightmare.*

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*You wake up from the nightmare.*

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I said, *you wake up from the nightmare.*

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Oh.

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## What do you think will happen?

I'm not advocating anything here, I'm just asking you to consider what happens if things in the world continue along the path we're currently running.

Dr. King, while advocating for non-violence, used to say that, "a riot is the language of the unheard."

What do you think will happen when our *backs are against the wall*?

What will happen when it's illegal to be trans *everywhere* and there's *nowhere* for us to run anymore?

Do you think we will all just detransition, wash our hands, and say, *well, we gave it a good run, now back to the grind*?

Do you think we will just *die*?

What do you think will happen when nations keep enslaving people of color and sending them to concentration camps?

What happens when your country is being invaded by Nazis? Can you even bring yourself to call them Nazis yet?

What do you think will happen when half the population is at risk of imprisonment and death penalty for even an accidental termination of pregnancy?

What do you think is the result of Palestinian genocide? What do you think is the result of trans genocide? Can you even bring yourself to say trans genocide?

When humans and other animals are under threat, they essentially only have four ways to respond:

- Fight
- Flight

- Freeze
- Fawn

But when your back is against the wall, *flight* is no longer an option.

- ~~Flight~~

*Fawning* is what you do when you give your bully your lunch money. *Fawning* is when a country chooses appeasement over refusal to be complicit. *Fawning* is choosing to be a pick-me. *Fawning* is often complicity. *Fawning never works in the long run*, and rarely even in the short run. Moreover, you often have to sell your soul to do it.

- ~~Fawn~~

*Freezing* is what you're likely doing right now. You're stuck, a deer in headlights, torn between action or inaction, torn with choice anxiety, torn between consequences for revolt or complicity. You weigh the consequences of your decisions, you weigh the consequences for others, and *you wonder if the ends justify the means*.

*There are no ends, only means.*

- Freeze
- Fight?
- Freeze?
- Hyperventilate

What will happen if and when *your* back is against the wall?

What do you expect when it happens to others?

## Proportionality

What happens when there's no sense of *proportionality*?

What happens when the punishment for the *crime of existing* is the same as the crime for resistance. What happens when the punishment is the same for *violence* and *non-violence*?

*What do you think will happen?*

*What do you think will happen when they have no other option?*

*What do you think people will choose?*

## **This is scary, I don't like it**

I know.

*But here we are.*

I don't know what's going to happen, but I know *it's going to get worse.*

I know **it can get better**, but it means you have to do something– yes **you**– *before* people have their backs against the wall. Make no mistake, many *already* have their backs against the wall, but if you want to prevent more, you need to *do something* before it can get to that point.

*Direct Action*

Otherwise, if you *don't* do anything, *what do you think will happen?*

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