



Change Baltimore by Strengthening the Family

We are grateful to Allan Brownfeld (“The Conservative Curmudgeon”) for his insightful survey of conditions in Baltimore that led him to conclude that other factors, not “white racism,” prompted the rioting and destruction in that city after the arrest and subsequent death of Freddie Gray.



Though not alone in noting that three of the four police officers who arrested Gray and shoved him into the police van where he perished were black, Brownfeld noted that the cries of “white racism” propelling rioters into the streets had little basis for what happened. He noted: “In Baltimore, the mayor, City Council president, police commissioner, and nearly half its 3,000-member police force are black.”

Only 25 years old when he perished, Gray was no stranger to police. First arrested at age 18 on charges that he was peddling drugs, he accumulated at least a dozen more arrests in his brief life. His final run-in with police was also drug-related. The area where he lived and operated was once home for thousands of blacks who made a good living manufacturing goods for Bethlehem Steel, General Motors, and Martin Marietta. They suffered when those jobs were lost. Poverty followed, as well as a loss of the kind of stability that sustains strong family life.

In most of America’s inner cities, the breakdown of the family and the sound influences over the young that families supply is enormously relevant when assessing what goes wrong. Many homes are led by a single parent and over 72 percent of babies born in inner cities are born to single mothers. Brownfeld cites a passage from the book *The Best Parent is Both Parents* by David Levy, who notes that neither poverty nor race is the primary cause of crime. The breakdown of the stable family should be blamed.

For a further explanation of why young blacks turn to crime, Brownfeld cites the findings of a non-profit counseling center in Los Angeles that attempts to keep youngsters out of jail and away from criminal elements. According to this center, the young join gangs and the drug culture “fundamentally because of a need for acceptance and identity [stimulated] by an absence of a cohesive ... family life where there is a sense of belonging and respect.”

Professor Orlando Patterson, a black sociologist at Harvard University, claims that a preponderance of black men are in jail not “because cops, prosecutors, judges and juries are racist” but because of the factors cited above.

Will the federal investigators looking into the death of Freddie Gray and the rioting and looting that followed factor all of these considerations into their findings? We can only hope so. The already widely heard charge of white racism ought to be ignored. Until all these other causes are acknowledged and dealt with, there will likely be more Baltimores.

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