



Correction, Please!

With Cities Riotous and Aflame, Radicals Bang the Drums for Police Defunding

Item: *In a double issue dated August 17/24, 2020 (with a feature variously entitled in different parts of the magazine “Reimagining the Police” and “The Police Are Broken”), Time magazine reported that after a Minneapolis police officer “knelt on [George] Floyd’s neck, the Minneapolis city council concluded that its police department was beyond reform and must instead be replaced.” The magazine noted that “many activists and academics alike have come to believe that the relationship between Black Americans and U.S. police can’t be solved with incremental change.”*

Item: *A major piece written by self-styled “agitator” Vicky Osterweil was highlighted in the radical Nation magazine dated June 12. In that article (“Burning Down the 3rd Police Precinct Changed Everything”), the writer trumpeted: “Calls to abolish the police are spreading. Dozens of cities are considering cutting police budgets, and police are resigning across the country.”*

She boasted about the “destruction of the Minneapolis Third Precinct house on the night of May 28, three days into the riots. Having just completed a book [In Defense of Looting] on the history of anti-police rioting and uprisings in America, I cannot recall another time when protesters took over and burnt down a police station. It was an unprecedented and beautiful moment in the annals of rebellion in this country.” In conclusion, Osterweil said that “the seizing of two police precincts is a blow against whiteness, against the police, against capitalism and the anti-black world it upholds. May the blows continue to fall, until we stand side by side in a post-abolition world.”

Osterweil and her treatise were subsequently cited in periodicals including the London-based Economist and Jewish Currents.

Item: *A commentary by “an organizer against criminalization” in the New York Times (June 12) carried this blunt headline: “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police,” arguing, “We can’t reform the police.” The writer (Mariame Kaba) also said, “We don’t want to just close police departments. We want to make them obsolete. We should redirect the billions that now go to police departments toward providing health care, housing, education and good jobs.”*

Correction: So what does the pervasive phrase “defund the police” really mean? And, given the opportunity, what would its advocates do?

Well, since this involves politicians and media mavens, it turns out it can mean whatever they want at a given time. Sometimes it is literally “defunding,” while other times it’s “reimagining,” “redirecting,” or “diverting.”

It certainly seems as if we have fallen *Through the Looking-Glass* with Lewis Carroll:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all.”

Naturally, our would-be masters promise to keep their word.

How about Joe Biden? We are told that the Democratic presidential candidate doesn’t really advocate



Written by [William P. Hoar](#) on September 20, 2020

Published in the September 21, 2020 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 36, No. 18

police “defunding.” So maintained a *New York Times* (June 27) piece called “Biden Walks a Tightrope as Top Democrats Push to Divert Police Funds.” The same *Times* article noted that virtually all of the dozens of top party personnel interviewed do support the “redirecting” of such monies “toward social services, education and mental health agencies.”

On the other hand, in a double-dealing “fact-check” meant to protect the candidate, the Associated Press contended that Biden does *not* back “defunding,” despite acknowledging that he “supports redirecting some police funding to address mental health or to change the prison system.”

There is no literal “defund the police” demand in the Democratic Party platform. Yet, there is an underlying message to that effect: “Democrats believe we need to overhaul the criminal justice system from top to bottom.” It is “unacceptable,” says the platform, “that millions of people in our country have good reason to fear they may lose their lives in a routine traffic stop, or while standing on a street corner, or while playing with a toy in a public park.” Biden might say (as he did during a pre-recorded discussion on racial inequality) that police officers are generally good, but the posture of his party’s platform is decidedly not pro-cop.

The question is, who would call the shots in a Biden administration, should it come to pass? There’s no doubt that activist progressives, who already have pushed Biden far to the left, will claim a good deal of credit and demand a payback.

Avowed socialist Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has boasted that Biden told him that he (Biden) believes he can become the most progressive president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And FDR, recall, did not show all his hand, or his furthest-left leanings, until after being elected.

Nevertheless, the notion that black Americans, especially those living in crime-ridden urban areas, want fewer police in their neighborhoods defies common sense. Indeed, even amid considerable anti-cop propaganda, black Americans support the police by more than a two-to-one margin, while 60 percent want more police officers hired, according to a Civis Analytics poll published by Vox. That’s not appreciably different from Hispanics (64 percent) or whites polled (65 percent).

Accordingly, those pushing the defunding or outright abolishing of police departments have not been shy about inventing stories. This has been the case with the usual suspects, including left-wing academics, pols, and celebrities with the personal wherewithal to hire private security. Many recently signed an open letter in this regard. As Kyle Smith put it in the *New York Post*, the letter was drenched with lies calling for public funds to be turned away from policing and toward more nebulous goals such as “public health.” The letter claimed, absurdly, that funding for cops and the military has gone up every year since 1973 while spending on “public health” has gone down every year since 1973.

Here’s the reality: Medicaid spending in 1975 stood at \$13.1 billion. It has gone up virtually every year since, and now stands at \$639 billion. Overall, public health spending has risen from less than \$200 billion in 1988 to \$1.6 trillion last year, according to [HealthSystemTracker.org](#).

The lies haven’t ended there.

