



Appeasing Rioters is a Bad Strategy

After every riot, street protest and violation of public order, we hear leaders—elected officials on the local and state levels, clergy, sports team owners and corporate heads—expressing their deep understanding of why there is anger in their communities. We have come to expect sugar-coated explanations from our so-called leaders apologizing for violence. Most of these leaders lack the courage to declare that street thugs, acting under the guise of “social justice,” should be put in jail when they break our laws.

We hear mealy-mouthed college presidents and administrators declaring themselves for “free speech” on campuses, but failing to enforce it by expelling students who disrupt a speaker. We see football players refusing to stand for the U.S. national anthem, while the super-wealthy team owners join hands with them in protest against racial injustice in America. Corporate leaders—the very group that should be most concerned about anti-corporate activism—donate money to the very groups and organizations calling for revolution.

It is mind-boggling to watch our political, religious and financial leaders condoning, in effect, social disorder in our streets, campuses and public life. Are they such fools that they don't understand who their adversaries are? Don't these leaders know that these enemies of order want their heads on a platter? Do they have any awareness that they have a social responsibility to maintain order and prevent social chaos?

The problem is more than limited vision on the part of these leaders. The bigger problem is that much of the social disruption we are seeing today is encouraged and even led by our political, educational, corporate and religious leaders.

St. Louis, 2017

The recent riots in St. Louis, Missouri presented a microcosm of failed leadership. In September, St. Louis, still recovering from the destructive 2014 riots in its inner-ring suburb Ferguson, experienced three days of disruptive demonstrations following a “not guilty” verdict for a white former

police officer, Jason Stockley, for first-degree murder. Stockley was brought to trial as a result of the outgoing city attorney Jennifer Joyce's decision to reopen a 2011 case involving the killing of Anthony Lamar Smith, an African American with a history of drug distribution, gun and theft offenses.

The episode began when Stockley and his police partner witnessed Smith's involvement in what appeared to be a drug deal in northwest St. Louis. When approached, Smith took off in his car, ramming the police vehicle twice and hitting Stockley's hand. After a wild high-speed chase ending in a crash, Stockley and his partner approached the car. According to Stockley's account, Smith was ordered to keep his hands up, but when he appeared to be reaching for something, he was shot five times and killed by Stockley. A handgun was subsequently found in the front seat of Smith's car. Heroin was also found in the car, with Smith's DNA on it. The entire incident after the stop took 15 seconds. A recording made in the police car showed Stockley saying during the chase that he was “going to kill this mother*****.” After internal police, city and federal investigations, city attorney Joyce and the U.S. attorney concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute Stockley for Smith's death.

In 2016—some four years later—Joyce decided to reopen the case, claiming there was “new evidence.” A grand jury indicted Stockley. After a bench trial, during which the prosecution alleged that Stockley planted the gun found in Smith's car, St. Louis Circuit Judge Timothy Wilson ruled that the state had not proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Stockley had not acted in self-defense.

DNA experts for the defense testified that Stockley's DNA on the weapon and the absence of the victim's DNA did not prove anything. DNA could have been transferred to the gun from the evidence bag, and guns often do not reveal the DNA of persons who have touched them. A dashcam video showed Shockley wearing a light summer uniform which

would have revealed any hidden weapon. A gunshot wound on Smith's lower left abdomen lent credence to Stockley's assertion that Smith was turning rightward and reaching for a gun when Stockley shot him.

In a courageous and well-thought-out 30-page decision, the trial judge laid out the weakness of the prosecution's case. The judge found that the 15 seconds in which Stockley stood at the door of Smith's car, ordering him to show his hands, offered no proof that this was a police execution. Following the verdict, Stockley told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "The taking of someone's life is the most significant thing one can do, and it's not done lightly. . . . Every resisting [arrest] looks bad, it never looks good. So what you have to separate are the optics from the facts, and if a person is unwilling to do that, then they've already made up their mind and the facts just don't matter. To those people, there's nothing that I can do to change their minds."¹

Three days of demonstrations ensued as peaceful marches turned into mob violence. Windows were smashed, car windshields broken, bottles and rocks thrown at police. Rioting occurred in downtown St. Louis, the upscale Central West End where the mayor's house was surrounded by about 1,000 protesters, and the inner-ring suburb University City. University City prides itself on its racial diversity and the revitalization of its business district called "The Loop," which had been revived by business leaders to attract a younger crowd of restaurant, pub and shop patrons. By the end of three days of demonstrations, more than 80 people were arrested, at least ten police officers injured, and tens of thousands of dollars of property damaged.²

