Letter From Baltimore: "Start Throwing Rocks"–Black Professor's Call Shows City Past Tipping Point. Is America?

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Ellen Packer August 24, 2017, 10:04 pm A+ | a-

In the week after the Charlottesville disorder, several notable things happened 130 miles to the northeast in Baltimore. Several public statues commemorating Civil War-era figures were hustled away in the dead of night. Five new homicides were chalked up. And Nathan Connolly, an African American associate professor of history at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University penned an op-ed for the *Washington Post* that may—depending on how you parse it—have called for terrorism against civil society.

Actually, five murders in a week wasn't notable in Baltimore. In mid-June, six people were killed in a single 24-hour period. The dog days of summer have sapped everyone's energy.

Nor, really, were the monument removals remarkable. They followed years of pandering to African-American sensibilities, which are both fragile and volatile, bouncing from angst over the death of a small-time (but persistent) drug-dealer in 2015 to complaints about a subsequent absence of policing in black neighborhoods.

The *WaPo* Op Ed was particularly striking. Its premise was that liberalism has failed to deal with racial injustice in the U.S.—and its conclusion was that blacks need to resume throwing rocks. Whether the rocks are to be literal or metaphorical is only somewhat in question.

Baltimore's murder problem, like its drug problem, police corruption problem, subliteracy problem, tax-base problem, and population-decline problem, has a distinctively demographic component. The racial mix of the city is now approximately 63% African-American, 29% white, with allegedly undercounted Latinos making up most of the rest. Those numbers accompany an eye-catching murder rate. So far in 2017 (through August 22) there have been 225 homicides. If the pace continues and the city closes the year with a record 355 murders, that would be 12% more than last year and a handful more than the city's *annus mirabilis* 2015, in which 344 were killed.

To give the numbers some context, the U.S. murder rate is about 4.9 per hundred thousand; in Baltimore, it's approaching 11 times that—56 per hundred thousand. That puts Charm City behind only St. Louis (60 per 100k) and well ahead of New Orleans (45) and Detroit (44), not to mention Chicago, which isn't even a contender at 28.

Race statistics don't explain it all. The mix in New Orleans is similar to Baltimore's, and Detroit is 81% black. Baltimore's gunmen have been particularly deadly.

It is difficult, just Googling around, to find a white murder suspect in Baltimore. The image search "Murder Arrests Baltimore 2017." produces this:

Those are mostly suspects, but the young man in uniform was actually a victim—stabbed (allegedly) by a white guy.

If you scrolled further down, you would see pictures of a white guy—but he's a victim, too, Sebastian Dvorak, a popular bartender *not* stabbed by a white guy.

The city doesn't publish statistics on murder arrests by race—at least I couldn't find any in several hours of searching.

But the photo array is consistent with two observations: that most homicide victims in the city are African-American (93% according to *The New York Times*, looking at 2015), and that between 1980 and 2008, 93% of black victims nationwide were killed by other blacks, according to a DOJ report. [PDF] Nationally, FBI statistics show homicides by blacks run about 4 times their 12-13% of the U.S. population; that is, slightly more than half the murders in the U.S. are

committed by African-Americans. Cities like Baltimore contribute much of that overrepresentation. None of this is disputed. Last year's FBI report offers ample statistical detail.

The impact of black crime on the small (6 million population) state of Maryland, site of one of the earliest English settlements, is statistically dramatic. With 553 homicides in 2015, including Baltimore's 344, Maryland logged 9.2 murders per hundred thousand residents. Not only was that rate 88% higher than the national average, it meant that Maryland's per capita murder rate was surpassed only by the rates in Louisiana and the District of Columbia. The 29% of Maryland residents who are African-American provided the pool from which 77% of homicide arrests were made in 2015. State and federal statistics vary slightly.[PDF] Overall, 70% of all persons incarcerated in Maryland are African-American. [PDF]

Social activists claim this is evidence of bias. Living in Baltimore, as I do, or some D.C. suburbs, a person could accept the total as simply evidence of the distribution of criminality.

Such numbers are familiar to VDARE.com readers. But they don't describe the visceral unpleasantness of living in Baltimore. The downtown sidewalk population is overwhelmingly African-American, which presents the not-unfair question: Is a slightly scruffy, moderately tattooed fellow one passes outside a Charles Street office tower headed for a job, or is he bound several blocks north for a day in court? Is he potentially a threat? (Business executives arrive by car directly into secure garages.)

Come dark, the sidewalks empty. Commercial ventures appealing to a more diverse population have vanished. A general seediness prevails. A trip along the light rail line through the city reveals shabby properties and skulking people, especially as dusk approaches.

And criminals are mobile. In upscale neighborhoods, far from the downtown, patrons leaving a French bistro are robbed at gunpoint. A woman walking her dog is stabbed to death. A woman returning from the market is brutalized by intruders who have followed her. Dirt bikes scream along the avenues into the wee hours.