The mainstream media have also created a myth, noted Smith, charging that “it’s open season on unarmed black men in the U.S.” He lays out the facts, namely, that 15 “unarmed black people were killed by police last year, as opposed to 25 white people, according to the *Washington Post’s* database, but black people are much more likely to have police encounters than white people.” He adds some



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perspective: 49 people, on average, are killed each year by lightning in the United States, according to the National Weather Service.

The leftist media already have their priorities in line. When buildings are torched, shots fired, and lasers aimed at police personnel in an attempt to blind them, these riotous and potentially fatal actions have been repeatedly termed “mostly peaceful protests.” Hardly.

Michael Barone, an emeritus fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, described in the *Washington Examiner* the nature of “journalists sympathetic to the Black Lives Matter movement.” They appear to be, he observed, “either puzzled by or blithely ignorant of the sharp rise in post-May 24 homicides in cities ranging from New York and Chicago to Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Denver, and Los Angeles. It’s the fastest rise in murder rates since the late 1960s, another era of urban riots.”

Don’t look for valid answers by such media personnel or progressive officials. As Barone put it, they “resist the obvious explanation: Less policing plus lighter punishment and delegitimization of law enforcement yields more violent crime. Almost all the extra victims, including children, are minorities in underprivileged neighborhoods. Some black lives evidently don’t matter so much.”

Meanwhile, there has been a lot of disinformation about “Black Lives Matter” itself. Few of those who have installed BLM signs on their yards or donned shirts with that motto are aware of what is actually behind the slogan. Here’s a summary by Ian Prior, a former top public-affairs official in the Trump administration’s Department of Justice. The Movement for Black Lives, he writes, is a radical organization “that advocates political solutions for Black Lives Matter, proposes decommissioning prisons and jails, ending home confinement, defunding the police, decriminalization of all drugs and prostitution, and elimination of criminal punishment fees and fines. In essence, they want to legalize crime.”

The nation has already been reaping the whirlwind of liberalism in urban areas that have been largely run by Democrats.

Heather Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the author of *The War on Cops*, observed in 2016 that President Obama “repeatedly accused the police and criminal-justice system of discrimination, lethal and otherwise.” Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, she noted, “Police have cut way back on pedestrian stops and public-order enforcement in minority neighborhoods, having been told repeatedly that such discretionary activities are racially oppressive. The result in 2015 was the largest national homicide increase in nearly 50 years.”

The Obama DOJ, continued Mac Donald,

imposed an unprecedented number of federal consent decrees on police agencies, subjecting those agencies to years of costly federal monitoring, based on a specious methodology for teasing out alleged systemic police bias. The department assumes that police activity like stops or arrests will be evenly spread across different racial and ethnic populations unless there is police racism. So if police stops are higher among blacks, say, the police, according to this reasoning, must be motivated by bias.

Progressive prosecutors and courts have also played significant roles.

This is not a bogus “conspiracy theory.” Even the left-wing *Washington Post* has recognized and acknowledged the considerable impact on criminal justice by Democratic Party mega-donor and billionaire George Soros. As the *Post* put it on April 24, 2019, “Soros-aligned PACs have given heavily to



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local prosecutor races across the country in recent years, helping tip contests to reformist Democratic candidates in Philadelphia, Chicago, Houston and elsewhere.” Activists such as Soros “have targeted prosecutor races as one of the most direct routes to changing policy because the local offices wield wide power over who gets charged, what charges they face and who goes free on bond.”

The conservative-leaning *Washington Times* has been more critical. As James Varney recently wrote, Soros

bankrolled the successful campaigns of a new crop of district attorneys who now preside over big cities with skyrocketing crime and frayed relationships with police departments.

Soros-backed DAs in Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco and other cities have fired scores of experienced prosecutors and, as promised, stopped prosecuting low-level quality-of-life crimes such as disorderly conduct, vagrancy and loitering.

When the get-tough treatment was dropped, as even a child might guess, major crimes skyrocketed.

Yet, liberal leaders in urban areas aim to make things worse. After recent rioting, New York, Los Angeles, and Austin were among cities making major cuts to police budgets — around one-third of the budget in Austin’s case. Here are some more from a *Forbes* summary: “Baltimore eliminated roughly \$22 million from its police budget; Portland, Oregon, cut nearly \$16 million; Philadelphia reduced police funding by \$33 million; Hartford, Conn., cut \$1 million from its \$40 million budget.... Several other cities are mulling the reallocation of funds within their own departments.”

One national law-enforcement leader who has not pulled his punches is Attorney General William Barr, who forecasts that the police-defunding movement will further devastate inner cities. Safety will suffer in these communities, Barr commented not long ago in a Fox News interview:

Now, a lot of the liberals will buy themselves out of that. They’ll go to resort towns and so forth, and they’ll escape the consequences of it. But the people in the inner cities won’t. Their lives will be destroyed. Their opportunity will be — they won’t have the opportunity they otherwise would have. Their schools will be overrun by gangs. That’s not caring about black lives.

No, it isn’t. Radicals, on the other hand, think differently. Some even believe the burning of an inner-city police building is beautiful.

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