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More
Lessons
Learned

Tony Bouza

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Learned**

by Tony Bouza

Preface

*A compilation of articles originally written for
Southside Pride, a monthly community newspaper
in Minneapolis*

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How did they kill Terrance Franklin?

The 228-page police report of the killing of Terrance Franklin has contradictions and inconsistencies that should have set off alarms for Police Chief Janee Harteau, Mayor Rybak, County Attorney Mike Freeman and Minneapolis City Council Chair of the Public Safety Committee Don Samuels. There are clear and arrogant admissions of the use of excessive force. There are serious questions as to whether Terrance Franklin was in control of a weapon or was simply executed. An analysis of the police report is available on the Southside Pride website. Go to www.southsidepride.com and type in Terrance Franklin in the search window at the top of the page.

Former Minneapolis police chief and author of “Expert Witness,” a catalog of 20 years of testifying against police misconduct, Tony Bouza reacts to my analysis and summary:

How to respond.

A tangled and confused scene.

Franklin did not help his cause by smoking marijuana and fleeing. The cops, appropriately, did not shoot at the fleeing car—but the flight itself was a

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serious mistake by Franklin.

The cops had an affirmative responsibility to respond and investigate.

This is the key point—once contained and secured they should have backed off and negotiated. The cops have a lot of experience with this and I always made it an imperative that negotiations follow the securing of the area. This could have been done easily, given the circumstances.

I tend to agree that Franklin probably shot the cops and they shot him. Honest folks can differ on this but the salient feature is that the officer lost control of his weapon. “Failing to safeguard” is the operative phrase. The vulnerability of the police version lies in the use of really poor tactics.

I need to address the issues you raised because they deserve attention. Using the dog, striking Franklin and trying to subdue him make a measure of sense, and I can understand the hesitancy of officialdom to criticize—especially given the nature of the cops’ wounds.

The fact that Franklin had no firearm is central. What I finally concluded—without hubris—is that it is a tangled web. They have training in negotiations, containment, etc., and they failed to employ them. Changing tactics is not the issue in this case. The fault lies in not employing them.

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What then is the remedy?

1. a tough reform chief, which is a clear lack here;
2. media exposure—which you’ve done with distinction—but it requires broader coverage;
3. FBI investigation, which you describe. Good luck with that one;
4. and, probably the best bet in this case, a civil suit.

It cries out for that sort of examination and scrutiny, and it holds the promise for a chastening lesson for city officials.

Sooner or later the public is going to awaken to the fact that their pockets are being picked. An onerous and unnecessary additional tax. Indemnification is tantamount to impunity. I know we’ve all broken our lances on this particular windmill, but that is what we do—right?

Tilt away!

Godspeed!

Ed Felien responds:

I respectfully disagree with Tony Bouza’s assessment of what happened in the basement at 2717 Bryant Ave. S. on May 10, 2013. According to police statements, when Sgt. Stender and Officer Meath pulled Franklin out of the cubby hole he at first resisted, then using their force against them, Franklin catapulted

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past them knocking Officer Durand into the dryer in the next room. Officer Durand had an MP 5 automatic pistol on a shoulder strap that went over his head. It seems possible that Officer Durand could have lost control of this weapon, but it seems highly improbable that Franklin could have gained enough control of the weapon to turn around and point it at approaching officers. It seems much more likely that Durand got off two rounds, striking Officers Muro and Meath, before Franklin laid across him preventing him from lifting the gun up and firing it directly at him.

Assuming Officer Peterson fired his pistol with his right hand, and from the medical examiner's report we learn that Franklin was shot seven times in the right temple, we have to conclude that Peterson came up behind Franklin, grabbed him by his dreadlocks in his left hand and shot him with his right. And, it seems reasonable to conclude, if Franklin was facing Durand he couldn't have fired the two shots at Officers Muro and Meath.

Officer Meath claims to have shot Franklin three times while he was sandwiched in between Officers Durand and Peterson. This seems an improbable feat for a man slipping in and out of consciousness to be able to hit so small a target in a dark basement. It seems more likely that Meath shot Franklin while he was lying on the basement floor.

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The police and city officials should have raised questions about the police report. The case should never have been sent to the county attorney, who has to maintain a working relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department, but should have been sent to the FBI and the federal district attorney.

Tony Bouza is probably correct when he says probably the only remedy, and the only way we will ever reach an approximation of the truth in this matter, is for the parents of Terrance Franklin to bring a civil suit against the city.

Until this matter is publicly and fairly dealt with, there is blood on everyone's hands: on the mayor's and the City Council's, on the chief of police's, on the County Attorney's Office's and on the media's, whose silence makes them complicit in the continued abuse and murder of young black men by the Minneapolis Police Department.

Bloat

As I travel about the state, people, invariably kind, seem incredulous 1) that I'm still alive, and 2) that I make Minnesota my home. Maybe I should get out more.

Then comes, "What are you doing now?"

The truth is, as little as possible.

"Are you writing?"

That's a tougher question. Frankly, I don't especially want to write anything, firmly ensconced in the belief that I've said all I've ever wanted or needed to say.

But ... every once in a while a topic bubbles within and finally boils to the surface and over. Then, as I'm doing now, I have to write about it.

Geezers, though, need to avoid garrulousness like the proverbial plague. I'm not sure I can or do. Today's bubbling began with a story about NYC's fiscal plight, a concern for every town (Detroit comes to mind).

In 1975, New York faced a desperate crisis.

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Thousands of cops were laid off. I gave a speech that appeared on the front page of the New York Times citing cutbacks that would avoid layoffs—a small stone into a large lake, nary a ripple.

I sent a memo to the police commissioner that I had 10 more captains than I needed and he could have them for use elsewhere. He responded that my proposal was denied and added that I was not to send any future memos on such topics.

In the Transit Police, we did not make a single promotion, in a force of thousands, for the three years I served there—and we still had more than enough super-annuated supernumeraries at the dismal end.

In Minneapolis, I encountered 22 captains and decided I needed 10, and never, over nine years, promoted anyone to that rank, or any other. I made a few replacements and never asked for an additional cop.

I returned a budget surplus for eight of my nine years there (perversely, the city gave me grief over this return of funds); cut down on overtime funds and sick time abuses; reduced precincts from six to four; went to one-person squad patrols; and sharply reduced settlements in lawsuits. My pleas to eliminate the indemnification of abusive cops had its effect on the behaviors of the few thumpers (alpha males) in the ranks. Quaintly, I even stuck to eight-hour workdays and 40-hour weeks.

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All this during periods of exploding crime levels. The effects of *Roe v Wade* would not kick in until 1990, and I had to go in 1988. A tremendous peace dividend followed a great Minnesotan's gift to America: Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court decision on abortion in 1973. Teen pregnancies declined by 50% by 2012.

My anguish rests on the handwringing that attends every municipal administration; yet they seem content to accept the fallacies that attend calls for more cops, more teachers, more everything—save managing for economy. And I'm pretty sure that applies across the governmental board—local and national, including that sacred cow—defense.

The sharp cutbacks were accompanied by surging productivity levels. Arrests soared. Traffic citations went through the roof. More emergencies were answered faster (with one-person cars you could field a lot more vehicles to respond to these), yet crime continued to rise—in the Bronx, the subways and in Minneapolis.

What does it all mean?

That officials preside over bloat.

Cops, for sure, have a big job to do, but preventing crime isn't it. Government unions have grown so powerful that criminals, psychos and miscreants cannot be fired. Officials collaborate. Private industry

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is subjected to the merciless efficiency of capitalism. I believe in welfare, public housing, food stamps and a sturdy safety net. I also believe in accountability and management.

The latter are in short supply in government.

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Patriotism and other mistakes

I am not an economist, but, then, I don't think anyone else is either. Just a lot of blindfolded idiots pinning the tail on a donkey. But I am, though, an economic animal. Fiercely.

I found the cruel competitiveness of capitalism very attractive to my nature. Maybe it's the animal instinct—you're either at the table or on the menu. For whatever perverse and unexpected reasons, I found the same attractiveness in the competitive world of police exams. I think it must have its roots in my father being a stoker (he died when I was 15) and my mother being a seamstress.

So, I don't want to repeal capitalism.

But it is cruel.

When the airlines discovered they couldn't make money (the only *raison d'être* of a corporation) because of fuel costs, competition and union contracts, they filed for bankruptcy, killed the union contracts, negotiated new ones, combined routes and companies and got lucky on fuel. Today they are

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awash in cash.

When American manufacturers found they couldn't compete they got Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans to make our clothes, Toyota to make our cars and just about everybody else our steel. Sacred institutions (U. S. Steel comes to mind) submerged. It's called outsourcing.

America adjusted and survived, but steel, automobiles, pilots and Wal-Mart clothing makers as such were never the same. Public service unions should calculate capitalism's capacity for reinvention and reform. An empty hope. Reforms will be imposed. Charter schools, municipal bankruptcies and civil service reform will be increasingly tempting tools.

When hard times strike, the intuitive wisdom tells us to retrench. Stop what spending we can. Save for that rainy day. All of this is true—yet John Maynard Keynes said this doesn't and shouldn't apply to governments. In hard times public bodies need to borrow (issue bonds, etc.) and spend. Doing public works (infrastructure) creates jobs, which produces taxes (income for the government) and eases the public pain. Counterintuitive, which is why it gets resisted by troglodytes.

Now comes inversion.

Ain't English grand? Provides a new word every day. Usually it masks a headache.

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Another slow moving earthquake that is sure to shake us all in due time. The problem is a simple one—American corporations sit on huge hoards of cash, overseas, that they won't repatriate to the U.S. because of high and uncompetitive corporate taxes—an inversion.

All well and good. Hardly anyone cares. Along comes Pfizer, a company whose shares I've owned since 1967. It's sitting on about \$6.5 billion overseas. They came up with the capitalist answer. Under a little used law they can purchase a foreign firm, using those parked dollars, not pay a tax and move their headquarters to England. They are currently romancing Astra-Zeneca, a U.K. drug firm, with an offer of over \$100 billion. Guess how many will follow? That deal stumbled over the target's greed, but the melody of the issue lingered on.

Is this unpatriotic?

Don't be naïve—I know Pfizer started in Brooklyn over 100 years ago, but its directors have a fiduciary duty to pursue the most breaks legally. That's it. They'd be canned if they paid any taxes they could legally avoid. Evasion is a crime. Avoidance is not.

Scandinavia tends to let capitalism thrive and then taxes the hell out of it. A useful model. Our

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dysfunctional government isn't heeding that distant rumble, growing louder and approaching. Chances are good we'll all meet beneath the rubble.

The kindest system is socialism, but it doesn't produce wealth. Too altruistic. Jesus was a socialist.

When a rich man asked how he might reach salvation, Jesus answered, "Take what thou hast and give it to the poor, for it shall be more difficult for a rich man to reach the kingdom of heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." Capitalism appeals to greed.

Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. Capitalism has little patience with such naïve thinking.

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Trust but verify

Woody Allen and Pedro Almodovar are, to me, cinema's biggest stars. Woody perplexed me with his personal life and forced me to consider the artist and the man—did the latter's behavior affect the artistic standing? Ultimately he led me to conclude the artist is a prophet, and his/her work has to be weighed on its own independent worth. A surprisingly tough answer to arrive at, for me.

I've just seen Mr. Allen's latest, "Magic in the Moonlight," perhaps the worst of his efforts. It lags, stumbles and loses focus. The female lead can act but was miscast badly. Allen forgot himself—she ain't hot. Scarlet Johansson comes to mind.

Still, withal, the flick is worth seeing for the author's take on faith versus reason. Apropos, yet aside, the New York Times actually ran a column on the value and wonder of Tarot card reading in the Aug. 24 issue in its weekly news review. So much for science, analysis, research, study and such irrelevancies. I digress.

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The movie centers on a profound skeptic who insists on evidence over faith. He is asked to debunk a mystic and happily agrees.

The hero proceeds to evaluate the seer and concludes he was wrong to be skeptical. Faith in the unknown and unseen do have places in our lives.

Or do they?

The hero apologizes for his agnosticism and, in a second scene that reinforces his new status of believer, prays.

Thus does Mr. Allen bait his clever trap. as it develops, the skeptic was right all along—the mystic was a fraud and the hero unmasked her. The prayer caused him to recoil from his lapse. Science, evidence, reason, analysis and research triumphed.

We live in an age when innocents are beheaded in the name of unseen, unprovable yet deeply felt fanatical beliefs. Charlatans, exploiters, madmen rule the day over much of the world, invariably in the name of some undemonstrable idea.

In another pivotal scene a host receives reassuring, but palpably false, answers in a seance. She lives in a fool's paradise.

Such gullability—albeit not as innocent—attended our Salem Witch Trials, McCarthyism (Woody Allen made a dandy film on this topic), denial of

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evolution and attacks on global warming, to list only a few.

Faith has consequences.

Skepticism demands proof.

Life is hard but it doesn't have to be quite the mystery so many of us make it.

God Bless!

Peeves

Garrulous geezerhood lends itself most readily to peevishness—so, here are a few:

When prominent folks are unmasked as fools, idiots, frauds, sex fiends or pimps, their default position is to kill the messenger. That means the press.