These observations are not built on a single year's statistics. In both 2015 and 2016, young women in the city (one visiting from Michigan) were run down and killed by illegal motor bikes. On August 11 (a day before the Charlottesville protest), a 66-year-old Baltimore woman, Margaret Hall, was killed when her car was struck by a vehicle driven by a Bloods gang member fleeing police.

The cases underscore the randomness of a violent city. Ryan Hazel, the alleged driver of the car that killed Hall, had been sentenced in 2015 to three years on gun charges, of which two and half years were suspended. Searching his vehicle, police say they found a handgun with a 50-round magazine (pictured). [*Woman killed in hit-and-run by gang member who should have been behind bars,* by Laura Lee, ABC2, August 11, 2017]

Hazel's mug shot supplied TV poster art for a couple of days.

But you can search the net and not find a photo of the late Margaret Hall, who as of this writing has not been designated a murder victim.

Whites take an unspoken comfort in the knowledge that most violent crime victims in the city are black. If their consciences were as alert as they imagine, it might be a guilty comfort. Yet the tilted victimhood is one of the things keeping the city from falling apart. If the statistically appropriate number of whites had been killed so far this year—65— instead of a handful of late-working bartenders and chance victims, the tipping point would have come and passed. Now, absent a repeat of the 2015 riots, there is a feeling that the city wobbles, as residents wait for what comes next.

But in truth, the tipping point passed long ago. The only question is the speed of the descent.

Late on the night of August 15, the city removed four Civil War-era monuments. Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson had to go, of course, and a monument honoring Confederate women—portraying a mother embracing a dead soldier— was surely provocative.

The other monument, hoisted from Mount Vernon Place, honored the fifth Chief Justice of the United States, Maryland native Roger Taney, whose offense was authoring the Dred Scott decision. Two nights later Larry Hogan, the Republican governor, who had written his father's name on the presidential ballot rather than vote for Trump, ordered removal of a Taney statue at the State House.

All of this was exciting to CNN and NBC, which had overlooked Margaret Hall's death, though of course not the death of Heather Heyer in Charlottesville. Heyer was a martyr to Feelgood, Hall was business as usual. The monument removals were also a salve to Baltimore's racial justice activists, who want to believe—or hope the rest of us will believe—that symbols lingering from the world of six generations ago, the last time slavery existed in the United States, impair black fulfillment in 2017.

Mayor Catherine Pugh [Email her] stated that the overnight monument removals served public safety. The City Council had voted unanimously for the civic cleansing. But addressing the perhaps more pressing public safety problem of homicide, city officials can seldom improve on fatuity, and Pugh didn't try. Earlier this summer she called for a "holistic and comprehensive" solution. "I'm meeting with the community," she said, according to the Baltimore *Brew*. "I'm talking to folks from the Muslim community. I'm talking to folks that engage in de-escalating violence. . . I've engaged about 20 people who come here every other week to sit down and tell me what's going on in the streets. More than what I am seeing because I'm out there."[*Mayor outlines a smorgasbord of strategies to reduce Baltimore violence,* by Mark Reutter, July 27, 2017]

Also, she has asked the U.S. Justice Department and the state for help. The last move isn't a bad strategy. It spreads the blame for an inevitable failure.

What "holistic" solutions might do for the general dissolution of black families, the city's low graduation rate and abysmal competency rate, social degeneracy, and underclass unemployment is a reasonable question that is without an answer, except: not much. The urban rot spreads across miles of dilapidated neighborhoods. The social rot runs, if anything, deeper. The city's majority population can't be expected to look itself in the eye and see what's to be seen.

And murder rates don't fully tell the story of crime in Baltimore. Dead bodies are easy to count. But attempted murder, carjackings, street robbery and stabbings are the nightly fare. A rash of nighttime burglaries in your neighborhood by an African-American team is almost a trifle. It's hard, at this point, to blame Roger Taney.

Politics is a game of three-card Monte. The money card, an improved society, seldom appears. But if the mark remains distracted, he can be fleeced again and again.

The challenge Baltimore faces: keeping the marks in place. If the wealthier population remains in the game, paying lofty income and property taxes, the city's deterioration can remain steady, if not stately. As population trickles away, new, younger marks can be lured into the game.

What the city cannot afford—and this is the only possible justification of Pugh's decision to hoist the monuments—is another major social disruption like the riots in 2015. But it's exactly such social disruption that a professor at Johns Hopkins University in the city celebrates and seems to be calling for more of.

Nathan D. B. Connolly, [Email him] an associate professor of history at Hopkins, found his subject early, and unsurprisingly for an African-American scholar in the 21st century, the subject was race. On his Hopkins web page, he announces:

> *I write about racism, capitalism, politics, and the built environment in the twentieth century. My work pays special attention to people's overlapping understandings of property rights and civil rights in the United States and the wider Americas.*

Connolly's dissertation at Michigan in 2008 explored racial aspects of the development of Miami, Florida, and concluded:

> As perhaps the single greatest source of social and economic power in the twentieth century, real estate defined 'whites,' 'blacks,' and 'America.' And whosoever controlled real estate controlled the making of these.[By eminent domain: Race and capital in the building of an American South Florida]

That's kind of a yawner—or at least lacking muzzle velocity. But on the Tuesday after the Charlottesville disturbance, Connolly upped his game.

