

Defenders of Civilization? - American Greatness

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The year 2020 witnessed a long series of writs lodged against an America beset with plague, quarantine, recessions, riot and arson, and the most contested election since 1876.

What was strange was not so much the anarchist Left's efforts in the present to wipe away the past to recalibrate our *Animal Farm* future. What was odder were both the absurdities of the complaints against American civilization, and the unwillingness or inability of Americans to rebut them and defend their own culture.

Demonizing Our Past

In just a year, thousands of memorials and icons have vanished. Names have changed, words are banned. Careers were ruined. As new totalitarian rules were enshrined, old freedoms became despised.

Yet most of the country sat in lockdown quiet, as it was told that it, and its history, were toxic and culpable—and by whom exactly? Moralists like Labron James? Steve Kerr? Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez?

Were Americans in their 244th year suddenly to write checks, apologize, and pay penance to their angry self-described moral superiors?

A few schools apparently are no longer to be named after Abraham Lincoln, the president who saved the Union, destroyed the slave-holding Confederacy, and freed the slaves at a cost of nearly 700,000 American lives. Now 155 years after his assassination, the present generation—the most leisured, entitled, and wealthiest cohort in civilization's history—deems him unworthy and unfit for any commemoration. Do any of the street-brawling Antifa radicals seem tough guys in comparison to the Union troops at Gettysburg or those who marched with Sherman?

Who or what does the Left offer in place in Lincoln—Che? Fidel? Malcolm X? Cesar Chavez? Margaret Sanger? Xi Jinping? FDR? Barack Obama? All would fall well short of the alleged standards applied by cancel culture. So what are we left with other than nothing? Diversity Academy A? Equity High School No. 3? Inclusion College IV? Campus 1619?

What happens if one principal, just a single superintendent, a few parents, three board members say, “Nope, we are not erasing Lincoln's name, no way, no how”?

Little need be said of increasing tense racial relations, given that the collective optimism of a year ago during the booming 2019 economy—record low minority unemployment and the undepreciated powers of assimilation and integration were beginning to make race more incidental than essential—has dissipated. That was

then, and this is now after pandemic, lockdown, recession, George Floyd's tragic death, riot and looting, a bitter election, and an ongoing cultural revolution.

Cornell University is now mandating flu shots for its on-campus students, but with allowances for nonwhites to petition for exemptions, in the manner of those pedigreed epidemiologists who all but said science should be ignored in ranking those to be vaccinated by their race. Had someone in 1980, 1990, or 2005 predicted such things, he would have been written off as a dystopian crackpot.

What happens if an elderly so-called white person dies of COVID-19, when a state medical policy ignores science and substitutes racial preference instead? Will his estate file a class action suit that the state has violated the Constitution and is culpable for needless death?

What Legal System?

Is there really a legal system any more, at least as we once knew it, in our major cities—New York, Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles? Violent crime has soared. Murders are up 30-50 percent in many of those places.

In 2020, whether an arsonist, looter, or rioter was arrested, indicted, and jailed depended on the ideology of the perpetrator and the political context of the crime. Old ideas like “broken windows” preventative enforcement went down the memory hole. Did Rudolph Giuliani's crime-reduction miracle in New York City ever really exist? Is it legal for a district attorney simply to announce that he will no longer enforce the legal code? Can victims of ensuing crimes sue such somnolent prosecutors?

Police forces operate under a “defunding” sword of Damocles amid a general collapse of spirit. Officers assume that if they arrest violent criminals, three things are likely to happen and all of them are likely deemed bad.

Either police can make an in-vain arrest in their no-bail, Soros-funded prosecuting attorney jurisdictions and see the arrested subject released, angry or defiant or both. Or they can risk being attacked or shot by emboldened criminals, given police deterrence has vanished. Or, *in extremis*, they can use force and find themselves charged with a felony and likely to have their careers ruined.

So police pull back, deterrence is lost, the elite rely on their money, influence, connections, and distance from the mayhem for their security. The poor and middle classes fend on the front lines as they can. Will the working classes establish their own security teams to police their neighborhoods? If they did, would that be vigilantism, or is vigilantism what the rich already practice with their armed guards who patrol their properties?

The homeless population of more than half-a-million seems to grow ever larger, as they line the boulevards of our major cities. How could a wealthier more sophisticated society of 2020, the greenest in world history, allow feces on its sidewalks, random harassment of its passersby, and garbage, and worse, strewn in its parks? Are there homeless outside the French Laundry restaurant? Do they camp at the curb outside Gavin Newsom's mansions? Why could not our Silicon Valley multibillionaires endow a health campus, or Ivy League campuses translate their abstract caring into concrete welcoming of the homeless into their empty

summertime dorms?

Americans know that purging the word “vagrant,” “liberating” the ill from mental asylums, and allowing public urination and defecation did *not* solve the problem. They sense they know the solution is the restoration of hospitals and health care halfway houses, but are too weary to hear the furious outcry.



Barry Chin/Boston Globe via Getty Images

Losing a Generation

The American university, once the global model of higher education, is in veritable shambles in ways that translate the value of its steep tuition reduced to laptop zooming.

There is no First Amendment on campus. The culture of the Salem Witch Trials applies: save yourself by going woke while going on the offensive to accuse others of witchcraft.

Administration has become a memo-writing contest, as both endangered and

aspiring white males issue edicts condemning items in the news to illustrate their superior woke bona fides. Most pay as much attention to them as did the vandals to purple toga magistrates reading edicts to the wind in Rome circa fifth-century A.D.