Americans—potentially the best informed citizens the world has known—should see these attacks as profoundly subversive because they undermine our faith in our most important and reliable institution.

And how we hate regulation.

Americans have a lot of trouble seeing that government has a role in our lives. Maybe they'd prefer to live with poisoned water; toxic air; unsafe air traffic; suspect foods and medicines; marauders on the streets—to name only a very few.

Remember when robber barons stole the right of ways for railroads; sent men into unsafe mines; plundered the earth of minerals and liquids; and tol-

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erated sweatshops, illiteracy, massive unemployment and other nihilisms?

Government can be masterful and intrusive. It suffers from the absence of capitalism's merciless (but terribly efficient) rigor, and we'd be right to be skeptical, but not abolitionists.

For example, in my experience, cities don't need more cops—usually ever; they need more efficiency, efficacy and economizing—in short, management. Government must learn to operate economically.

Race.

The enduring reluctance to debate the race issue keeps our nation divided—in every sense: economic, educational, residential and, most especially, in terms of the levels of violence.

Many years ago Gunnar Myrdal, a sociologist, said America's greatest problem was "the Negro" question ["An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy," 1944]. Guess what? It still is. And the Obama presidency does as much to underscore it (in mostly unstated terms) as to refute it.

Forgotten in all this is that oppression does a lot (not as much, perhaps) to twist and monsterize the oppressor as it damages the oppressed. What is indisputable is that it's bad for everyone—even as it makes the twisted fascists happy.

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Ferguson, Mo., is not an aberration—a white minority running a mostly black town. Blacks must ask themselves why seniors have so much power. They vote!

We ain't ever gonna realize this great nation's potential until we confront the race issue in its myriad manifestations.

Our real greatness depends on our facing this dilemma. We must debate.

So, what's to be done? To be done?

Faced with a similar conundrum, President Lyndon Johnson, in 1966, set up a Commission on Law Enforcement and Justice. Its big contribution was to suggest 911.

President Barack Obama should set up a President's Commission on Crime, Justice and Race.

Editor's note: When Tony Bouza writes "It still is.", halfway through the article, he doesn't fully explain that the ongoing dilemma is not that black people are the problem, as could be implied in Myrdal's "the Negro question" but that white racism persists.

Vanished problems and their consequences

Ours is an activist, not a reflective, society. Our shelves groan under the weight of “How to ...,” not “What if ...,” books. Yet I’ve always been intrigued by Conan Doyle’s “The Dog That Didn’t Bark.” Why not? What did it mean?

It meant something—and that’s the point—we need to understand what no longer exists—or what didn’t happen—sometimes with greater urgency than we’re inclined to give.

A long life affords—hopefully—perspective.

The police world I entered in 1953 was brutal and corrupt. Today it’s just brutal—centering on America’s perennial dilemma, race.

What happened to corruption?

Remember when friends would regale you with tales about how they’d handed a cop a \$20 bill, with the license, at a traffic encounter? The palmed currency exchanged in dubious transactions of all sorts.

That doesn’t exist anymore.

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Today: cops are not corrupt—and therein lies an unexpected tectonic shift.

Today's cops are well-paid, enjoy really handsome benefits (for which I thank the authors thereof) and have been endowed with dignity and respect.

How come?

Police unions.

They secured great wages (yes) and cornucopias of benefits from their municipal employers.

Once achieved, though, they had to do more. What?

They trooped to state capitols with cash, endorsements and constituencies and persuaded legislators to pass laws that encased cops (and teachers) in protective cocoons. Civil service laws that prohibited firings and most other forms of control passed easily. No one was watching.

Once deprived of the power to control through fear (the real strength of our economic system), chiefs adjusted—they stopped managing, remained union members—and used the rank and file as their base of support.

And so we wound up with Detroit—bankrupt. Chicago with pension costs it can't handle. The enormous iceberg of the obligations passed by legislatures is just emerging into view. The march began when a Detroit mayor, in the early '70s, seized the moment to

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add to the burden by weakening the police.

Today we emerge with honest police departments and schools, peopled with operatives who cannot be held accountable for performance. Police unions have become apologists for, and protectors of, bums and thumpers in the ranks. An unlikely prophet has emerged in attempts to curb the powers of unions of public servants—Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin.

The trade union movement is one of America's great adornments. One of the firmest pillars of our society. It deserves kudos. But any organization run by humans—even the Vatican—can succumb. In the public sector, the pendulum has swung too far from the people and too favorably to member interests.

It's time for a correction.

Accessibility

It's 3 a.m. and a black motorist, slightly tipsy, is pulled over by a white cop. The driver is obstreperous. This is a challenge to the officer's manhood. The cop wants to meet the challenge to his authority: "The asshole needs a lesson." That is the usual scenario.

How to control the cop's behavior such that he observes the need for articulable grounds and probable cause while using only the legal forces required to secure his prisoner?

As Hamlet put it, "That is the question."

But there is an answer.

What if the motorist has access to grievance machinery that actually produces a relevant response? It can be done. The Chief is the key. First, the Chief must live within the city limits—a surprising rarity. I did and do.

The access must be assured. For nine years my name and phone number were in the book. My calls were not screened. Any visitor could wander into my office, unquestioned and unannounced. No

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gate-keepers. No insulators. No screeners.

Usually, I'd ask if the caller had attempted to contact the precinct commander—who would know I expected him or her to be equally accessible—or be replaced.

I'd escort the visitor to Internal Affairs and always personally review the results of the investigation.

No press officer to massage media. An open system for journalists too. That's how the people get their information.

Readers will blanch.

Isn't this intolerably burdensome?

Actually it isn't.

I always thought I was in control of my time and used it. The people were not burdensome. I always had time to do other essential business. Two or three times a year I'd take my home phone off the hook as some drunken oaf prattled on. Cops several times flooded my home when I'd done something—like name tags, one-person patrols, etc.—that outraged them. We coped!

Chiefs love their comforts, their insulation, their perks, but "The good of the people is the chief law." (Cicero) Try another line of work if you find this inconvenient.

The system must be accessible and respon-

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sive—just as any properly managed enterprise. Comfort and convenience have little place in public life.

Risk it!

Open up!

Serve the people!

The more things change . . .

America's hands wring in agony over police-black tensions now characterized by the Black Lives Matter movement.

What a mystery!

Cops treat blacks badly.

Mirabile dictu!!

Look at any analysis of American social, economic or judicial life and who will you find—literally or figuratively—on the ghetto corners of urban blight? Slavery—after 244 years or so—was erased.

Hallelujah.

Reconstruction was subverted, and to learn how, go see "Birth of a Nation," which, amazingly, idolizes the Klan.

Jim Crow laws followed—for a century—which carefully segregated blacks and regularized their secondary status—everywhere and in everything.

Then the truly historic 1965 Civil Rights Act

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ended Jim Crow.

Another hallelujah.



But racism's slippery slope—capable of chameleon shifts—devised a new approach—imprisonment.

Thus were the police assigned to sustain the exclusion and suppression of black aspirations. In a bitter personal irony, as a Spanish immigrant, I lived the American Dream withheld from blacks.

Has progress occurred?

Yes.

Is racism dead?

That, as Hamlet put it, is the question.

Look at the jails—disproportionately crammed with blacks. Look at the jobs—not crammed. Look

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at our institutions (the Oscars, for God's sake!) and you'll see the true motives behind society's actions. Ours continues as a racist society, notwithstanding some pretty breathtaking—and even impressive and promising—shifts.

Gunnar Myrdal's "An American Dilemma" posited "the Negro Problem" as our No. 1 obstacle—70 years ago.

What's No. 1 today?

The more things change—the more they remain the same.

The cops have been assigned the role of enforcing America's racism. That is one helluva task.

Good luck with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Namings

Humans have extolled the virtues and memories of their heroes by naming things and places after them. This serves as a gentle prod to memory as to the qualities we cherish and celebrate. As with every other human activity this can be a fraught and complicated process.

The Confederate Battle Flag has to be a provocation to every black American. We seem to have decided Robert E. Lee was OK, but Jefferson Davis was not. The controversies continue even as the issue was settled on the battlefield over 150 years ago. It looks like no one wants to admit the struggle was over slavery.

You have only to read “The Plot Against America” by Philip Roth to understand why it was, indisputably, a mistake to apotheosize Charles Lindbergh. The evidence of shocking infidelity has been piled on the fascist, anti-semitic views of another unlikely—and to some of us, embarrassing—hero. His name

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clings stubbornly to our airport terminal.

Another example is the erstwhile Richard M. Nixon High School.

Now along comes another challenge to our sensibilities.

The FBI's headquarters, named after J. Edgar Hoover—its long-time director—is to be razed. What should its replacement be named?

Curt Gentry's definitive biography—and a stream of revelations since Hoover's death almost 50 years ago—reveal not America's foremost crime fighter, as he would have clearly defined himself, but a self-protective, self-seeking, self-perpetuating tyrant who had little real interest in fighting crime and gave himself over to clinging to power by whatever means necessary.

While I served in the NYPD I spent eight years ('57 to '65) in the Intelligence Division that had an intimate relationship with the FBI. An agent spent every day there studying our files and copying our reports. This accorded perfectly with Hoover's passion for chasing Reds—a major preoccupation of our Bureau of Special Services.

I worried about what I thought were America's two biggest problems—illegal drugs and the Mafia—but Hoover didn't just lack interest, he actively opposed FBI investigations of these areas. We have

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seen how absolutely central the FBI has been since Hoover's death—in battling the Mafia, a brilliant and hugely valuable effort.

I thought—as a consequence of my exposure—that Hoover was the worst thing that happened to law enforcement in America in the 20th century—a huge chunk of which he dominated.

The new director, James Comey, has a great public record. He saved Attorney General Ashcroft from a major violation of the U.S. Constitution and has otherwise rendered sterling service. He has a great opportunity to help erase the blemish Hoover has left on law enforcement in America.

“Congratulations—You’ve just inherited . . .”

Around 10 a.m., June 16 (Bloomsday), I received a call. “Grandpa, this is Tony (my 18-year-old grandson, who lives in California and is headed for Carleton).”

“I’m in trouble,” he said, sobbing. I was certain it was genuine. “Can all weepy voiced teenagers sound alike?” I asked.

“I’m in the Dominican Republic with a friend and his family. I was driving and hit another car. No injuries. My friend was drunk.”

“And you?” I asked.

“I was 1 point over the limit and was arrested. I’m at the American Embassy and I need to raise \$1150 bail to catch a flight home tomorrow night. Please don’t tell dad, he’ll be terribly upset.”

I calmed and reassured him but insisted I had to inform my son—his father—who, I was sure, would respond wisely.

My grandson put me on with a very helpful Sergeant Williams, of the Embassy, who instructed me

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to get \$1150 in cash, go to a CVS pharmacy and send it through Moneygram to Attorney Miguel Castro in Mao, Dominican Republic. The phone number given was 809-839-3138.

I spoke to my grandson again and he pleaded I not inform his parents. I reassured him I had to and that they would respond lovingly and effectively. I had to do it and that was that.

I called my son—a lawyer in L.A.—and left a message and called my daughter-in-law Cynthia (also a lawyer) as reassuringly as I could.

Cynthia listened politely and said, “Tony is asleep in his bedroom.” Sure enough, she checked and there he was.

Carefully researched. Craftily acted. Skillfully scripted. A scenario worthy of nearby Hollywood. A scam, but a beaut. I’d been totally taken in. I was certain I was talking with my grandson.

Where could these talented fraudsters have gotten the information enabling them to impersonate my grandson, get my number and follow through so convincingly?

We’re not all lottery winners or heirs to fortunes in Kenya.

“You can’t cheat an honest man.”

I was gulled but I, following Reagan’s advice to “trust but verify,” was saved by pursuing this simple

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suggestion.

I’m not sure about the next step, but I’m never content to let such things float by without some follow-up.

When Constabulary's Duty's to be done

Gilbert and Sullivan had it right—A policeman's (today's grammarians would insist on an androgynous "police officer"—and be right) lot is not a happy one.

Cops shoot black males. Riots explode. The Criminal Justice System contorts itself and produces grotesque outcomes. The Dallas killing of five cops evokes memories of The Black Panthers and hints at nascent insurrection. Where's it going?

No one can tell—but we can look at harbingers and take a couple of sensible guesses.

The prophets?

Rappers, mainly. As usual look to the artists to define the age.

What do they speak to?

A quarter of a millennium of slavery.

A century of Jim Crow.

Decades of segregation.

And now?

Incarceration.

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By any measure—jobs, education, income and prison population—America’s blacks are excluded from mainstream life—where you and I live. Drive up and down this nation’s Division Streets (Chicago’s aptly named black ghetto) and you’ll see black males, hanging out with no place to go. Trump’s uneducated, white, male, lower-class voters are determined to keep their feet firmly planted on black necks.

Has there been progress?

Oh, how we love to remind ourselves of the Blacks’ March to Equality.

Really?

Gunnar Myrdal’s “An American Dilemma” had—and still has—it right—our biggest challenge is “the Negro problem.” Written in 1944!

Roe v. Wade was a big help, in 1973—a peace dividend proffered by the great Minnesotan Harry Blackman [of the Supreme Court]. It reduced the population of black males and resulted in a big drop in street crime 17 years after its declaration.

