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## Crime and (No) Punishment

By Steve Bakke  December 28, 2021



The world changed with the first news of a mysterious virus suspected to have originated in a Chinese lab, or wet market, or wherever. An unexpected perfect storm was on the horizon. News of COVID-19 elbowed its way into our consciousness along with a failed impeachment trial in January and February of 2020. Politicians were girding for a Presidential election, and with that, a societal “perfect storm” needed only a lit fuse.

The Memorial Day killing of George Floyd became that lit fuse. The hoped-for opportunity for legitimate and peaceful protests was not to be. Legitimate much-needed reform efforts were kicked aside by anarchists and thugs, stealing the stage with violence, looting, and destruction.

Let's connect some dots.

Fear, the most powerful human emotion, gripped many state and local governments. Law enforcement was told to “stand down” in the foolish and futile hope of letting angry emotions burn out. But violence raged for months, and in many communities it continues still. Despite a spiking crime rate, many on the left were inclined to label the violence and destruction as somehow virtuous, and “defund the police” movements gained popularity.

Old fashioned tolerance has been radicalized into intolerance and identity politics. And there is a new all-encompassing word to describe it...“wokeness.” People are afraid of speaking out because disagreement or debate isn't tolerated. For some, differences of opinion are considered personal offenses. Intimidation and fear are incompatible with freedom and make it impossible for philosophical opponents to work together. And we learned another new word – “cancellation.” This new “cancel culture's” success was nurtured by society's fear.

New ideologies led radicalized leftists to conclude that they know better than some old White-guys who founded our country; better than those whose statues adorn our parks; and are certainly better informed than those who've written our history books. Rather than

working to fix our many flaws, their appetite for chaos would have us start over as a society and country – surely a doomsday choice.

Eventually, the joy found in destroying historical relics and statues deteriorated. Attention turned to new destructive exploits. Leftist DAs are displaying an appetite for removing criminal accountability. For example, many jurisdictions no longer enforce shoplifting or loitering statutes. And the habit of catch and release with little or no bail is common, even for serious crimes. These measures seem intoxicating to “woke folk.”

Some radicals even support releasing much of the prison population. They believe leniency and compassion will reduce crime. Rather, we see new and ever more bold crimes, including a “smash-and-grab” pandemic and fearless car jackings.



Thankfully, the recent Kyle Rittenhouse acquittal was a potential watershed event in this 2-year chain of events. Rather than trying the young man for illegal “vigilantism,” the trial was appropriately focused on whether his actions were legal self-defense. Rather than legitimizing the destruction and violence that occurred, the acquittal acknowledged his actions were legal, however ill-advised. The “rule of law” prevailed. Let’s build on this.

Who would have imagined that Americans would be arguing about enforcing law and order? Law enforcement is receding as violence and other crimes increase. I’m frustrated that some see justifiable purpose in the destructiveness and actions of “cancellation.” And I’m saddened by the permanence of so much of the damage.

Hopefully, the radical leftist movement to achieve what they’ve labeled as “criminal justice reform” will burn itself out. Let’s bring an end to the time that opposition to lawlessness is labeled “White supremacy.” We should no longer find chatrooms and letters-to-the-editor discussing ways to dodge violence and about where to find safety.

Gone should be the time that true crime is falsely labeled as an elite “construct” for preserving White privilege. Petty crime should no longer be accepted as an unavoidable reality of urban living. Let’s think once again about character and not just about skin color. True criminals should no longer be considered unfortunate victims. Let’s bring back responsibility, accountability, and enforced rules of law.

Public safety requires rules and stability. Think about the things that keep us safe and secure. How can we have a nation, or culture, and how can we be called a civilization, without them? Begone fear, uncertainty, confusion, and societal division.