We hope only that the firebreaks thrown up around the social sciences and humanities can prevent their infectious nihilism from crossing into the sciences and professional schools. What is most striking is the self-righteousness of the university faculty, administration, and students, despite their collective culpability for the current chaos.

Statue topplers were taught to hate dead white males, but never taught about the particular historical, literary, or cultural contexts that fuel their deductive hate. Is spray painting easier than reading?

All the ingredients for civilizational *stasis*—delayed or nonexistent marriage and child-bearing, massive unsustainable student debt, ideological indoctrination without learning, and superficial credentialing—originate in the university.

And yet no one in academia steps forward to offer ways to slash costs, or to promise the campus will guarantee its own student loans, or to take some responsibility for the current demographic, financial, and ideological crisis of our twentysomething lost generation, as it stagnates in prolonged adolescence. Can we at least have the university endowment substitute for the federal government as the last guarantor of student loans?

The media has proven deadly but not serious. Few believed in the “Russian collusion” yarn; all assumed its weaponizing of the original Christopher Steele/Hillary Clinton/Fusion GPS mythography was to paralyze the Trump Administration.

All knew that Trump was far harder on Russia than his predecessor. And none cared. The Ukrainian hysteria that led to impeachment—like the Brett Kavanaugh hit and like the news blackout of Biden Inc.—did the country terrible damage, but again was so farcical that even the purveyors of the lies knew that their charges were not serious.

Now after they have destroyed their credibility and lost the trust of the American people, what is next for the media? We are left with a bad version of a Ministry of Truth, as supposed muckrakers and young Zolas vie with each other to find out what color socks or which flavor milkshake “President-elect” Biden prefers. Like *Pravda* that often translated Leonid Brezhnev’s incoherent mutterings into truth speak, so too after January we will be reminded that an often incoherent Biden is really Cicero.

Importing and Nurturing Ingratitude and Decline

There are more immigrants in the United States than at any time in its history. More arrive here each year, legally or illegally, than to any other nation. And they do so not for the New Green Deal or abortion on demand. Instead, as mostly minorities, they expect to find more freedom, economic prosperity, meritocracy, and personal safety in America than they did as majorities in their home nations. Do they know, but cannot say, that?

Yet we are hellbent on transmogrifying the immigrant experience into one in which the newly arrived must lodge complaints against their hosts, as if we are to assume they chose to immigrate to what they didn't like and to abandon what they did. What happened to requiring every immigrant to have familiarity with English, a high school diploma, and legal entry? Does anyone believe such requirements would make newcomers less successful? Or is the rub that they would arrive more independent, more upbeat about America, and less inclined to be patronized—and therefore not so needed by the Left?

Some days decline is ascendent. On Sunday, I drove through Fresno on Highway 41. The landscaping on the berms of both sides has become a veritable homeless village of the desperate and forgotten. Oddly, some abodes were subterranean, as the homeless, in World War I fashion, had dug under trees to pitch tents over their burrows.

Last night, walking through our almond orchard, a truck was parked on the alleyway, the driver standing outside with an automatic rifle. I had no idea whether he was working for a neighbor to shoot squirrels, or the renegade who shoots doves that sometimes drop wounded or dead in our yard, or the one who shot the majestic red-tail hawk who rotted for weeks on a power pole transformer with a bullet in him. The stranger was polite and put the gun down, but spoke no English as I walked on by with four dogs. Does Nancy Pelosi encounter such people in her environs?

In between these two incidents I read the local news, with its daily fare of gang shootings, and fatal drunk-driving wrecks—both are way up in the San Joaquin Valley in 2020. During this lockdown, there are the now-familiar details that the lethal driver was out without bail or had a host of prior DUIs—the equivalent of mere traffic tickets in 2020. There seems a new boldness too in the *modus operandi* of speeders, drunks, and criminals ramming police cars when purportedly pulling over.

Not long ago when two young women were having sex in the back of their car parked in the orchard, then gave me the finger when I walked by, and then spun out and sped away, it was deemed a calm day—no drug injectors, no trash tossers, no stolen car strippers.

Searching for Common Denominators in Our Malaise

Is there some common denominator in our malaise? A look back at Athens 340 B.C., or Rome 440 A.D., or Constantinople 1440, or France 1940? Perhaps.

Is the culprit an estranged elite of the keep—wealthy enough to ensure that the consequences of its own toxic ideology fall only upon others?

Our grandees seem too exhausted, too guilty, or too ignorant to pass on and improve the civilization they inherited for others to come. Instead, the elite justifies its leisure, privilege, and affluence by medieval penance, virtue signaling and offering confessionals about their own “unearned” white privilege. It is strange to see the Volvo brigade of our most privileged Americans on the metaphorical barricades, as if they are the real revolutionaries who fuel BLM and Antifa.

Why do \$20,000 refrigerators, trying to torch a federal courthouse, and spitting in

a policeman's face all seem to have something vaguely in common? Revolutions with ensuing chaos usually follow from the professional and upper-classes joining the mob, either in expectation their solidarity will earn exemption, or as a lark out of boredom, or in ignorance about the venom of those who destroy monuments and burn, or in furor their own upward mobility did not quite land them among the most chosen of the elite.

For now we wait for one local PTA member to refuse to change the name of his Lincoln school, or a crusading prosecutor who issues 40 federal racketeering indictments the next time Antifa drives in to town to take over a house, torch a courthouse, or reclaim a street, or a judge who sentences a violent arsonist to a 20-year sentence *pour encourager les autres*, or an exasperated college dean who will say no to segregating dorms or no-go zones by race, or one honest journalist who finally presses Joe Biden to answer what have Hunter and his family done.