It seems beyond us to do the right thing when it comes to race. And even our President doesn’t seem to get it—witness his comments on the July 2016 shootings and his reaction to the abuse of a Harvard prof (black male) by a white police sergeant. Obama invited them to a kumbaya moment in the White House and turned the abusive cop into a big hero to

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his colleagues. He’d put an uppity black in his place!

Our Governor Dayton had it heroically right when he said, of a black male shot dead by a cop, that he’d “be alive today if he’d been white.”

Brave words.

And on and on.

Doing the right and decent thing eludes us.

People ask me—to cite G and S again—What’s to be Done?

The issue transcends police-black male relations.

The issue is racism.

I want President Obama to convene a national commission on race. This should generate a desperately needed debate. The Veep could chair it if we can deflect him from attending weddings and funerals.

So, to those asking, this geezer’s suggestion is to generate debate.

Women in policing

The NYPD I entered on 1/1/53 had a Police-woman's Bureau (adopting the androgynous "police officer" came about 20 years later and the police union is still called "The Patrolman's Benevolent Association" —a classic anachronism). There were maybe 150 females in a department of over 20,000, and they overwhelmingly cooperated with the prevailing view that they'd be employed as secretaries, stenos and other work seen as appropriate for women. The job title was "Matron" (searched women prisoners—oversaw their detention, etc.).

There were two mavericks, Felicia Schpritzer and Gertrude Schimmel, who'd have none of this. They sued to take promotional exams, and won. They were isolated, scorned and resisted.

In 1967 I wound up in an office occupied by just Schimmel and me. She hectored me mercilessly and scornfully on the injustice. I emerged a convert.

I believed women could and should be real cops and wrote an article, "Women In Policing: An

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Idea Whose Time Has Come.” I lobbied an FBI agent who owed me favors to get it into their FBI Bulletin.

The piece—finally, and after a lot of pushing—was published in 1975.

I received a call from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) asking if I’d testify in some lawsuits that women could be cops. The impediments were height and strength requirements (usually 5’ 8”; lifting heavy weights; running fast and agility tests). That these had little to no relation to the job’s actual needs had bothered no one for centuries.

The SPLC added that they’d not been able to persuade a single police commander to testify that women could do police work—arrest, traffic citations and respond to emergency (911) calls. I was, by then, 1975, commander of Bronx forces for the NYPD and a two-star chief.

I would, and I testified in a number of cases across the country (inadvertently launching a career that blossomed into 20 years of 90 cases of expert witnessing). We won every one. Today the LAPD boasts—rightly—of being one of the most integrated departments in the nation, forgetting—conveniently—that their obdurate and intransigent leaders fought us tooth and claw, until they were defeated and signed a consent decree that forced integration over the next quarter century.

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And so Schpritzer and Schimmel were vindicated, and women marched into the ranks by the thousands.

As Bronx commander I had about 60 women on patrol. I insisted they work the streets. No stenos or secretaries in the Bronx. Their uniforms required mini-skirts. As they emerged from squads their flashing thighs inspired whoops, hollers and whistles from the corner layabouts. The women pleaded with me to allow pants.

I wrote the police commissioner (PC) asking to allow it. He wrote back that the proposal had been sent to the Uniform Committee for evaluation. Permanent entombment. The PC—Michael J. Codd (whose photo had graced my article in the FBI Bulletin on Women in Policing) was a ram-rod straight preserver of the status quo.

What to do?

I was stymied, but the women were right. The problem was real, and their positions were fatally compromised by those silly skirts.

I decided to take a chance and, by telephone, not written order, said that henceforth women could wear pants or skirts as they chose. I later came to regret not offering the same choice to men.

Overnight, every single woman was in pants. The women in the other boroughs immediately fol-

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lowed suit. The PD was confronted with a classic fait accompli.

Codd said nothing. He accepted the inevitable and went on. The next year he'd drive me into early retirement over another issue (I described it in "Bronx Beat," published by the University of Illinois Press).

Today the revolution is over. Women won. They proved us right—as we knew they would. We love to pick at the scabs of our failures and tend to ignore the victories. Women, today, run police departments and not only participate at all levels, but they have inspired the world to emulation. They can now be seen in a dazzling variety of police uniforms the world over.

Gertrude Schimmel died last year. They should erect a statue to her.

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The mentally ill and cops

On Oct. 18, 2016, Deborah Danner, a 66-year-old black woman, was shot dead in the Bronx by an NYPD sergeant responding to a 911 call that said she was acting erratically. She was brandishing scissors and then a baseball bat she swung at the sergeant.

Ms. Danner had written an essay, "Living with Schizophrenia," in which she described her helpless capture by the illness. A terrifying depiction of her dilemma.

The sergeant's action was described as a failure and still another investigation was launched. The New York Times called for sending "mental health professionals to accompany officers on calls like these."

Yes.

Minneapolis is considering a mental health co-responder program that would embed mental health workers with cops responding to calls involving mental health issues.

If you just look at the homeless population, one

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of the features that immediately pops out is that about a fourth are mentally disturbed; a fourth are addicted (drugs or alcohol); a large contingent is single mothers with kids; and the rest “other.”

Minneapolis police once led experiments on domestic abuse that resulted in the adoption of arrest as the best approach. The study was led by America’s foremost criminologist, Dr. Lawrence W. Sherman, and was widely adopted.

Sherman studied “hot spots” and how some locations contributed, disproportionately, to crime and violence.

Many experiments, reforms and innovations were funded by the McKnight Foundation and its leader, the wonderful Virginia McKnight Binger. That was then. This is now.

The Minneapolis Police Department has the chance to adopt training and response methods that address the great challenges posed by a population of the mentally disturbed who have been loosed on the streets by the closing of mental care facilities. This was made possible by the development of drugs to control much aberrational behavior. Only problem was how to insure they take their medicine.

We live in an age where the police are assigned to respond to problems—racism, economic inequality, addiction, mental disturbances—for which they have

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scant training and few resources beyond the local jail. As we’ve seen, this has led to tragic—yet often preventable—results.

I will confess I am not sanguine, but I do believe that silence is acquiescence.

Heidi Ritchie, aide to Council Member Jacob Frey, Ward 3, wrote: “Mayor Hodges has also proposed funding for a co-responder pilot program in which a mental health specialist would respond alongside officers on mental distress calls for service. In addition, all new officers are receiving the Crisis Response Training, which trains officers to respond to and deal appropriately with mental distress calls.”

Fidel and me

Reader's Digest used to have a feature called "The Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met." Set me to thinking. Malcolm X ranks high, but my No. 1 choice would be Fidel Castro. I first met him in 1959 when he attended the U.N. session in the fall and, again, in a reprise in 1960.

I was born in Spain in the same province as Castro's father, and I worked in a branch of the NYPD that guarded visiting dignitaries so I was assigned to Castro's security.

We hit it off immediately, although I, like most Americans, had my doubts and fears about hints of communism. Harry Matthews of the NY Times had done a gripping series on Castro's revolt against Fulgencio Batista.

Castro was, quite simply, irresistibly charismatic. He engaged me in vigorous debate with no thought to his rank or position. Breathtakingly egalitarian.

Nevertheless he concealed his true instincts—



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later to be emblazoned in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

While in a midtown hotel a disgruntled reporter wrote of Castro's staff plucking chickens in their rooms. Outraged, Castro directed an aide to explore a move to the Hotel Theresa in the center of Harlem. I went with him to check out the rooms. In one he peeled away an oven cover from the wall, revealing a perfect square. Dark. What was it? It moved and scurried. Cockroaches. Ugh and double ugh.

Undaunted, they booked the rooms, flew in Huber Matos—the Army chief and only black at the new top—and scored a brilliant exploitation of America's race agony.

I was there when Nikita Khrushchev visited and engaged Castro in a little hug and jig on Harlem's sidewalk. Unforgettable imagery.

Castro proved a genuine and devoted revolutionary. Perhaps the most dynamic ever. The overclass (loosely labeled latifundistas) fled and the country was turned over to the underclass. Socialism triumphed. America was appalled and angry. And it lasted and lasted.

Only one little problem.

Socialism doesn't work. It lacks the competitiveness, greed, energy and wealth-producing genius of capitalism. Too bad—but true. Lenin proved it in Russia, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Lazaro Cardenas

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in Mexico and a lot of other ideologues in between.

Capitalism—with its ruthless efficiency and merciless competition—creates great wealth. Most of Scandinavia learned to tame it, without abandoning it. We have yet to learn the lessons of re-distribution.

When I heard of Castro's death I was saddened. The man gave of himself selflessly. What a contrast to Batista and his ilk.

Was Castro right?

He made Cuba literate, produced teachers, doctors, soldiers, and his government doesn't appear to be the kleptocracy that bedeviled the continent. In person, his charisma, lack of self-importance or pomposity and devotion to the shirtless was magnetic.

Geezerhood

One of the inescapable disabilities of geezerhood is the temptation to reminisce. Here I go.

The time is early 1968. I am the eminence grise to the highest ranking member of the NYPD—a Sammy Glick* who knew how to run after the prize—and get it—but had no clue as to what to do with it once obtained. Bizarro!

A detective I'd known in the Army came to see me. He had a reputation. He'd made a contact in the Nixon camp and expected the Tricky One to be nominated and elected President. If he were assigned to Nixon's security detail (which entailed a transfer to an elite unit) his contact would take him to Washington—and I'd have a friend in high places.

I'd think about it, but what was his contact's name? John Ehrlichman! I'd never heard of him.

In the fullness of time I transferred, and Caulfield got assigned to Nixon's detail and went to Washington. Very curiously he took another detective with him—Tony Ulasewicz.

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Tony U was sent to Chappaquiddick to sniff around the Mary Jo Kepechne/Ted Kennedy drowning tragedy. He wound up writing “The President’s Private Eye” and shone as comic relief to Sen. Sam Erwin’s investigative committee on the Watergate break-in.

Tony U. was much more talented than Caulfield, and I thought it curious to see the role of Quixote and Panza reversed.

Tony died nursing a deep grievance against me because I’d been quoted as describing him as “as cunning as an outhouse rat.” I’d actually meant to convey he was, in a grotesque sort of way, really talented, but we never reconciled.

Both were caught up, tangentially, in the Watergate fiasco and punished and disgraced. Caulfield took to drink. Both died embittered and dismayed by their experiences. I got a White House tour for me and my family out of it all.

So, what’s the point?

We live in a period of fear and loathing—what the Chinese curse labels as “interesting times.” Trump’s vanity, thin-skin, commercialism, amateurishness and hapless judgment has truly shaken thinking America. It’s possible—even likely—that the inevitable shambles will produce tragic results. I pray not but it looks suspiciously like Opera Buffa.

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And yet ...

I am going to cling to the notion that Nixon was worse.

Fundamentally criminal in his view, Tricky Nick would—as he proved over and over again (in bombings, tapes, cover-ups, slush funds, Enemies Lists and anti-Semitism, to name only a few)—stop at nothing to get what he wanted.

I refuse to forget or forgive Nixon’s sins, and Trump will have to go a “fer piece” to beat them.

*from “What Makes Sammy Run?” by Budd Schulberg

Organizational Cultures

America—under the prodding of Black Lives Matter—struggles with the question of police behavior, even as it shells out millions and millions following abusive encounters.

How to explain it?

Practically all of us get it when combat soldiers speak of the mystical bond forged by shared danger.

That, folks, is it.

Shared danger. Us versus them. Cops versus assholes. Cops forge bonds with partners that are stronger than any other of their relationships, however close.

Is this a mystery?

So, what to do?

Well, the simple, tragic fact is that, after 60 years of deep involvement in police work at all levels, I simply don't know how to change the culture of the "Brotherhood in Blue" (with apologies to the many women in the ranks).

"The job sucks."

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“The Chief is a psycho.”

“Morale has never been lower.”

These—and similar sentiments—guide America’s cops’ bitches and moans. Yet nobody quits. Try firing one or two if you want a truly Sisyphean struggle. And they stay and stay. Policing—as a job—is amazingly stable and incredibly competitive. And, thank God, they are now sensibly paid, with generous benefits (of which I have to confess I am a beneficiary). And—another secret—their morale is high. The internal culture is Atlantis—shrouded in myths.

Confronted with that dilemma, I decided—early on—that the only hope was to change behaviors and ignore the culture and attitudes. And the only way I could see to do that was to control through fear. And they ain’t ever gonna love ya if you frighten them.

Not very edifying, right? We call that Realpolitik.

A famous general turned the war in Iraq into a success for America when he insisted that American troops treat Iraqis decently.

My approach was the same.

Cops (black or white they are all blue) had to account for every contact. Did they have probable cause and iculable (reasonable) grounds? If not, they

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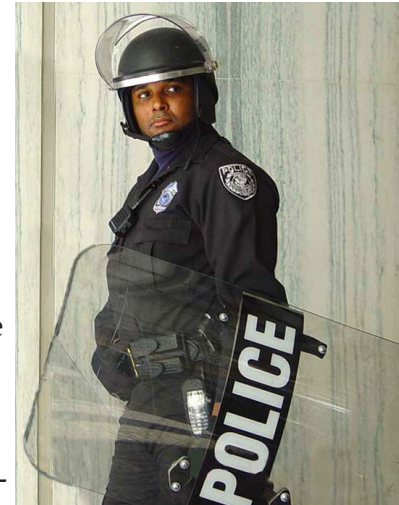
could not make stops—period. If they did, disciplinary action followed. This is not brain surgery.

