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The Mayhem Is the Message

If the aim of violence is to expose the racism of America, the worse the better



By: William McGurn

For Americans of goodwill, the chaos and criminality transpiring in the name of George Floyd are absolutely baffling.

Ever since Floyd died at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, filmed with a knee on the man's neck while he was not resisting, almost no one has excused police actions—including fellow cops.

Even Donald Trump, who called himself “the president of law and order,” called the video “shocking” and promised the Floyd family that justice will be served. In this the president reflects the mood of his countrymen. A Reuters/Axios poll is clarifying: 73% of Americans “support the peaceful protests and demonstrations that have taken place,” and 79% believe the lawlessness and destruction “undermine the original protest’s case for justice.”

This reasonable view should offer a path for Americans to come together. Instead it is being deliberately frustrated by those answering with rocks and Molotov cocktails, as well as by their

apologists. “Please, show me where it says protests are supposed to be polite and peaceful,” asserted Chris Cuomo on CNN.

If justice for George Floyd is the goal, many cannot fathom how it makes any sense to trash already-vulnerable neighborhoods, kill other African-American men in the process, and destroy black-owned stores that, as former President Barack Obama just pointed out, may never come back. But it makes perfect sense if the goal is to indict America as fatally compromised by racism since birth. And if the mayhem provokes authorities such as Mr. Trump into further inflaming the situation, so much the better.

“Radical mobs on campuses call speech they don’t like ‘violence,’ ” says Scott Walter of the Capital Research Center. “Radical mobs in the streets call their violence ‘speech.’ Either way, instead of highlighting the difference between peaceful protesters and rioters, they want to erase it.”

With apologies to Marshall McLuhan, the mayhem *is* the message.

It's also the corollary of "systemic racism." As the CRC's new "Architects of Woke" video shows, the seeds of systemic racism were planted by Stokely Carmichael when he broke with Martin Luther King Jr., in part over the latter's insistence on nonviolence. Carmichael spoke of "institutional racism," but the contention was roughly the same: Individual acts of racism can distract us from the real problem, which is that the entire American system is racist to the core and always has been.

When Carmichael talked of this in the mid-1960s, his was a fringe view. Today it's the Pulitzer Prize-winning orthodoxy behind the New York Times's "1619 Project."

In practice, it also means no concession will ever be enough. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, for example, may be the most racially woke politician in America, married to a black woman and the father of two black children, one of whom was arrested during a New York City protest.

Yet last Thursday Mr. de Blasio was booed off the stage when he attempted to speak at a Brooklyn memorial for George Floyd. How did the mayor go from progressive in chief to enemy of the people? He'd imposed a curfew in the mildest of efforts to save his city from destruction.

Does anyone doubt that sooner or later Joe Biden will find himself subjected to the same treatment, no matter what he says on the subject or whom he picks as his running mate?

Then there's Drew Brees. Like most Americans, the New Orleans Saints quarterback

was repulsed by Floyd's death. He expressed his solidarity by sharing a black square on Instagram for #BlackOutTuesday. But then he told Yahoo! Finance that he disapproved of players disrespecting the flag by taking a knee during the national anthem.

From the reaction, you might have thought some grand dragon had just weighed in. Within a day Mr. Brees was forced not only to recant but to confess that his "privilege" meant it was divisive and hurtful for him to offer such an opinion at all.

Those promoting—and manipulating—the violence aren't interested in debate or facts, least of all those that might contradict their narrative about a war on unarmed black men by white police. They are using the mayhem to shut down honest debate and bully anyone who dares offer the slightest criticism into confessing he speaks from a position of moral inferiority.

Robert L. Woodson says we must not let that happen. The 83-year-old Mr. Woodson is a veteran of the civil-rights movement who runs the Woodson Center, which for nearly four decades has done the hard work of trying to "transform lives, schools and neighborhoods from the inside out." He rejects the worse-it-gets-the-better ethos of those hijacking peaceful protests to turn them violent, calling it a ruse to distract attention from, for example, the failure of black children in school systems run by their own people.

"There are a small group of people hell-bent on destroying this republic," he says. "They are using our birth defect of slavery to devalue our founding principles and virtues, and using race grievance as its weapon. We must resist."