Spineless Leaders

Coming on the heels of the 2014 Ferguson riots, these demonstrations reinforced a view that St. Louis is a city in decline. What is most outrageous about what occurred in St. Louis was that it was avoidable. St. Louis prosecutor Jennifer Joyce chose to revive a case that had been extensively reviewed more than four years earlier. In pursuing this case, Joyce seemed to have taken a page from Maryland state's attorney Marilyn J. Mosby, who brought charges against six Baltimore policemen accused in the death of a black man, Freddie Gray, and failed to achieve a single conviction. Mosby is now being sued by five of the officers for malicious prosecution, defamation and invasion of privacy.³

St. Louis clergymen calling for Stockley's conviction bear some responsibility for what followed the verdict. The Friday before the acquittal, 25 clergy demonstrated outside the courthouse. Led by Rev. Clinton Stancil, pastor of the Wayman AME Church in St. Louis, clergymen demanded a guilty verdict. In a public letter to the court they declared, "Any decision by you other than a guilty verdict will make you liable for any ensuing unrest or acts of aggression." The group added that "in biblical terms, the blood will be on your hands."⁴

The mayor of St. Louis—a woman whose husband was murdered in cold blood before her eyes in a 1995 attempted carjacking—failed to stand up for the police and the judicial system. Prior to the decision, Mayor Lyda Krewson had observed that the citizens of St. Louis do not trust the criminal justice system. Immediately after the acquittal, she told the press, "My thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Anthony Lamar Smith, our police, judge, prosecutor, our citizens who find no comfort or justice, and everyone involved in this difficult case." She added, "I am appalled at what happened to Anthony Lamar Smith. I am sobered by this outcome. Frustration, anger, hurt, pain, hope and love all intermingle."⁵

Mayor's Home Vandalized

These empathetic words did not prevent a mob from throwing stones and bottles through the mayor's windows at her home in the Central West End. Her statement after the trial did not spark the riots, but her words suggested that the acquittal of Stockley, a decorated war veteran and graduate of West Point, was an injustice. Instead of a stern warning that any violence following the trial would be punished, she issued platitudes. As for her lament for Anthony Lamar Smith, a convicted drug offender found with heroin in his car, she might have used Smith's death as lesson about the tragedy of drugs in St. Louis. Immediately after the St. Louis Board of Aldermen unanimously passed a resolution honoring Smith, Mayor Krewson and the board president hugged Smith's mother. A subsequent proposed board resolution to thank the police for their response to the protests went nowhere.

Where were the grownups to point out that resisting arrest is not a good idea?

Politicians and clergy were not the only leaders eager to show sympathy for the dead criminal suspect and for protesters. Classes were dismissed at the local Jesuit college,

Saint Louis University, which has become an epicenter for social justice education, as well as at local high schools. At Webster Groves High School, in the affluent suburb of Webster Groves, students marched out of classes to hold a protest against the verdict. Superintendent John Simpson wrote to parents of the students, "It is our hope that students who participated today learned the value of peaceful assembly." Students at University City High and Kirkwood High cut classes to march, chanting, "No justice, no peace." The same morning, University of Missouri-St. Louis students marched, chanting, "The whole damn system is guilty as hell."⁶

These college and high school administrators and educators could have used the court decision to discuss why the judge acquitted Stockley, or how heroin is devastating St. Louis and other cities across the nation. They might even have told students that if they cut classes they would be penalized because they were in school to be educated and not to learn how to "peacefully protest."

Capitulation on Campuses

The St. Louis college and high school administrators followed the same approach that administrators have used when faced with student protesters at Middlebury College, University of California, Berkeley, Claremont College, Columbia University, Evergreen State College, Yale University, University of Missouri-Columbia, Auburn University and many more: that is, they typically coddle the left-wing demonstrators. Numerous colleges have allowed students to shut down or intimidate speakers or professors. (See *Mindszenty Report*, May 2017.)

Meanwhile, many college professors remain inexplicably upbeat about the state of free speech on campuses.⁷ For example, Julian Zelizer, an historian at Princeton University and a regular on CNN, stated, "My view is that, generally, the state of college campuses is pretty good. When I hear laments about the demise of free speech at universities and colleges, and certainly about the new fascism in university life, my instinct is that these commentators are taking some examples of outlandish protest and crass behavior to paint an inaccurate picture of the majority of students."⁸

Yet free speech is not alive and well on college campuses. Professor Zelizer might be correct that these protesters are only a minority, but protesters have been violent and have disrupted speakers on many campuses. He ignores the larger ramifications of violent protests in that they intimi-

date faculty and student groups from inviting speakers who are controversial. Any student group or faculty member who invites a controversial speaker will inevitably be charged with being racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic or white supremacist. Many decide it's not worth it. And, they know they won't be backed by the administration in most cases.

These college administrators are not just cowards; they kowtow to the protesters because they too often share the sentiment that indeed their institutions reflect "white privilege." These administrators are fellow travelers in the movement for "social justice" in America. This is evident in general education curriculum requirements that classes have a social justice component, and in the huge bureaucracy of diversity officers who oversee faculty hires, academic programs and student life. Concerns about the First Amendment, the right of free speech, religious conscience and freedom of assembly are ignored.