Organizations, like other organisms, wax and wane. Most unions are in decline because of globalization and outsourcing, but you can’t outsource policing and teaching very conveniently. So police and teachers’ unions have grown so powerful that they weaken the institutions their members serve as they further the interests of the members against the attempts of management to control them.

A quandary—and, unfortunately—a highly visible one.

The dynamic is not really understood by city councils and mayors, which results in the appointment of chiefs who have come up through the ranks and are thoroughly acculturated. Currently, Chicago is one prime example of Brand X, but others will vie for the crown vigorously.

Is there hope? Can we discern a bit of progress? Can we get reformers into the chief’s chair?



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Over a long life I've discovered not all problems succumb to the rosy hue of American optimism. The short answer here is nope.

We insist on answers. We are a "Yes, we can!" people, yet the central problem of curing racist behavior through an understanding of the police culture continues to elude us.

I am not hopeful.
Sorry.

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Gay rights and history

History is a funny place. It is said to be written by winners. I'm not so sure. I wonder if it isn't the province of scribblers. In any case it is too frequently a distortion.

Over a very long career I was really lucky to have been a fly on the wall when interesting little events were taking place. One example is women in policing—whose history has yet to be written. When it is, I'll insist they include references to its two pioneers—Gertrude Schimmel and Felicia Shpritzer of the NYPD. I have little hope this will happen; the place of women in the ranks is now so vast, established and unconcerning as to invite neglect as a subject of historic interest. Thus passeth earthly glory.

And then there are the twistings—and these can get pretty tortured.

One such is gay rights. In this case we have apotheosis—a frequent temptation of self-promoters—Remember the Alamo?

The prevailing wisdom is that the gay men's

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revolt originated in the clash between cops and gays outside the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village.

Heroic.

Not so.

I was there—in the NYPD—and at the center of operations (but not at Stonewall itself).

These are the facts:

In 1965 John V. Lindsay, a patrician, liberal, former congressman (Republican, but he'd later run as an Independent) was elected mayor of NYC. He appointed Jay Kriegel—an Amherst grad, lawyer and brilliant behind-the-scenes operator—as his liaison to the NYPD. This meant Kriegel effectively, if remotely, ran the agency. The second Jewish chief inspector, Sanford Garelik, was named to lead the department, while a figurehead, know-nothing from Philadelphia served as police commissioner.

At this time, the '50s and '60s, the NYPD enforced morals laws vigorously. It sent attractive young men into gay bars to arrest groppers. The transit police had elaborately constructed viewing spots to check out liaisons in subway toilets (a truly ironic result of abandoning these tactics was the closure of all subway toilets by some faceless bureaucrat—forever).

Fully aware of the issues—particularly in the Irish-Catholic-Daily-Communicant environment of the NYPD—not a single word was said or written

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of the radical policy of abandonment of these practices. We just shifted the emphasis to gambling and alcohol (serving drunks or after hours and, yes, even moonshining) violations. Amongst the sufferers were Harlem's largest employers—the numbers runners.

And then came Stonewall, which was nothing more than a melee between cops and gays, greatly exacerbated by a police executive who—not having gotten the admittedly tacit message—escalated the conflict by calling for reinforcements. An idiot.

Thus was the legend of a Gay Rights Revolt created, and no one was willing to point to the stupidity and lack of necessity of it all. Or even that it was a total aberration.

Lindsay and Garelik are not exactly heroes of the Gay Rights Movement. They aren't even known—and very likely wouldn't want to be. A peek behind the curtain can be a salubrious act if one has a genuine curiosity for historical accuracy.

And, in delicious irony, the issue of gay-police tension was one of the major problems I was hired to fix in Minneapolis. The cops regularly raided gay bathhouses, even parading crude artifacts through the streets as the TV cameras whirred. The last such raid—ever—was on 2/10/80. I was sworn in on the eleventh, as gay activists burned the citations received the previous night in the Council Chamber during

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the ceremony. When asked, I responded it had been a short honeymoon.

In the end the bathhouses were closed, not by rabid, homophobic cops, but by AIDS.

In the '80s the gays and cops even played softball together.

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“Deja vu all over again”

“Those who don’t learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” — George Santayana

Metempsychosis—the Buddhist theory of transmigration of spirit-lives. The spirit of Charles Stenvig (remember him?) has landed on Chief Janee Harteau. How deliciously ironic.

In 1980 I was hired to exorcise the spirit of Stenvig over the Minneapolis Police Department. He had created a political spoils system that lasted a decade. The police union ruled.

And today we entertain a reprise. The current police chief sought to promote the longtime union head into a higher rank and command of the department’s key unit—the 4th Precinct—in a mostly Afro-American community.

The confluence of events beggar the imagination. The promotion and assignment not only elevates a former union president into a key post, but the act serves as an insult to a community that saw that official as an apologist for cops accused of brutality and worse.

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The mayor—and, parenthetically, let me say the controversy involves two women in top positions (any feminist’s dream, or, perhaps, nightmare)—alleged being blindsided and insisted the action complied but insisted she’d texted the mayor.

To us troglodytes this simply illustrates the illiteracy of an age that relies on dumb technology for communication—a sterile and intellectually bankrupt exercise.

Under our system the civilians, elected representatives of the people, rule the military. The analogy extends to the civic arena of mayor and police chiefs. There must be no surprises for the mayor from the police chief. That is the first law.

And matters of great pith and moment get smoke screened by such tempests as these. Bloat, brutality, enormous and repeated judgments against the city, racism, lack of productivity and accountability result. Management issues that no one can, or cares to, address go blithely ignored. Such questions as residence in the city you are hired to protect and which rewards you get ignored.

In my nine years at its helm our mayor was never once surprised by any of my actions. This is just fundamental, and please don’t tell me you texted—the last refuge of the semi-literate.

I know these are the classical fulminations that

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inevitably attend geezerhood, but I simply can’t help it. Perhaps death will resolve the question and free us all from the grip of senior persiflage.

So, welcome back to the Stenvig Era, for which we all wax nostalgic.

Right?

Censorship

Humans learned the importance of controlling the extremes of other humans very early on—about contemporaneous with learning of the efficiency and importance of conveying their messages and controlling behavior. Artists were called “the antenna of the race” by a poet who saw them as key definers of our nature and prospects.

The Nazis burned books.

A free press is the embodiment of our democratic ideals and the greatest adornment of our society—notwithstanding an idiot president’s definition of a free press as an enemy of the people. Ibsen cringes.

And that is why the Walker Art Center’s decision to dismantle and burn “The Scaffold” is so dismaying, whether they actually go through with the burning or not. Artists promote debates and provoke discussions. Without them our society would be a barren, sterile place.

“The Scaffold” was intended to illustrate both

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the folly and cruelty of man, when driven by dumb passions and un-surrendered prejudices. How can we combat our ignorance without guidance?

The position of the Dakota Native American community that “The Scaffold” be dismantled and burned is an uninformed act of censorship. The Walker’s craven surrender to intimidation simply fuels right-wing extremists’ contempt for political correctness. And what a great example of intellectual flaccidness it is.

The creator of “The Scaffold” transferred the intellectual property rights to the sculpture to the Dakotas, who seem to be entertaining second thoughts about burning the artwork. As with the pipeline—a faint whiff of extortion permeated the backdrop.* [see Editor’s Note below]

Last winter we saw the Native Americans demonstrate against a pipeline in North Dakota despite its operators having secured all needed permits and despite the fact that it touched no Native American’s lands. It looked to me like an attempt to secure something through the interruption of construction. Despite the fact that it is both safer and cheaper to transport fuels through pipelines than truck or rail.

The demonstrators were doused by fire hoses, very likely creating grotesque versions of ice sculptures. A cruel and unnecessary response by the au-

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thorities. Arrests were legitimate. Acts of gratuitous cruelty and repression were not.

Such events raise critical and fundamental questions relating to moral courage. If the emperor’s naked, why not just say so?

A totally fraught element was recently introduced when NBC anchor Megyn Kelly interviewed Alex Jones. The guest holds that the killing of 20 children in Connecticut’s Sandy Hook elementary school was a media hoax. His assertions triggered the febrile right to call the victims’ families with threats and imprecations.

It is in its very ugliness and emotion that the test of freedom is forged. Sympathies flow to the families. Antipathy is a boil for the conspiracy theorist Jones—a friend of President Trump’s.

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make ye free.

That is all we know and all we need to know.

Editor’s Note: I’m sure Tony knows that all political acts of resistance are, in some way, acts of extortion—whether it was Thoreau in a Concord jail or Martin Luther King in a Birmingham Jail. But the greatest extortionist of all time must have been Mahatma Gandhi. His hunger strikes held the holiest man in India hostage, and he threatened to kill him if the British did not surrender India.

America's police are still out of control

I wrote a piece in this space years ago with that title (excluding “still”), and the passing years have only deepened and confirmed that view. And how many objections/refutations did I receive for such an outlandish claim? Zip.

Well, save your pennies, because your pocket is about to be picked over another police shooting—of Justine Damond, in Minneapolis on 7/15/17. There will be a lawsuit and a settlement. In the shockingly confused aftermath the police chief was fired and weeks later there was still no account of the fatal shooting. Utterly incomprehensible, impermissible and outrageous.

When you misbehave and are sued, who pays? Who is accountable? We live in a nation where you are expected to be responsible for your actions. Not the case with the police. You pay, no matter how egregious the act. And why are cops never convicted? Of anything? Anywhere?

Juries love cops and cut them a lot of slack—es-

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pecially white jurors. The union is a fierce protector.

Firing cops—for anything—is very hard to do because of civil service protections obtained by tough, smart, well-financed police unions. They help lawmakers get elected and secure great contracts from the folks they elect.

The police unions are skilled practitioners of the darker social arts. They hold votes of no confidence. A delegation asked me (while I was chief of the MPD) not to attend their annual picnic. Even during such ghastly tragedies as a fallen cop's funeral, they will reward friends and punish enemies. NYC Mayor DeBlasio felt the chill when cops turned their backs to him during one such funeral. During the 1975 fiscal crisis, NY's imaginative gendarmes urinated on the mayor's lawn, blocked traffic and disrupted events—finally holding one such raucous outburst that resulted in my unceremonious departure from the NYPD in 1976.

Ironies abound. Even in the horrific recent killing of Officer Familia in New York, the record showed that the killer's girlfriend called 911 several times, attempted to flag down patrolling cops and frantically sought help for her mentally sick boyfriend. All ignored her and became complicit in their colleague's murder.

Teachers are analogous, which explains the

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truly deplorable state of our Second Tier Educational System (meaning public schools in poverty areas ministering to minorities).

So—as Lenin put it—What is to be done?

Well, folks, I regret to tell you—nothing. It's pretty hopeless. And for President Trump to dog whistle approval of brutality and racism to cops is profoundly subversive.

Can the police be controlled?

Absolutely—if they can be fired for cause; personally sued and held accountable; carefully trained and supervised; and if the cops reflect the society it polices. Note I've said nothing about improving salary or benefits. Your generosity is such that, in addition to subsidizing any behavior, however gross or even criminal, you actually pay them well and afford great benefits. Congratulations.

Cops do good work and have important tasks to perform, but they are human and humans will respond to rewards and punishments. Would you do better in their place? I doubt it.

It ain't the folks in the ranks—it's the pervasive and awful power of the institution to acculturate its members. Don't underestimate it. It lives and breathes and shapes. If countervailing forces are not introduced the organism goes its own way. Why is this a big mystery?

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This ought to be titled, “The Confessions of a Failed Police Executive.” Police behavior can be controlled and I did affect their actions, but I changed nothing permanently—look around you.

As to the Damond shooting—since the cops chose to stonewall it, I’d have sought indictments—of the shooter for murder or manslaughter and of his partner for serving as an accessory.

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McCarthyism and you

“An enemy of the people!” What irony. Does Pres. Trump even know the reference he uses so freely actually attaches to an Ibsen play in which a doctor discovers the therapeutic springs that attract tourists actually cause disease? The dilemma is obvious but the good doctor makes the right choice and destroys his livelihood.

Now the springs are replaced by the media and, in a probably unconscious revival of McCarthyism, our leader stokes the fires of hysteria against our most important institution—the free press.

We can’t forget that McCarthy’s Svengali was attorney Roy Cohn—an intimate friend of Trump’s until his death, probably of AIDS. The linkage is both ironic and unavoidable, and Cohn was in furious denial of his sexual identity to the bitter end.

I know I’ve beaten this horse many times before, but, out of fear for the institution’s viability, I keep coming back to the same theme—a reminder of the critical importance of a free and independent

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press to our democracy.

Let's not be naïve.

What is the role of the press?

Mainly to inform you. Are you fascinated by the fact that your neighbor pays her bills, is faithful to her husband and regularly attends services? Is that news?

Or would you be more intrigued by a salacious scandal?

Get real.

