



Local Police Under Siege

To residents of Sharpsburg, North Carolina, Chief Wayne Hathaway was more than just a law enforcement officer. To the people of this small town 50 miles east of Raleigh, he was a friend who will not be forgotten, a man who served his community for 25 years, more than half of his life. On July 17, 1997, Chief Hathaway, age 47, was shot and killed while responding to a domestic dispute call, a “routine” call police officers know is one of their most dangerous regular encounters.

Hathaway had gone to the home of Abner and Gloria Nicholson to investigate and mediate the reported spousal altercation. As he walked inside the couple’s home to talk to the Nicholsons, Mr. Nicholson spun around, put a gun to the chief’s head, and pulled the trigger. Nicholson then shot and killed his wife, Gloria.

Death came just as violently and unexpectedly for 24-year-old rookie police officer Jeremy Charron in Epsom, New Hampshire. The young, spit-and-polish ex-Marine was just days away from buying his fiancée’s engagement ring. But at about 5:00 a.m. on August 24, 1997, Officer Charron stopped for a routine check of a vehicle parked near a swimming hole. Two young men, Kevin Paul and Gordon Perry, were sleeping inside. According to Kevin Paul’s later testimony, Officer Charron tapped on Perry’s driver-side window. Paul said his “partner” handed over his license and registration, but then got out of the car, pulled a gun from behind his back and yelled, “You picked on the wrong [expletive]” as he shot Charron several times. The duo then sped away, and a short time later were involved in a shootout with police after robbing a convenience store in Campton, 50 miles north of Epsom. The crime spree stunned New Hampshire, following by just six days another shooting rampage by a disgruntled property owner in Colebrook that left two state troopers, a judge, and a newspaper editor dead.

In Higginson, Arkansas, Officer Daniel Longstreet was sitting in his patrol car watching traffic when he was shot and killed on March 14, 1997. Officer Longstreet, age 39, who had served on the Searcy, Arkansas, Police Department before joining the Higginson Police Department in 1996, left behind a wife and three children. Longstreet’s murder came only 56 hours after the slaying of Officer Myron Kelly in Osceola, Arkansas. Kelly and his younger brother Eugene, also a police officer, were attempting to serve an arrest warrant on a suspect in a carjacking case, who turned out to be a paroled felon.

Hathaway, Charron, Longstreet, and Kelly were four of the 158 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in 1997. As we write, 39 police officers have thus far given their lives in 1998 “to protect and serve” their fellow citizens. The most recent casualty, Michael Marshall, was a member of the Omak Police Department in Omak, Washington. He was shot on March 25 by Duarte Gonzalez, an illegal immigrant from Mexico who was wanted for failing to report to a corrections officer and failing to pay fines stemming from a 1995 conviction of child rape.

Of course, police casualties should not be counted only by the number of those who pay the supreme sacrifice. Also shot by Duarte Gonzalez was Marshall’s fellow Omak police officer, Don Eddy Jr., who survived but ended up with a bullet lodged next to his hip, which doctors say is too deep to remove. Every year, many officers are wounded, maimed, and injured in the line of duty. And as the above stories illustrate, one does not have to serve on a major metropolitan force to come under deadly fire. Criminals are highly mobile, and the social factors that favor violence — drugs, family breakdown, declining morality, popular culture, juvenile gangs — have penetrated rural and small-town America. Not that flying bullets are the only — or even the primary — threat to life and limb faced by the members of our thin blue line. Vehicular deaths and injuries take a similar toll. High-speed chases,



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

assisting at auto accidents, and routine traffic work on busy thoroughfares expose police officers to danger from deadly collisions and reckless motorists.

Then there is the psychological toll: dealing with the loss of partners and fellow officers who are felled in the line of duty; the numbing daily exposure to death and mayhem on the streets; the unforgettable, tragic faces of victims and their surviving loved ones; continuously confronting a hopeless, revolving-door justice system that releases violent predators again and again; the fears, pressures, and work schedules that tear apart marriages and family life; the second-guessing by superiors, politicians, and reporters; the unrelenting attacks by anti-police activists; and the lack of appreciation and understanding by the public.

As the Gilbert and Sullivan character remarked in *The Pirates of Penzance*, “When constabulary duty’s to be done, a policeman’s lot is not a happy one.” Indeed, the policeman seems destined always to be caught betwixt and between opposing political and social forces and to bear the brunt of our society’s tortured ambivalence about law, order, justice, and authority. When it’s my safety, my life, my family, my property, or my business that is endangered, I want the police, and I want them here NOW! Not only that, but I expect them to be superhumanly patient, professional, efficient, competent, courteous, and cordial in their conduct with me, and preternaturally capable and ferociously swift, relentless, and retributive in their pursuit of, and conduct towards, the criminal. I want them to catch the bad guys immediately and make sure the miscreants never threaten or bother me again. BUT — if everything is going swimmingly with me and mine, the police are just another nuisance. That attitude, unfortunately, is all too common.

