



Jan. 27, 2023

I have a feeling this is going to be an eventful weekend.

This evening, at 4pm, video footage of the savage beating that five foul cops put on Tyre Nichols was released in Tennessee. It is horrifying in ways that even the Rodney King, Eric Garner, and George Floyd videos were not, if only because these cops not only bludgeoned Tyre to his eventual death, but they repeatedly picked up his slumped, spent body just to punish it some more.

I don't want to write about the awfulness of what these pigs did, though. They did what pigs do, and countless others are already describing their actions. I also don't want to carry on about the skin color of either Tyre or his murderers, not because it is irrelevant, but because it distracts too much from the larger question, namely: What are ~~we~~^{we} going to do, FINALLY, about the problem of BLUE menace?

No one yet knows what will happen in the wake of these brutal images, but already I hear three main calls from the chattering classes:

- 1) These five cops must be held accountable;
- 2) "Jail Killer Cops!"; and
- 3) Protest peacefully / Don't destroy cities.

I disagree with all three calls, and let me explain why. Rather, let me use Martin Luther King Jr.'s words to help explain why. In his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," Dr. King wrote:

"You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects and does not grapple with underlying causes."

From the same Letter:

"...As I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love?"

Taking the three points in order, first of all, these cops, like many cops these days, ARE "being held accountable," (whatever that means). As happened with Derek Chauvin and others, this "accountability" will make no difference in the end. A few turds end up in jail... big deal. The toilet remains overflowing with more feces just like them, so the only real solution is to flush them ALL, then stop crapping where we live by retaining the system that excretes them in the first place, i.e. policing as an institution. We know what policing is about, and it's time to eliminate it for good. Literally, FOR good, we must decide that the era of policing is over, then set ourselves to the task of completely and permanently closing this ugly chapter of human history. That would be a social movement toward true GOOD, whereas emphasizing "police accountability" is just a way of continuing our collective refusal to grapple with underlying causes, as Dr. King accused.

(Continued on reverse)

Second, and closely related, this obsession with "jailing killer cops" is a sickness we must contend with and recover from. Soon. Jailing and punishment are addictions of the weak and cowardly, but we aspire to be strong, do we not? At the moment, however, we ARE weak, and like drug dealers who revile "junkies" yet still get hooked on their own poisons, we decry the excesses of police (which all stem from equating retribution with "justice") while simultaneously screaming for their blue porcine blood whenever we sense an opportunity to take an eye for an eye. Two wrongs still do not make a right, though, and demands to jail cops only LEGITIMIZE jailing as a response to harm, right along with those paid to do the jailing. It's a bit like an abused kid cheering on his abusive father when he beats his abusive mother; there's no justice in this type of revenge.

Finally, this brings us to the pleas for peaceful protest in the wake of an atrocity that represents so many more that we never hear about. Police beatings are like cops and cockroaches in that way — wherever you see one, many others are almost certainly nearby. Look... I understand the distress at seeing vandalism and destruction of property — I feel it too, as I've really never been much of an extremist myself — but let's remember that those ruined things are THINGS, while what police destroy are PEOPLE (as well as people's things, of course). It may not be unreasonable to take extreme measures to attract the necessary attention when lives are at stake. In fact, it sometimes seems there is no other way, doesn't it? As Frederick Douglass wrote, "Power concedes nothing without a demand," so if that demand requires teeth (spoiler: it does), then violence in the streets may be the only expedient.

Ultimately, what pigs do is BAD. Period. No one should ever make his or her living from the suffering of others, but that's precisely what "working" in blue uniforms behind bronze badges always amounts to. Cops invariably either create the suffering directly (ticketing, arresting, chaining, caging, beating, shooting, etc), or they enable and perpetuate it (enforcing court punishments, transporting and guarding prisoners, "patrolling", etc.). They collect large salaries for injuring and terrorizing people, plain and simple, so energy focussed exclusively on those who actually MURDER their victims is energy diverted from The Big Picture: Cops suck, and besides killing us — which is pretty bad all by itself! — they simply do more harm than the occasional act of good that they may bumble into can ever make up for.

Perhaps the riots will begin soon. Maybe tonight. Honestly, I'm hopeful. It's not the violence that I relish, it's the outrage, because we NEED this outrage... what other reaction makes any sense, and what else could foster meaningful, systemic change in these outrageous conditions?

Care to drop me
a personal letter?
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