News mostly centers on things we're curious about or that we need to know to function as citizens. News is essential to our lives as Americans. We hunger and thirst for information and treat it cavalierly because it is so plentiful. Thank God for it.

Over the course of about 60 years of public life I've had frequent contact with the press, across a broad spectrum from flattery to condemnation. I have found the press to be truly and totally devoted to delivering honest accounts. Our press is an adornment of our society and, in my view, its most important institution.

There are [according to Louis XIV] the nobility, the clergy and the peasants, but the most important pillar of the nation is The Fourth Estate.

Attempting to undermine the people's belief in the integrity of our media is profoundly subversive. It

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is McCarthyism at its hottest. To indulge in unfounded attacks on the press is to assault the bonds of trust that unite us. It is your responsibility, and mine, to defend this institution. Trump's denunciations strike me as incitements. The right of a people to be informed is a wispy concept—yet real. How can we function without the information necessary to inform our actions? We in the NYPD had a joke that an FBI agent was assigned to cut out items from the N Y Times and stamp them "Secret." I wrote a book about secret police intelligence operations in 1967 but managed to escape being censored for it. Publishing the Ellsberg Pentagon Papers was a useful public service, and I am far from sure that notorious leakers do less than a very valuable public service.

Why wait for the Nazis to win and drive the rest of us to the tender mercies of censorship? I am profoundly shocked by the silence. Won't anyone come to the defense of the press?

The clouds gather.

The Justine Damond killing: some modest questions

Do you want to know why police departments across the breadth of America are screwed up? Look no further than the July 15, 2017, shooting of Justine Damond—a white woman—by a Minneapolis police officer who is black.

In this ghastly tragedy we encapsulate the nation's ills. Race, police accountability and official paralysis.

The kicker here is that the victim—and I use the phrase purposefully—is white and the cop is black. Had the positions been reversed there would have been, what we in the police world call, black riots. And officialdom would have reacted with panicky alacrity. The circumstances, being reversed, afforded the principals the opportunity to temporize, juke and jive and slip and slide.

The Minneapolis Police Department handed off the case to the State's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension—a clear and direct evasion and an admission of lost trust. The chief appropriately was tossed over

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it and the mayor might soon be with equal rough justice.

The prosecutor's imagination must be tortured by the difficulties of convicting cops of anything.

White jurors are notoriously sympathetic of police "actions," in addition to being quelled by officers in uniform "out there risking their lives for you." In a way they are supportive because those jurors send the cops out there to keep blacks in their proper postures of subordination—otherwise labeled racism. It is an awful public auto de fe.

And let's not forget the protective power of the police union.

And the prosecutor, who is uniquely allergic to grand juries, evades this path, probably thinking an indictment will be difficult to prosecute and the outcome, a jury trial and an acquittal—more problematic still. Maybe it will all blow over? That seems to be the animating strategy. And the prosecutor, let's face it, is the very embodiment of Minnesota Nice.

Well, folks. There's a downside (and an upside) to Minnesota Nice, and that is that it encourages the suffering of fools gladly. And, from my privileged perch, I have certainly seen a lot of fools and knaves suffered for insufferable lengths.

Let's not forget that three officials are responsible for the outcome of this case—the mayor, the po-

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lice chief and the prosecutor. What grades have they earned?

There's also a trifling vetting question. It relates to the "expedited" hiring of the shooter cop. What on earth does that mean? His actions will result in a whopping bill to the city, which you will be good enough to pay. How profligate is that?

And the music plays on to a pacified, patient, uninformed audience. A woman lies dead. Answers are demanded by the event. Cries to heaven.

Where are they?

Bravo, Trump

On these very pages, on more than one occasion, I pleaded for the one thing I felt America needed most. I even wrote a book about the subject, and the result? Silence.

I begged the President to convene a National Commission on the issue—and a black president—for eight years—blithely ignored the imperative.

And now, in the unlikely form of a famous athlete, we seem to have finally launched the one project most likely to save the soul of our great nation—a national debate on racism.

Colin Kaepernick has launched—I think and hope—a national debate on the issue of police abuse of black citizens. Hallelujah!

The great blessing of America is that “the tempest tossed and wretched refuse” so often provide us with unexpected and fortuitous salvation.

Kaepernick is the son of a white mother and a black father who was given up for adoption and raised by a loving and lovely white family. Many

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thanks to the four of them.

A cynic described patriotism as “the last refuge of the scoundrel.” Please thank our president for breathing meaning into the observation.

I heard Trump’s speech to the cops in Nassau County, N.Y., this summer. I’ve spent 60 years in the police world and studied the nation’s departments. Trump’s speech was a dog whistle: “We’re the good guys; they’re the bad guys; they’re the bad guys; go get ‘em.”

And guess who “they” are.

The cops intuit that they’re there to control the blacks for the power structure.

That’s the awful reality in a racist society.

America is a great country. God bless it,

We have work to do and Kaepernick has launched the debate. Let’s dive into it—immerse ourselves in it. Analyze the issue closely. Work towards racial justice.

A sociologist, in 1941, said, “The Negro problem” was America’s number one issue. It still is. And whose responsibility is that?

Those who peacefully demonstrate for racial justice are our true patriots. Those who support Nazis, dodge the draft, demean our heroes and encourage cops to assault blacks are our enemies.

Irony of ironies—the issue is police abuse of

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blacks and Trump, a draft evader, twisted it into disrespect for the flag. Really? Who, in fact, does the fighting and dying for America’s cause? A lot of black men and women.

We’re going to have to get better at distinguishing friends from foes.

Those who protest peacefully and respectfully, while stirring our consciences to do the right and American thing, are the real patriots.

Thank you Colin Kaepernick.

And, I suppose—in a very underhanded and tortured way—thank you also Donald J. Trump.

Myths, shibboleths and dogma

The job sucks.

The Chief is a psycho.

We're going to hell in a handbasket.

Morale has never been lower.

These are a few of the bromides that drive police thinking. Civilians, though, are looking at Atlantis and don't know it. An unfathomable world, several fathoms deep.

Mayors speak in platitudes about the police, but actually know nothing about the profession's inner working or how to control the cops.

Even lawyers have a real problem distinguishing police brutality from necessary force.

When legally challenged, cops (the name derives from copper shields they once wore) show up in uniform and testify they're out there risking their lives for you. From whom? From blacks—which reinforces the racism that drives our society. Yet, that is their assignment.

Cops don't quit—ever. They stay and stay and

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bitch and moan every day of service.

A cop's partner is his closest attachment.

Women are accepted and part of the appeal is the hope of friggin' in the riggin.'

A few cops are thumpers—alphas who lead one pack. They are usually brave, heroic, admired leaders who must be controlled. They set the pace.

Physical courage abounds in police ranks but moral courage is AWOL.

The blue code of silence exists and is enforced. Rats are the lowest form of life. Testilying (perjury) is routinely employed to protect self and partner.

Corruption has faded as the union secured great salaries and benefits. The union's job now is to protect wrongdoers in the ranks.

Settlements against thumpers are paid by you.

Challenges to authority must be faced and put down. Those defying the cops are scumbags and assholes.

Self-pity abounds. Don't rely on civilians to get it.

Police work is long stretches of boredom punctuated by bursts of excitement. It's the bursts that get on cop shows.

A chief's principal job is to control the cops and the only tool available is fear.

It is a big myth that cops control crime—a

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myth their chiefs embrace when the trend is downward. Crime and revolution—according to Aristotle—are caused by poverty (he forgot racism).

Aggressive police tactics are universally shunned. Decoys, stake-outs, stings and even choke holds are perfectly legal but rarely, if ever, employed. Black communities resist these approaches because they impinge disproportionately on black males, who make up a large segment of the street criminal population. And we must never forget we, the overclass, shaped the conditions of their lives.

Crime is declining in America (since 1990) because of Roe v Wade (abortions to impoverished teenagers who produce street criminals); sex education and welfare reform (removed the incentive to have your own apartment with your baby).

It's economics and social conditions, stupid!

Drug gangs, the opioid crisis and the enormous proliferation of firearms threaten to reverse crime trends upward.

All attempts to control cops have failed—law suits (the citizens pay); the FBI (don't really want to alienate their colleagues); Civilian Review Boards (co-opted, resisted, ignored or circumvented). Only the press serves as a sort of Inspector General.

The police union is to policing what the teacher's union is to instruction—it is there to protect the

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unfit. Civil Service “reforms” are the Iron Maidens protecting abusers.

Police ranks, nationally, are bloated with supervisors who don’t control their charges—overtime costs soar and settlements for brutality are exploding, yet reforms are utterly and universally ignored.

In America—this great country—it is traditional to be upbeat.

Sorry.

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Tergiversation

Haunted by the word and frustrated by the lack of an excuse to use it. Then along came our senator to the rescue. Al Franken is a great guy. Amazing career. Shoved Norm Coleman out of public life. SNL. A book with a title to die for—about lies and liars. Just a model for the age. Kind of a political Garrison Keillor. I am grateful for an example—and for his service and stance on issues. And then came the twists, turns and evasions. And, naturally, Keillor was felled by what looks like an innocuous transgression.

You know what Alabamians say when we complain about Roy Moore?

“Yeah, he is pretty bad, but your guys are worse.”

And, since Clinton, they’ve had a point. And Hillary’s connection to Huma Abedin, and by extension and email involvement, to Anthony Wiener, simply extended it. Her fundamental problem was an utter failure to gain America’s trust, and her total lack of introspection simply proves the Greeks right. You

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can't get there from here without it.

And so, we curse the bread and while away the night. A torture.

Cut our heroes some slack. They're on the right side of the issues. We agree with them, love them, vote for them.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And the result of cutting all that slack? President Donald J. Trump.

This is it, thus hath it ever been.

I was angered by Clinton's denials, perjuries and declassé' behavior, but my ire rose as I heard the tedious excusals offered by my friends.

I don't think anybody really cares very much if the President is getting a blow job in the Oval Office. Consenting adults. Private actions. No force or coercion. We've tolerated these peccadillos before and will again. Do the initials JFK mean anything to you?

It's the lies, perjuries, intimidations, coercions and assaults we rightly object to. And if the rules don't apply to our allies as uniformly as to our foes, we are not only hypocrites but fools.

Clinging to power is ugly, unseemly and embarrassing. Power must be held in an open palm, not a clenched fist—from which it oozes out through the moral cracks.

And is there a double standard involving

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public office and private employment? The O'Reillys—Lauers—Ailes and such are fired (with a bright, golden parachute) while the Frankens, Conyers, Moores and such cling to their posts and prospects.

If you have any sense at all you'll admit you have no real right to judge—especially if you're as flawed and stupid as I am. And yet we must. Our social health depends on our undertaking cleansing rituals that have meaning.

When they say yours are worse, the answer must be, not really—only equivalent, and we must hold both to the same standards.

Roy Moore is a disgrace. Trump is not a model to the nation. Al Franken must go.

Am I next?

Editor's footnote:

"Tergiversation"—evasion of a straightforward action, equivocation.

"her total lack of introspection simply proves the Greeks right. You can't get there from here without it."—probably refers to the sign over the gates to Olympus (the home of the Greek gods) "Know thyself."

Truthers

I first heard the word a couple of years back. Its utterer seemed to be in possession of some unique verity. Profound.

I was on my annual, solo pilgrimage to Cape Cod, where I'd spend January in splendid isolation.

A friend—Jeff—called and said he had a video he wanted me to see. I invited him to a rare dinner and regaled him with a T-bone steak; instant mashed potatoes; a salad; toasted bagels; dessert and coffee. And he'd started with a single malt Scotch.

My recompense was a video of the Twin Towers' downing on 9/11/01 that lasted over two hours and which contained a lot of images of molten metal flowing from the flames. And then a covey of glib charlatans with ersatz degrees, white coats and less credibility, pontificated on how it was scientifically impossible for the heat of those flames to produce this result.

Ergo, someone was suppressing the truth. And the pundits fed the raw meat of conspiracy to their

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credulous acolytes. Now they were privy to things the rest of us would be too naïve to know.

And the progenitors of this suppression?

No one but our beloved federal government.

Conspirationalists presume to know things the rest of us can only dream of.

Anyhow, at video's end Jeff eagerly awaited my response.

I wanted to be kind and couched my reaction in as much generosity as I could muster.

Rubbish, I'm afraid, was my conclusion.

Jeff now moved hastily to recover his dishes, thrust his arms through his coat violently and stormed out into the cold night.

I thought long and hard about this and, whatever Jeff's reaction, concluded this was a deal-breaker—equivalent to a racist or anti-semitic outburst. As e. e. cummings so wisely put it, there is some shit I will not eat.

Jeff later made a feeble attempt at reconciliation and we met for coffee. Yes, he was still a Truther, so, no, I could not accept it.

A year or so later we were at a bar in Minneapolis where a guy blurted out, "Are you a Truther?" to me. Erica gave him such a blast that the guy's wife hastily wrapped their fries and left. Not so nice Minnesota, on all sides.

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I agonized over the meaning of it.

In the fullness of time I came to realize how dependent we are on shared truths. As the saw has it, you're entitled to your opinion but we have to share the same set of facts.