University administrations should look of all places to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, at which the Board of Regents recently enacted a policy that students found to have twice engaged in violence or disorderly conduct that disrupts others' free speech will be suspended.⁹ Actually the new policy is rather mild in that it takes two instances of disorderly conduct, and then the punishment is suspension, not expulsion.

Toleration of Violence

The failure of leaders to stick up for the police and public safety has consequences. The "Ferguson effect," as Manhattan Institute fellow Heather Mac Donald observes, is evident in the increase of homicides in the 56 largest cities in the United States. Those cities closed 2015 with a 17 percent increase in homicides over 2014, the year of the Ferguson riots. Twelve cities with large black populations saw murders rise, from 54 percent in the District of Columbia to 90 percent in Cleveland.¹⁰ Two years after the Freddie Gray riots, Baltimore by September had recorded 238 homicides in 2017.¹¹ In our major cities, police are wary of making routine stops of black suspects because they will be vilified by the press and local community leaders as racists. These officers know they won't be supported by city officials.

Instead of standing for law and order, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio marched in a Puerto Rican Day parade in June honoring terrorist Oscar Lopez Rivera. Rivera was a leader in FALN, a nationalist Puerto Rican militant

group that conducted a war of terror in the 1970s and 1980s, including two attacks in New York City that killed five people. Bryan Burrough in his magnificent history of American terrorism in this period, *Days of Rage* (2016), discovered that FALN conducted more terrorist bombings than did any other revolutionary group in this period. Yet, de Blasio decided to join a march intended to reconstruct Lopez Rivera into a hero.¹²

Corporate leaders and foundations are providing funding to protest groups that organize demonstrations that sometimes turn violent. The *Washington Free Beacon*, using unredacted tax forms, discovered that millions of foundation dollars have been given to the Center for Community Change, a Washington community organizing group that has been a leader in training and organizing “the resistance” to President Trump and to Republicans long before the November 2016 elections. Organizers for the Center for Community Change sit on many activist organizations, the vanguard of the “anti-fascist”—Antifa—movement which has been directly involved in riots in Berkeley, Seattle, Portland, Baltimore, Charlottesville and an array of other cities.

The Center for Community Change received funding to the tune of \$3 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, \$2.3 million from the Ford Foundation and \$1.7 million from George Soros’s Open Society Foundation.¹³ In addition, the Ford Foundation and the Borealis Foundation announced the formation of a Black-Led Movement Fund, a six-year pooled donor campaign aimed at raising \$100 million for the Movement for Black Lives coalition. Black Lives Matter had earlier received a \$30 million grant from George Soros’s Open Society Foundation.

Providing the Hanging Rope

Russian revolutionary V. I. Lenin is reputed to have said that capitalists would sell revolutionaries the rope from which the Bolsheviks would hang them. Today, our leaders are not just selling the rope; they are providing free rope. These corporate leaders, city officials and university administrators are generally not revolutionaries themselves, although a few on the New York, Seattle, Berkeley and other city councils are actually self-styled revolutionaries. Nevertheless, leaders should be held accountable for contributing to agents of disorder.

Across our nation, we are witnesses to capitulation of leaders to mobs. This surrender is seen in public officials, educators, clergy, and corporate and foundation heads. Their failure to respond to mob action expresses political opportunism, shared sentiment of injustice, and occasionally outright complicity in helping to sow disorder and violence. We deserve better leaders.

1 Edward Helmore, “St. Louis Protests Turn Violent for Third Night Over Acquittal of White Officer,” *The Guardian*, September 17, 2017.

2 Ibid.

3 Justin Fenton, “Freddie Gray Case: Judge Allows Malicious Prosecution Lawsuit against Mosby to Proceed,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 6, 2017.

4 Joel Currier, “Clergy to Judge: ‘The Blood Will Be on Your Hands’ if Jason Stockley is Acquitted of Murder,” *St. Louis-Dispatch*, September 10, 2017.

5 Doyle Murphy, “Students Protest Jason Stockley Verdict, Leaving Class and Going on March,” *Riverfront Times*, September 9, 2017.

6 Ibid.

7 <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/09/students-free-speech-campus-protest/539673/>.

8 Ibid.

9 Jazz Shaw, “University of Wisconsin To Crack Down on Disruptions of Free Speech,” *Hot Air*, October 7, 2017.

10 Heather Mac Donald, “The Ferguson Effect,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 2016.

11 “Baltimore Could Surpass New York City in Homicides This Year,” *Associated Press*, September 9, 2017.

12 <http://nypost.com/2017/05/31/de-blasio-defers-to-parade-organizers-on-honoring-terrorist/>.

13 “Donors to Anti-Trump Resistance Group Revealed,” *Washington Free Beacon*, October 4, 2017.

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