

"I Don't Understand the Outrage"

I heard an interesting comment yesterday: "I don't understand the outrage". This was said by a guy named Nick Calderone, a panel member on a T.V. program called Right This Minute. The show features video clips of funny, amazing, or exciting events, and yesterday's episode played a few minutes of cops in some mall violently bashing a double amputee in the ribs. The 20 year old man and his 18 year old caretaker/girlfriend were being held down by at least 3 cops who were arresting them for shoplifting. The woman pleaded as she was physically subdued by the cop's weight and wrestling holds, while the male amputee apparently resisted the attack, though it was characteristically unclear whether he was resisting the arrest itself or just the painful mauling he was subjected to while multiple cops screamed at him to "stop resisting". After less than a minute, one cop began punching the flattened-out amputee in the ribs while laying on top of him. That's when some on the Right This Minute panel noted that a lot of viewers were very upset by the images, and our friend Nick chimed in with "I don't understand the outrage." He said the assailants were "just trying to arrest someone... they're just doing their jobs."

Question: Wasn't "Just doing my job" the favorite excuse of Nazis during the Nuremberg war crimes trials? Yes, it was, and it was rejected then, just as we all should reject it as bullshit today whenever bullies with badges try to deny responsibility for their barbarism. Personally, I don't understand not understanding outrage when a person is repeatedly cracked in the ribs for "not cooperating". The video showed a legless man held down by two large men, so even if he wouldn't let himself be easily handcuffed, he wasn't going anywhere, either. It all seems to come down to impatient cops, desensitized to violence, not hesitating to injure people when it's expedient. I mean, rabbit-punching a downed man? With their two or three to one advantage, how long could it possibly take before one amputee exhausts himself and succumbs to two burly cops trying to handcuff him? Two minutes? Three? Five? Do five minutes of a cop's time really outweigh the ~~bruised~~^{bruised} or broken bodies of "uncooperative" arrestees? It seems a terribly cold way to think.

In my too-many years of engagement, I've seen an awful lot of routine authoritarian violence. Lots of heads banged into walls, cracked with batons, and/or ground into the asphalt by knees and flat palms; lots of limbs twisted and torqued into unnatural positions; lots of bodies kicked and punched, invariably while on the ground and often already shackled. I can't count the gratuitous pepper-spray soakings of people already complying with an order to "get down!", almost as if the cops are frustrated by the quick coopera-

tion that deprived them of the joy of beating an unarmed man. All of this, not to mention the daily psychological abuse of the powerless by the powerful, is the norm in jails and prisons, and many prisoners grow numb to it over time. Thankfully, I've escaped that fate so far, and abusive "authority figures" still horrify me very much, maybe even more than ever. Those pigs in the mall video could easily have waited out their victim, worn him down with his own resistance, and then taken him away with little or no injury (and a lot less outrage). But that was apparently too much to ask — their few minutes were valued higher than a man's ribs.

To those who insist they "don't understand the outrage", I have to ask: Is this casual acceptance of brutality the best we are capable of? Will you be proud when your kids display the same?



I always mean to end these entries with a meaningful quote, but I often forget. I have more space than usual this time, so I'll add a few. (Sorry if some are repeats, I don't see these blogs after I send them out, so I can't easily remember what I've already written.)

"What we do for ourselves dies with us; what we do for others lives on and is immortal."
— Robert Pines (?)

"To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is to not die."
— Unknown (to me)

"The most painful state of being is remembering the future you can no longer have."
— Unknown (to me)

These quotes all seem to speak right to me. That's all I'll say for now. If anyone feels like googling them and letting me know the original speakers' names and any other info about them (when written, from what, etc.), I'd sure appreciate it.

Happy Thanksgiving.

(End Blog #7)