Truthers subvert faith. Grotesquely they cast doubt on the murder of 20 babies and six adults in Newton, Conn., on 12/14/12. They undermine human trust in communication. "Fake News" plays into this notion.

And therein lies the danger of Russian interference in our lives. Our enemies feed on this naïve instinct to be the sole repositories of arcane wisdom. In the end those who harbor this inside knowledge become superior to those of us who, despite some healthy skepticism, continue to rely on such institutions as the New York Times and government agencies and scientists to furnish us with accurate information.

Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

A bunch of Islamic militants plunged planes into American buildings.

Evolution is a scientific fact that makes it hard to reconcile with Genesis.

The rising waters enveloping your dog and the poisoned air in New Delhi are evidence that our actions are shaping our climate.

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The Truthers poison the wells of discourse, sow discord and weaken our abilities to function cooperatively. These summer soldiers and sunshine patriots show up at Charlottesville, brandishing swastikas and Confederate flags.

Let's call it what it is—treason.

Get real.

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Am I a racist?

That is, according to Hamlet, the question.

As a naturalized citizen I feel it is something we must all ask ourselves. At the very least it becomes a sovereign exercise in introspection. The life unexamined ...

In a very complicated equation, it finally became clear to me that ours is a racist society.

Poverty produces hopelessness. Lack of education leads to an economic cul de sac. The male's only escape is alcohol and drugs. Protest takes the form of criminal acts. The society creates criminals and moves to control them—that's where the cops come in.

Do the cops know this?

There are none so blind as those who will not see. Knowing their role would be profoundly introspective and amazingly rare. Nobody enjoys confronting ugly truths. Oedipus blinded himself for a reason.

Look around.

Education—try getting your kid into a good public grammar school in Manhattan. America is in

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a perennial agony over the state of our education. Really? Have you tried getting your child into Harvard? Yale? The Ivy League? How about West Point? We tried with a wonderfully gifted grandson. He's at Carleton (a great school, to be sure, but the truth must out). The unexamined truth is that we have a dual system—the best and the worst—depending on your color and wealth.

Charlotteville. Ah, yes—all those “very nice people.” Really? Trump needs to be thanked for embodying the very worst of our society—for, after all, who are his acolytes but rednecks, bikers, racists, drop-outs, gun nuts, losers—and even, unfortunately for everyone, coal miners? “Deplorables” comes to mind.

Trump's speech to Nassau cops in July was a thinly veiled incitement to brutality. They should stop being “too nice.” Is that or is that not hilarious?

And how about the paroxysms over kneeling for the Anthem? Who's kneeling? Mostly black athletes! What about? Police brutality. Who wears our other uniforms and fights our wars? A lot of blacks escaping the ghetto (a truly unfashionable word). And who sends them to fight? Draft dodgers in the White House.

And the Confederate Battle Flag.
Sigh! Heroic symbol of Southern manhood.

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Right? Nothing to do with slavery. And less to do with racism. Jim Crow? An aberration. Segregation? Never heard of it. Monuments to the Confederacy's treason? Innocent expressions of patriotism. And the Klan? Loveable guys in sheets. Let's not forget burning crosses. Crosses? Is that irony or do we prefer to slip over it unthinkingly?

Fulminations.

But I need to get back to the question. Am I conscious if a person is black? Do I harbor stereotypes? Would I be afraid to use the word “niggardly?” How could I have escaped being a racist in this society? Can a fish describe the water in which it swims?

The honest answer is I probably haven't escaped. I'd better struggle with the question every day. It results in healthy introspection and invites humility.

The Justine Damond case revisited

In August and in October 2017, I wrote essays on the Justine Damond shooting in Minneapolis in these pages. I called it murder and criticized the mayor, police chief and prosecutor. The first two are gone—not, I'm confident, as a result, but following a vague chiasma of fecklessness—and the third has now charged the officer with murder.

Prosecutor Freeman now faces the daunting task of convicting a cop of a crime. Testi-lying will be in full flower and white jurors will be very—excessively—sympathetic. “We’re laying our lives on the line for you,” officers in uniform will uniformly testi-lie. “I was in fear for my life,” the cops will say.

What is to be done?

There are a number of answers to this horrifyingly unique American dilemma, viz.,

1) Prosecutor Freeman needs a credible (been there, done that) expert witness to describe the real issues.

2) The partner should be charged as an ac-

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complice and offered the out of testifying against his associate. From what I've gathered, he hasn't been a model of helpfulness.

3) The issue of "fear for his life" must be attacked, and what a cop feels is bullshit. It's the objective reality that matters. Was there real (as opposed to imagined) danger? Did Damond have a gun or other weapon? Can his legitimate danger be defined as relating to the case? Did the cop have his gun out and in his lap? If so, it is an unimaginable breach of protocol, and he should have been additionally charged (in disciplinary actions) as failing to safeguard his weapon.

4) Notwithstanding the counterintuitive nature of it all, I think it vitally important that the jury contain some black males who would bring healthy skepticism to the police testimony.

The Damond family has hired the Angel of Death as their attorney. Clutch your wallet, it's about to be emptied. And, indeed, why should you pay for another's misdeeds? Is all sense of responsibility fore-sworn when a citizen dons police blue? In what other human endeavor in America are we all charged for another's egregious acts?

The Damond case has a long way to go, but, so far, at every single step of the way, officialdom has stumbled. We pay dearly for these mistakes. Is there the slightest evidence the new mayor, new police

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chief and old prosecutor have gained a smidgen of insight? Count me amongst the skeptical or, perhaps, among the naive turkeys.

Finally, in a very real sense, I am tempted to name you—dear readers—as the prime culprit. You elevate turkeys to high office, but you don't hold them to account.

The Columbia Bust

Every century has its memorable years—think your birthday. The '20s had 1927 (Lindbergh), 1928 (Mickey Mouse and Oscar), 1929 (Crash). And then there was 1968 (Nixon, Humphrey, Chicago) Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. Kent State. The Kerner Commission. 1941 (War). 1945 (Peace). And the Columbia University Bust in April 1968.

Columbia University is an elite enclave in the heart of Manhattan's Harlem. Its campus is a kind of self-contained, isolated outpost, surrounded by a lot of apartments housing faculty. It is a gem of the Ivy League, vying with Penn, Princeton, Yale and Harvard. Eisenhower was once its president (Princeton had Wilson and Harvard everyone else).

In 1968 Columbia decided to build a gym and easily secured the city's permission to expand into Morningside Park—a small oasis in Harlem. Black and white students sat in, in protest, occupying the dean's office and other buildings. My recollection is that the dean bore the ironic name of Truman.

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The white demonstrators were entitled, arrogant, insufferable, cosseted young snot-noses who insulted the police. We were angry and, with the school's enthusiastic backing, planned a raid.

In late April we stormed in, batons flashing, gaseous fumes clouding and arms flailing as we arrested scores of the scions of the privileged. The black students were merely surly and didn't provoke the animus the white militants managed, but they were collared as well.

The buildings were cleared, peace restored, and, except for a critical study of the event, the dust settled.

I was perfectly content with our action and my role. At that time I had power and influence way above my deputy inspector's rank since I was the aide of the NYPD's highest ranking officer.

And, then, as it does, time passed.

The one thing I'd learned (I was 40) was the value of reflection, and I pondered the issues.

Gradually I discovered I—and all my colleagues—had responded to the externals—the snotty nosed insulters, and not their actions—defense (successful, as it turned out) of the black community's small park. A pretty tortured epiphany, even if essential.

Seven years later I was in command of Bronx

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forces. 1975. The students at Lehman College sat in to protest tuition hikes. I met with the president, an idiot fascist. He wanted them arrested. But they're kids, I said. No, they're not, they're Vietnam vets, the president responded.

I established a liaison with the sit-ins, advised them to assault no one and destroy no property, and I'd try to let them stay.

The school head was furious. He called my bosses, but I put him off. I was temporizing and massaging. Finally, the president went to court and the judge said, "I note Chief Bouza is in the courtroom." (I was sitting in the back.) "He knows his duty and I don't have to remind him of it."

The die was cast. I was forced to act after about six weeks of the sit-in. I told the demonstrators we'd be around at about 3 a.m. and arrest those who remained. Resisters would face an additional charge. About 34 were collected and the story was a squib on page 28 (or so) of The Times. A very peaceful end.

Tony Schwartz made a radio tape of the event, recording (separately and without identities) me and the president. All listeners identified the president as a routine cop—fascist—executive and me as the woolly-headed, liberal academic.

And so ended the legacy of the Columbia Bust, at least partially redeemed.

More Cops

Whenever the Chief's coffee grows cold and the last bite of the doughnut is taken, a light flashes and a voice whispers, "More cops." That is the mantra. They will control crime and improve community relations.

What tripe.

It is nothing short of a scam—or, better yet, a shell game.

The union shortens the work week from five 8-hour tours to four 10-hour tours. And good luck getting 10 hours' worth of effort. This means they show up four times a week. The day hasn't changed so you have to hire more to cover the same span. Then there is overtime; settlements for wrongdoing; and two-person patrols. The scheme is to keep adding cops to cover the same ground.

And with the extra day off the cops are free to moonlight (in uniform yet, an unthinkable prospect in the NYPD) and deprive the unemployed of jobs they could fill.

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Throughout the '80s—a period of much higher crime levels—we had 700 cops; today it's 850 heading to 1,000—an absurdity. The managerial challenge is to have fewer cops do more, work smarter and produce (more arrests, citations and faster responses to 911 calls). It ain't brain surgery. Amazingly, what Minneapolis actually needs is fewer cops, not more.

The really infuriating aspect of all my efforts to control the police budget was the unremitting hostility of the City Council. They regularly accused me of grandstanding. The official resentment of frugality is a surprising development.

And how did the new folks respond? With additions to the bloated cadre of supervisors, demands for more cops and the prospect of hideous settlements, and, oh yes, the creation of specialized units to meet every contingency. Your donkey was stolen? We will create a Donkey Recovery Squad. And we'll give it a nifty name—Ass Coverage Unit.

You know, there are only 400,000 or so of us, so each dollar counts. How's paying off the settlements, subsidizing unneeded units, supporting superannuated supernumeraries and other extravaganzas working out for ya?

And the bloat at the top is prodigious. We had two promotions from 2/11/80 to 12/31/88 [the years Tony Bouza was Chief] and we still had too many

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supervisors at the end.

There were 700 cops in the '80s and a lot more crime and violence, but there was never ever a call to hire more cops. The police are irrelevant to the levels of crime in America.

The union—running this show and the previous one, throughout the '70s—is having a good time. Under metempsychosis, the spirit of Charles Stenvig alights on his successors at the union's helm.

Aggressive police tactics like decoys are abandoned because black leaders (politicos and ministers) hate the operations. And, indeed, it results in a disproportionate arrest rate of black males. These same leaders identify the police as the enemy, fatally injuring any attempt at recruiting black males.

But don't let that lead you into believing police departments are having the least problem recruiting males and females everywhere. The union has secured such salaries and benefits as to make "The Job" (as if there could be no other) wildly attractive and competitive.

There is a coarse NYPD phrase for what the union is doing to you and the idiot politicians buying into its scams—they're pissing all over you and telling you it's raining.

You could stop police abuses—everywhere in this nation—overnight if you: 1. Made cops financial-

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ly responsible for demonstrable depredations, and 2. gave chiefs the power to identify thumpers, document their acts and fire them.

I haven't the slightest hope that the politicians—who are really in charge—will adopt any reforms vaguely resembling anything I've said. But hope springs eternal even in the most cynical breasts.

In the meantime, keep the umbrellas handy and wear slickers.

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Unintended consequences

I came late to the Law of Unintended Consequences, usually believing—naively, as it turned out—that the results of our actions were what folks usually intended.

Gradually I came to recognize that the corruptions and abuses of Netanyahu actually lent support to Anti-Semites hungry for evidence of Jewish wrongdoing. Perfidious and, worse, self-defeating.

Along came Trump—a character whose aggressive self-positiveness is familiar to any New Yorker looking at the behaviors of a lot of its real estate moguls. He knows better than any expert, and he has no need, use for or patience with the sagest advisor.

And his unintended consequences?

As of the dawn of July 16, 2018, any indictment—in whatever form—was sure to be shot down by his collaborators (in both houses) in Congress. Robert Mueller stood little chance, but then the opossum-coifed Trump rode to his rescue through his embrace of our enemies and the repudiation of our most

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trusted friends. And this is the patriot who obtained five deferments, attacked fallen and captured heroes, scorned athletes whose families fight and die for our country and literally and figuratively embraces figures presumably condemned by evangelists and other religious mystics. O tempore. O mores!

These cannot be labeled “interesting times.” That was then. Now we’re looking at both farce and tragedy.

Trump is now vigorously clearing the path for whatever message Mueller delivers. It almost—but not quite—renders the November elections moot. But, still, it needs to be said that these elections are bound to be critical to whatever resolution surfaces from our bizarre saga.

Imagine an indictment featuring obstruction of justice (the firing of Comey because he wouldn’t abandon the Flynn inquiry—which, as you’ll remember—resulted in an admission of criminal wrongdoing by that patriot). How ironic is it that all these champions of America wind up working for our enemies? Benedict Arnold was a piker compared to the folks we see on TV every day.