> Charlottesville showed that liberalism can't defeat white supremacy. Only direct action can.
>
> It's time to stop relying on markets and multiculturalism, and start engaging in real activism.
>
> By N. D. B. Connolly August 15, 2017
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> D. B. Connolly is Herbert Baxter Adams associate professor at the Johns Hopkins University and author of "A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida."

His Op-Ed argued that liberalism and markets have failed African-Americans and that something more direct is required:

> The white nationalist riot [sic] in Charlottesville . . . made a lot of things clear. One of them is that generic solutions to the racial problem — bland affirmations of inclusiveness, tolerance and "free speech" — will no longer work. Indeed, they have never worked, at least not on their own.

Connolly sets up a little conceit, that it's a game of paper, scissors, rock. Paper is liberalism's promise of contractual rights, particularly to blacks the contractual right not to be owned as property. Charlottesville, he says, "reminded the country of the persistence of white supremacy, our country's 'scissors'" –which cut up paper contracts.

And that leaves "rocks," which smash scissors.

Even as hastily-written farce, this is a little strained. The hypothetical existence of people holding white supremacist views hardly vitiates the rights of others, and a boisterous demonstration by them wouldn't, either. Connolly adds an "attendant terrorist attack"—jettisoning another bit of traditional liberal paperwork, the trial of fact. If you can junk liberalism that readily, the commitment can't have been deep.

Connolly drops the next step in the game's circularity, in which paper covers rock. That wouldn't fit his theme: It's time for "rocks."

Time here for a digression into another liberal fixture, the legal code. 18 USC 2102 (b) states:

> the term 'to incite a riot', or 'to organize, promote, encourage, participate in, or carry on a riot', includes, but is not limited to, urging or instigating other persons to riot, but shall not be deemed to mean the mere oral or written (1) advocacy of ideas or (2) expression of belief, not involving advocacy of any act or acts of violence or assertion of the rightness of, or the right to commit, any such act or acts.

(My italics.)

Speaking of "terrorist attack," here is a snippet from 18 USC 2331:

> (5) the term 'domestic terrorism' means activities that— (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; (B) appear to be intended— (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion . . ."

Is Connolly inciting riot or terrorism? I presume he would say no, and so would *WaPo*'s lawyers: The professor doesn't mean "rocks," he means, ah, "rocks." Connolly says

> *Resistance, be it forceful or clandestine, threatened or explicit, stands as our 'rock.' Rocks can look like armed self-defense or nonviolent direct-action campaigns. They appear, too, as blunt, bald public speech about the hatred arrayed against the dispossessed.*

He gets rhapsodic here about resisters: Medgar Evers, Viola Liuzzo, even Heather Heyer. "No matter its form, rock breaks scissor."

That's all very nice, the strong statement or idealistic act serving as a rock. But context is everything:

> *…[I]n April 1968, amid a flurry of other 'rocks,' riots shook American cities following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. It took that rolling unrest, not the promise of further economic growth, to spur President Lyndon Johnson and Congress to action. Within a week they had passed the Fair Housing Act.*

This reader is confused. Does Connolly mean strong statements and idealism, or arson, looting and murder?

Connolly concludes:

> *We would do well . . . to wise up and start throwing rock — public denunciations of white supremacy, clear anti-racist institution building, and fighting for policies that undo the money made off racism, especially with an ancient hatred now standing unhooded. Segregationists have again assumed their pedestals in the Justice Department, the White House and many other American temples. Paper alone won't drive them out. Start throwing rocks.*

This is too cute, if perhaps legally effective: nobody is going to drag Professor Connolly before the bar for inciting riot or advocating terrorism. *But he is,* you know. The question is why.

The Sixties race riots, from Watts to Baltimore, claimed scores of lives and devastated inner cities. In terms of racial diversity, population, prosperity, and crime, many of these cities have never recovered. The population of Baltimore has fallen by a third; median household income is 58% of that of the state as a whole. Newark's population has fallen by 26%; whites account for just 26%, and median household income is less than half that of New Jersey. Homicide rates, based on current trends, are 56 per hundred thousand in Baltimore and 33 in Newark (for 2016). As a reminder, the national average is 4.9.

This is victory?

If Professor N. D. B. Connolly can argue a post-hoc case, so can people who wonder about his intellectual integrity, scholarly detachment, and motives. Despite constant legislative attention, many African-Americans dwell in racially homogeneous urban ruins, marked by poverty and crime of their own making.

Removing offensive statuary may serve a purpose— if it removes yet another excuse protecting African-Americans from confronting the reality that a hundred fifty years after slavery's end, they are in fact their own masters.

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