Today we face, I think and hope, a very different climate than obtained pre 7/16. Trump’s Helsinki press conference bids fair to become a crucial signpost along his road to perdition. Of course this sounds like

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wish-fathering thought, but still ...

And so the band plays on, yet no evidence of disaffection surfaces from the rednecks, bikers, racists, evangelists and others who’ve embraced our President. Why does “deplorable” resonate?

Donald Trump is, to me (and I may be indulging an unforgiveable conceit), a familiar type. Quintessentially New Yorky. I met tons of Trumps in bars, stadiums (I will eschew the pretentious stadia), police precincts, street corners and stoops. These guys have all the answers—to every human possibility; have never asked a question; think themselves the smartest guys (and we’re talking guys here, guys) in any room; and have a street-tempered cunning that makes them—all at once—formidable, arrogant, roughly eloquent, absolutely positive and convinced and utterly scornful of your views. And they often combine these qualities with a coarse likeability that often passes for charm.

These guys are inventive. In 1975 they chanted “Codd (the police commissioner) is a fish; Beame (the diminutive mayor) is a shrimp.” They reach the apotheosis of expression in the Yankee Stadium addressing the home team’s opponents. In this forum, your race, sexuality (real or imagined), family, religion or most sacred held beliefs become currency for the marketplace of ideas, freely and loudly exchanged.

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In the meantime we have to pay strict attention and measure our words and actions in such a way as to avoid sending aid and comfort to our enemies.

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Roads—high and low

“They go low, we go high.”

Thus, did that classy First Lady, Michelle Obama, abjure us to take the high road.

Then we have Rep. Maxine Waters tempting us to the low road.

All those lunch counter sit-ins ignored.

What did it all mean?

Think of the battles to be served simple meals. Decent, civil, respectful blacks asking for service in a restaurant that refused them. Wasn't there a legal obligation to serve orderly customers when you opened your doors to the public? Civility sacrificed on the altar of racism.

And now Rep. Waters, a black woman (of all grotesque ironies) calling for a Trump employee and her family to be confronted, insulted and denied service.

How many victims of Jim Crow spiral in their graves over this one?

How much comfort does Ms. Waters hope to

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extend to racists? Why does she work so hard to be Trump's biggest asset? Is it that she wants to supplant Nancy Pelosi as the Right's *bete noir*?

Life is quite complicated enough—especially under the goofy visions of our universally scorned President Donald Trump (at least in the upper reaches of intellectualism).

Our only hope lies in a Blue Wave in November that can sweep Mueller's findings (sure to be damning) into impeachment. In such a case Trump will discover (as all his cronies—Pruitt, The Mooch, Cohen, Manafort, et alia, on and on—have) that you actually cannot resist the pressure to resign. Nixon comes to mind. Yet the conceit survives that "I can tough it out."

Susan Huckabee Sanders and her family must be served at the Red Hen—and everywhere else—when they arrive with civility and are prepared to pay. That is what this nation is all about.

That she is a shill for what I think is a criminal enterprise means only that she must be charged when the evidence demands it but not be subjected to mindless exclusions and illegal denials of service. How can we know that it's wrong to deny blacks at the counter yet believe it's right to extend such idiotic and illegal cruelties to similarly situated whites.

The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

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But Talleyrand had it right when, referring to a folly of state, said, "It is worse than a tragedy. It is a mistake."

Criticizing blacks in government does not come easily to me, but the more egregious follies have to be attacked if we are to retain civility, respectability and integrity. Was the Civil Rights war fought in vain?

The Black Caucus in Congress has made serious errors. They were apologists for Rep. Charles Rangel when the evidence showed he was a grifter. Altogether too much slack is given to Louis Farrakhan and Al Sharpton. There is little comfort in acknowledging that blacks are human too, but a decent respect for—yes—decency, requires us to demand responsible actions even from those we'd prefer to protect and succor.

I'm very afraid that beating up on black leaders lends aid and comfort to the enemy, yet I can't help pointing out the harm done by such as Jesse Jackson (senior and junior), Bill Cosby and O.J. Simpson—whose acquittal led to an explosion of glee in black communities across America. This burst was merely a sense of relief for getting Charley's foot off Black America's necks, however done or however briefly.

November beckons. I see it as our only hope. Maxine Waters is a serious obstacle (and a very ap-

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pealing and convenient target) to any hopes of an overthrow of Trump. If that hope is to survive we must jettison the baggage that slows our pursuit of that goal. Waters should repent and apologize; Pelosi should quit and Democrats should walk as if they understand the Republic is at stake.

First Lady Obama was not only right but prophetic. The High Road is our only option.

What Maxine Waters did proves a wonderful illustration of a topic I recently dwelled on—the law of unintended consequences. I'm sure she meant the opposite of the results she managed to extract from the treatment of Ms. Huckabee-Sanders. Had she set out to feather Trump's nest she could not have done a better job than she did with her diatribe.

The hour is late. Repent!

Complex struggles require carefully thought out responses, not reflexive self-indulgences.

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The end is near! Repent!

Today I am 90.

No, it's not my birthday, only one of 365 days. Never thought (like death) it'd happen to me.

And the point?

Only a few ignorant musings.

I am more convinced than ever that I am but a worm on the planet, along with you and you.

Not many learnings—and those are probably mistaken, and, no, I am not given to modesty—mock or otherwise, but I do love the English language.

Money matters. As for love, yes, and hate has to be measured, focused and justified.

If all religions are valid, why do they say they're the only gatekeepers to salvation? Why do the overwhelming majority of American scientists say they don't believe in God?

Questions matter. The very best lecture I ever heard on anything, posited the insane notion that we must question everything and struggle to get real answers.

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What drove me?

I really gave that one a lot of time. Sure sex, hunger, cold, shelter, thirst and such, but what was central?

This proved a very tough and long inner struggle.

The honors, medals, awards, praise, etc.?

Nice, but, although I welcomed, embraced, appreciated and took them, they weren't it. In the end they meant something, but not enough.

As I thought back, I landed on failing the test for Brooklyn Tech. I focused on the humiliation of being excluded from a conversation on an opera I knew nothing about.

My ambitions had me, aspiring fascinations, dating upper middle-class women. They were mostly Ivy League and I, almost literally, worshipped them.

Without fail they all dropped me after the second or third date.

Showering and brushing teeth didn't help.

Ultimately and on reflection (questionings) the answer came.

I had no prospects.

That was it. I wasn't a lawyer or a doctor, and my future looked dismal. Only Erica saw me as I was.

Job interviews were exercises in humiliation.

When I saw "Death of a Salesman," there I was—Wil-

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ly Loman (low man). Ugh and double ugh.

Civil Service was my one and only hope and proved a salvation.

And now the end is near.

I see ego as the great enemy, yet there is a negative virtue in its existence. The threat of its diminution (humiliation) can drive us—as it did me—to some measure of success.

Truth matters. Decency's real. Doing the right thing counts. The people must be served. Democracy is best. Fascism is evil. Heroes must be chosen carefully—not Lindbergh, Calhoun or Lee, but Lincoln, Gandhi or Buddha. Family comes first. Violence can work—as is attested by practically every Western ever filmed.

Voltaire's "I never heard of a crime of which I did not think myself capable" resonates. I speak to the near-infinite malleability of the human (think Nazis and the things they came to do).

I've seen sunsets. I've heard Beethoven. Endless museums all over the world have provided pleasure. I've watched a ton of great movies—America's greatest art form—and generally led a privileged cultural life. I even saw Fonteyn and Nureyev and operas at the Met, so what is the greatest exemplar of beauty to me? Sounds crass to say it—perhaps even sexist—but it is the sight of a beautiful woman. Noth-

ing equals it.

I wax between Philistine and Sophist. But it is my fate. Where does pedant fit in all this?

Whatever rewards (mostly unearned and certainly undeserved) followed the simple formula: hard work, hard study—but what a very long time it took me to learn this. I was a very slow learner and a very late developer. My advice to kids is always “Read!” Real simple.

One of these will be my last—hopefully not this one. As you can see, my publisher is a very patient fellow—albeit a Maoist, polymath and pseudo-intellectual.

Navel gazing?

The roar ahead

Great events cast their shadows before them. Minneapolis is heading for a reckoning likely to affect every person in the city. The Justine Damond killing, in July 2017, will likely result in a settlement costing citizens three dollars each for every million. The lawyer for the family is Robert Bennet, who I previously described as the Angel of Death.

But the city (like three schmucks merrily paddling down the Niagara River asking, “What is that roar ahead?”) pushes on without much consideration.

Two of the three captains on our ship have been replaced (the mayor and the chief of police) while the third, the county attorney, is back-paddling desperately to cling to office.

And ahead? A waterfall.

Like the paddlers (described by a New York Yiddishism that I hope is seen as analogous)—our merry ship steams full ahead. A dark and menacing giant looms calmly in dark waters.

What might be done?

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If you send your servant abroad and h/she commits a crime, your first response is going to be to disavow the action and divorce the miscreant. If you, additionally, punish the criminal, you strengthen your position. That person is not your agent and is on his own.

How do cops differ?

They have a very strong union that knows how to persuade the city's parents that they should open the coffers. The symbiotic relationship is fueled by political contributions, endorsements, all forms of help and that indispensable addition—schmoozing. Boy, are they good at it, notwithstanding the City Council members' modest reluctance to be stroked. Right. Having done three prior essays on the Damond case, I won't belabor the facts.

How to avoid a \$10 million settlement that will cost each and every member of your household (even that little toddler) \$30?

Step No. 1 is to charge the shooter. Miraculously this has been done, albeit reluctantly. Witness the handwringing, delays and refusal to submit the case to a grand jury.

Step No. 2, charge the partner as an accomplice and make a deal for leniency if he testifies truthfully (a more daunting task than is usually realized).

Step No. 3, get blacks on the jury. Connection is

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going to be really tough—but essential to mitigating the civil costs of a judgment or settlement.

Step No. 4, in the criminal case, take a plea to lesser charges if guilt and responsibility are admitted.

Step No. 5, in the civil case, do not settle. Even the threat of a trial will reduce the settlement and—if previous steps are followed—the city's threat to disavow the actions of rogue agents gains heft.

And, I'm sure there are additional points I've forgotten or never knew.

The fact is, there is a waterfall ahead and we should hear its roar.

If the city doesn't know how to control its cops (and it is possible—but there are costs) your pocket is going to be picked again. The city is self-insured. No insurance company in America would take its business, or, if they did, the costs—given the city's stupidity and cowardice—would prove prohibitively high.

The problem with the waterfall is when the captain goes down with the ship he takes us with him.

Paddle on!

Full steam ahead!

And, one final note—the fact is, you are complicit in this idiocy (as I am), because you send these fools to office, keep them there, never ask the right questions, wring your hands in an agony of despair

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and traipse innocently forward toward a monster looming ahead in the dark waters. It is a painful truism that, in a democracy, you get the government you deserve.

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My trivial view

“What a great country!”

The beginning of one of the many dumb jokes I love.

Yet, for me, in there is contained the kernel of a central truth. Only an immigrant experiences the shock of change. I left a dictatorship (Spain) in Dec. 1937 to experience the genius, joy and infinite rewards of America.

Traditionally we think of the material—cars, homes, TVs, and those costliest of all—education and health care. Under the withering, merciless laws of capitalism, those who plan, work hard, educate, save (invest) and experience a measure of normal luck, thrive. Quite a formula and really—although I know it’s boring—worth reflecting on. My father was a stoker, my mother a seamstress, and I became a cop. A mere 80+ years later here I am. Ta Da!

But greater than all material benefits is the joy of the interior life—the endless speculations that echo within us as we stumble from one moment to the

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next. The Greeks had it right and offered us the inexpressible joy of introspection.

All of this is made possible only in a climate of freedom. There we can explore endlessly. A problem arises when it is seized as license. My freedom ends where your nose begins. With freedom must come restraint, accountability, discipline and responsible behavior. Our laws are just rulers to conduct and guide our behaviors.

Freedom—democracy—is both messy and complex. It requires effort. The human animal is a slippery beast and requires guidance and monitoring. My adult life has mostly been spent in controlling the less beautiful aspects of the human spirit.

Freedom requires a measure of wisdom, a bit of tolerance, understanding and involvement. In short—effort!

And guess what? Effort can be tiresome.

A baleful look at the global scene reveals a bleak perspective. It was ever thus—yet each age faced its own, *sui generis*, ills. Think bubonic plagues; potato famines; droughts; wars; pestilence and those Horsemen of the Apocalypse. So it goes—the endless cycles of ruin and renewal.

And now? My amateur's glance across the landscape reveals the usual bleakness—specific, however, to our age.

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Europe is awash in crises—immigration (Germany); idiot budgets and fiscal plans (Greece and Italy); housing bubbles (Spain); nutty hiring/firing rules (France); the dark appeals of the extreme right (Poland and Hungary) and on and on.



Villiamcurtis https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GREECE_NEXT_ECONOMIC_MODEL-.JPG

Latin America is a mess. Brazil has just elected a totally unready Army Captain as President. Those who can are in massive exodus from a disintegrating Venezuela. Peru and Argentina writhe in corruption and nepotism. Colombia is in an agony of emergence from an endless civil war. And the rest ain't faring so well either.

Democracy basically requires two things from

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us: 1) Do the right thing. 2) Tell the truth.

Again, Lenin—What is to be done?

Yet, I brindle at the thought. The notion that bubbles to the surface of my very shallow brain is Democratic Fatigue.

That is what I think is at the bottom of all this nonsense—very notably including Donald J. Trump. The planet is momentarily tired of the struggle to maintain. Just that—maintain.

The simple answers of the Hitlers and Stalins allure. Why struggle? I've got the answers. Don't worry your pretty little head about it. Slavery means full employment. We can make better use of the land than they can. There is a free lunch. In this world the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.

Enjoy!

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The Jews

The very word conjures a freighted emotional frisson we barely dare acknowledge or express.

Watching "Thurgood," a biopic on the Supreme Court Justice and the NAACP, inspired me to think of the role of Jews in America.

They arrived at the Lower East Side of Manhattan and marched on. No proselytizing but a deep sense of unity and a devotion to learning, family and community. They set up places to help—like the Henry Street Settlement House and created unions and schools. They were—and are—in the forefront of the labor, educational, civil rights and related movements. It was Goodman and Schwerner who died with Chaney. Truly at the ramparts.

In my innermost heart I think of the ACLU; the NAACP; and even the Southern Poverty Law Center as either mostly Jewish or importantly Jewish organizations.

The Jews have been the trailblazers in our educational and cultural systems. They've produced

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inspiring films and influential literature. They're philanthropic and altruistic, and their religion requires them to self-examine and atone.

When I was growing up, the city's mayor was asked why he never said his mother was Jewish. Fiorello La Guardia answered, "I didn't want to appear to be boasting."

I had no exposure to Jews until I was 16 and went to push a hand truck, sweep and pack dresses in the Garment Center. I felt immediately comfortable and appreciated, notwithstanding the fact that I was an obvious loser—and that ain't modesty speaking.

The experience of encouragement and acceptance accompanied me for the next 74 years and counting (albeit more slowly). And it led me to think of such colossal ironies—which I had not even suspected—that Jesus was a rabbi and that the temples where he spoke were actually synagogues and not cathedrals, as I half-believed (or, more likely, had been led to believe). And how can we conclude that Jews murdered Jesus when it was Pontius Pilate who sentenced him and Romans who placed INRI (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) over the cross. And it was a devout Jew who spread the word beyond the Hebrews. Paul of Tarsus said you didn't have to be circumcised or be Hebrew to worship Jesus. A real breakthrough. And this came around six decades after

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the Crucifixion.

More ironies; if you were a Jew in NYC in the '30s, and had an inkling of the world around you, you'd have to be a Communist. Who fought the Nazis in Berlin in the '30s? The Communists—only. And why did Jews sign up for the Lincoln Brigade in '37 and '38? Because, again, only the Left fought the Nazis and fascists in Spain. Such complexities expose the dangerous actions of such morons as our president—and his followers.

Even Jack Benny employed Rochester. Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America" and George Soros suffers pretty horribly for contributing to learning democracy and other good causes.

Another irony—the anti-Semitism in much of the Black community. I heard Malcolm X, in the early '60s, exhort Black crowds in Harlem about the evils of "Goldberg." Malcolm—to his everlasting credit—saw the light and abandoned the stain. His former boss, Elijah Muhammad, and his successor, Louis Farrakhan, continued the poison.

They came for my neighbor and I stood silent. When they came for me there was no one to protest.

"An entire nation—every single one, almost, became complicit in the Holocaust. This is the greatest crime ever perpetrated by any people. Six million dead is a statistic. Ann Frank is a tragedy," Stalin, a

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pretty big criminal in his own right, was reported to have said.

And the beat goes on and anti-Semitism lives—and did I forget to mention Erica, my wife, is Jewish?

A caveat.

The creation of Israel in 1948 provided a glow of genuine satisfaction. As an evolved Zionist, I believed Jews needed a safety valve sort of homeland. Splendid.

What Israel and its actions have taught me, however, is a chastened discovery—the nation’s behavior has often meant bullying, insensitivity and exclusion. What an awful irony.

So—I believe Israel must live, but it also needs to remember the history of Jews and the need for mercy and justice. Jews must never forget the Holocaust and its lessons.

***Response to Tony Bouza’s “The Jews” Commentary
Published Jan. 21, 2019***

Yes, this got our attention. The title, alone, was enough, but it appeared above the fold in the print version. As we read, the distortions from beginning to end it demanded response. Clearly this is just the reaction that Southside Pride had in mind and we are glad to oblige.

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First, the title, “The Jews,” is engineered to provoke. As Jews, we perceive these two words as a prelude to an attack: “The Jews” own the media.” “The Jews” control an international conspiracy that manipulates politicians.” “The Jews killed Jesus.” “The Jews will cheat you.” Etc. The list goes on and we’re girded for battle. Let’s see what Mr. Bouza has to say about what we did to lie, cheat, steal, etc. In this case, Mr. Bouza surprised us. He did not attack. He gushed praise. We have heard this litany of good deeds and accomplishments before ... by our grandparents. Art’s grandmother, Lena, would have been “qvelling” with pride. Indeed, she could easily have made these same comments herself (and she did). Our grandmothers would have been surprised to know that “The very word conjures a freighted emotional frisson we barely dare acknowledge or express.” Deb’s grandmother Sophie believed that it conjured a litany of Eastern European foods that stick to your ribs: knishes, kreplach, kneidels and blintzes.

Second, there is no coherent structure for this commentary. This surprised us since usually Mr. Bouza’s commentaries are well thought out. He begins with a reference to the movie “Thurgood” and then launches into his praise of “The Jews.” He jumps from civil rights to education, philanthropy, culture, New York City’s mayor in the 1930s and jumps again to his own childhood, to the New Testament, Communism, Nazi’s, Jack Benny & Rochester, Malcom X and Ann Frank. After this whirlwind ride

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through “history,” we land at anti-Semitism and finally a slap on the wrist for Israel’s current behavior. What is the point?

Third, this narrative is dangerous because it obscures a reader’s ability to see Jews as human beings. It describes a two-dimensional Jew that is used for political gain by people like Benjamin Netanyahu who says he speaks for “the Jews” and by white nationalist organizations that talk about the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” This narrative lifts up certain individuals and then equates them or their deeds with the whole community of people referred to as “the Jews.” What we know, and what we feel strongly about, is that Mr. Bouza’s version of “Jewish history and progress” is the folklore narrative that Jews may tell themselves, but it is far from the truth. If this narrative is to be displayed in our local media, it needs a tempering dose of truth. We love the Southside and we love being Jewish. Therefore we believe that our Southside neighbors need to know who we are as full human beings, not idealized caricatures. The following are just a few points to expand on Mr. Bouza’s “history”:

- Far from “arriving at the Lower East Side of Manhattan,” Jews were here in the USA beginning in the 1600s. In fact, Jews lived in the South and some owned enslaved Africans. Many Jews came through Canada, and some were “illegal aliens.”

- Although Jews were involved, we believe that

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saying we were “in the forefront of the labor, educational, civil rights and related movements” is a bit of a stretch. Although some of our relatives helped organize the ILGWU, they were organizing against other Jews who were the owners. Deb’s father and uncle, Si and Moishe, were disowned by their extended family when they organized a union in their uncles’ hanger factory. We can understand that in Mr. Bouza’s “innermost heart he thinks of the ACLU; the NAACP; and even the Southern Poverty Law Center as either mostly Jewish or importantly Jewish organizations,” yet we believe these organizations would have a hard time agreeing to that label. We also think that it is important to recognize that these movements were led by many people of diverse faiths due to their common belief for human dignity and morality.

- Equating Jews in New York in the 1930s with Communists may be laudable but is very far from the truth. Our own families are complex. We are communist and capitalist, pro- and anti-Zionist and even pro- and anti-Trump. Art’s grandpa was an anarchist. His grandmother a Democrat and “Bundist.” Yes, some joined the CP but many others were trying to get food on the table and a place to live in a virulent anti-Semitic environment. In addition, New York has always been home to large Modern Orthodox, Chasidic and Conservative Jewish Communities, none of whom would claim communism. As Jews we also always have to acknowledge that many of our community

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and family members are pure capitalists.

- *His poisonous oversimplification, “the anti-Semitism in much of the Black community,” contains the same flaw as this whole piece. It promotes a two-dimensional view of the Black Community and uses the behavior of two people to characterize an entire culture and community.*

- *Near the end, he comments, “And the beat goes on and anti-Semitism lives.” This is indeed ironic since the two dimensional structure of his own arguments are the exact methods anti-Semites use.*

All this effusive praise leads to “A caveat.” Mr. Bouza says, “What Israel and its actions have taught me, however, is a chastened discovery—the nation’s behavior has often meant bullying, insensitivity and exclusion. What an awful irony.

“So—I believe Israel must live, but it also needs to remember the history of Jews and the need for mercy and justice. Jews must never forget the Holocaust and its lessons.”

As Jews, we feel strongly that the discussion of Israel needs to go beyond this two-dimensional characterization that seems to need a little slap on the wrist to correct its bad behavior. We can expand the picture by remembering that the State of Israel was created by the winners of WWII as a place to ship unwanted Jews out of Europe. The Haganah conquered the land and displaced the indigenous residents in a brutal manner, killing many. Indigenous Palestinians were thrown off the land and forbidden to return. This be-

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havior continues 70 years later to this day. The West Bank and Gaza are the largest open air prisons in the world. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed by the occupying army known as the Israeli Defense Force. This group currently trains U.S. police departments.

We also feel compelled to remember that the sequence described above for the conquering and occupation of Israel completely parallels our own occupation of Indigenous people’s homeland here in the USA. These parallel tracks are not a coincidence. Ultimately they are about white supremacy and both countries and all their citizens need to come to terms with this.

“The Jews” are a complex people shaped by their history. We would hope for future reference that those seeking to understand our culture and history do so from reliable sources within the Jewish Community. As with any people who struggle in unfriendly environments, some people who are Jewish “make it” and others don’t. Some assimilate into the dominant culture and some become part of various subcultures. Finally, as a complex people, we strongly believe that Israel needs to be held accountable for its current behavior which, in our estimation reflects the opposite of Jewish values. It is doing real, physical harm and creates stifling pressure on Jews worldwide.

—Deb Moses and Art Serotoff

P. D. Blues

Around 1966, the NYPD was assailed by the police union as an unfit place to work. The cops were miserable. Morale had never been lower. The troops wallowed in lachrymose self-pity and the Fourth Estate lapped it up.

What a fun time they were all having.

My boss then was the four-star chief in charge of the force, under the police commissioner. As he usually did, he asked me what I thought.

What did I think?

The question shoved me into my favorite exercise, and I began to consider the question.

We were having a problem recruiting black males because the community leaders defined us as the enemy. Still true.

We had no interest in recruiting women but I helped change that in 1975—still nine years off then.

But Italians, Irish, even Jews? They flocked to the tests and we steadily raised the requirements and still they flooded the lists. No recruitment problems.

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The standards were high. The job was incredibly attractive to the segment of the upper levels of the lower class (civil servants, clerks and high school strivers) from which we'd always drawn. Salaries and benefits and pensions were surprisingly good.

Outsiders thought it was easy to be a cop. Insiders knew better but bad-mouthed "The Job" (the curious appellation used by insiders) for their own arcane purposes. No one quit, and the union made it damnably difficult to fire thumpers, racists, alcoholics, thieves, scoundrels and other miscreants in the ranks. Indeed, the unions—having, by 2019, secured seriously attractive salaries, benefits and pensions—had little else to do but defend wrongdoers.

So, in 1966, I told my boss to label the brouhaha "The Myth of the Exodus."

That catchy phrase punctured the balloon and the issue sank to the ocean floor.

And now comes City Pages echoing the recruitment myth—and using a female police executive (a real revolution—unheralded and unsung) and, of course, the union-head, to prove the point.

I was outraged from the first line. Cops do not call it the "noble profession" and never have. Some awful events are cited to justify the affection for self-pity. Yes, cops do encounter the underbelly of the human beast. This is news?

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The account describes tough incidents—often (without comment) handled by female cops. Duh! Split second decisions; horrid cases; unappreciative public. Hello? Anybody home? There are three photos—a white female police executive; a black female sergeant and, of course, a police union head. So, are America's police free of problems? Not quite. There's racism and brutality and featherbedding, not to mention gargantuan judgments and settlements. And, yes, waste, inefficiency and bloat. What there isn't—amazingly—is corruption. Bribery is history—made thus by such generous salaries, benefits and pensions as to make the acceptance of a corrupt offer literally unthinkable. The unions have done their jobs so well that all that is left for them to do is defend thumpers, racists, alcoholics, malingerers and their ilk.

A recurring theme of mobility suffuses the account. Rough statistics (guesses, really) are offered. Nothing in the least persuasive.

Does anyone quit? Is it easy to be a cop? Can you describe the salary? The benefits? The pension? Haven't the requirements been raised?



Tony Bouza was Chief of Police for Minneapolis from 1980 to 1989. He writes a monthly column for Southside Pride.

\$5.00
ISBN 978-0-9643587-1-3
50500
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