But, hey, cheer up, be happy. After all, things are getting better, aren’t they? Well, yes, relatively speaking, things do seem to be improving on many fronts that affect, and reflect on, law enforcement and criminal justice. Relative, that is, to the strained-to-the-breaking-point racial tension and the in-your-face confrontational anger that characterized police-community relations in many cities following the 1991 Rodney King trial and the Los Angeles riots. Relative also to the concomitant crack cocaine epidemic and incendiary gangsta rap-revolution of Ice-T (whose 1992 song “Cop Killer” set off boycotts against Time Warner) and Sister Souljah (whose 1992 inflammatory video “The Final Solution” was too hot even for MTV). And relative to the seemingly ever-upward crime spiral of the past few decades.

Tougher sentencing laws have been passed in many states. More jails and prisons are being built. Police forces are expanding, with more minorities being recruited. “Community policing,” “hot spot targeting,” and other policing strategies and reforms are being widely implemented. The economy is bustling and many indices have been showing drops in crime. Even New York City, once almost universally thought to be irretrievably headed into the abyss, has made an astonishing turnabout, posting huge drops in crime.

These and many other positive factors can be cited to paint a rosy — but false — picture of the true state of our disunion and to paper over a host of fundamental social ills and deadly trends that can be ignored only at a terrible cost. For if we fail to confront these ills and trends, we will not be able to expand our police forces fast enough or build jails and prisons large enough to prevent our society from descending into complete anarchy. But an equally grave concern is that if we confront these ills and trends wrongly, in our rush to avoid anarchy, we may find that we have transformed our once-free republic into a totalitarian police state.

Anarchy or totalitarianism. Are those our only options? So it would seem, listening to the raging policy debates between liberals and conservatives on crime, justice, the law, and police. The “conservative”



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

position (admittedly oversimplified) usually is to hire more cops, build more jails, lock up more malefactors, and execute more criminals. The “liberal” position (again, oversimplified — but not much), on the other hand, usually casts the criminal as a victim of an unjust society and advocates solutions that attack the “root causes” of crime. The more-cops-and-jails position is obviously more popular, as shown by the plentitude of liberal politicians (President Clinton being most conspicuous) who have adopted it. And it is popular because it makes sense — in the short run. Society must be protected from criminal predators, but, as previously mentioned, not at the expense of degeneration into a police state. Liberals are right about the need to address “root causes.” Unfortunately, they always seem to misidentify them. Liberals see racism, sexism, police oppression and brutality, poverty, unemployment, and the inequitable distribution of wealth as the root of our crime and social decay dilemmas.

In reality, crime is the reflection of a spiritual-moral problem, a problem that is both individual and social. It involves conscious, voluntary decisions to do what is wrong instead of what is right. In dealing with this problem, the police have an indispensable but limited role and capability. They cannot address the true “root causes,” the social ills and trends responsible for the crime and social pathologies that threaten our continued existence as a free, self-governing society.

While the following list is far from exhaustive, it offers a more reasonable index of the root causes of our current crime woes, which are:

- The de-Christianization of society and the collapse of morality.
- The destruction of the family.
- The welfare state.
- Unchallenged usurpations of power by the federal government.
- The drug revolution and the equally dangerous “War on Drugs” response.
- The professional, anti-police lobby.
- The pernicious influence of the mass media and popular culture.
- The subversion of public education.
- Out-of-control illegal immigration.

Obviously, many of these social ills and dangerous trends are closely interrelated and intertwined, and greatly affect and play off each other.

Juan Donoso-Cortés, the Spanish philosopher, statesman, and writer, wisely observed: “There are only two possible forms of control: one internal and the other external; religious control and political control. They are of such a nature that when the religious barometer rises, the barometer of [external] control falls and likewise, when the religious barometer falls, the political barometer, that is political control and tyranny, rises. That is a law of humanity, a law of history.” If civilized man falls into disbelief and immorality, Cortés went on to remark, then “the way is prepared for some gigantic and colossal tyrant, universal and immense.”

The Founding Fathers understood well this indissoluble link between religion, morality, and liberty. George Washington said shortly after leaving the presidency, “Religion and morality are the essential pillars of civil society.” John Adams commented in 1789: “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

And in 1799, the Reverend Jedidiah Morse presciently observed: “To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of true freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism.... It follows, that all efforts made to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them.”

The truth of these observations is self-evident: A moral people have strong internal controls and, thus, require less external control — i.e. less government. The more moral a people, the less they will lie, cheat, steal, kill, covet, etc., and the less they will come into conflict with one another. Subsequently, the less will be the need for laws, jails, and police. Yet, the militant “liberal” secularists are intent upon expunging every vestige of Christian influence from the public sphere. Prayer, the Holy Bible, the Ten Commandments, Christmas carols, Nativity displays, the Cross, and any mention of morality based upon Judeo-Christian belief have been evicted from the government schools, meeting halls, and almost entirely from “proper” public discourse. And we are paying for this anti-religious bigotry with phenomenally higher crime. (See sidebar.)

Unfortunately, conservatives have, to varying degrees, accepted — if not embraced — many of the underlying false premises of the liberal, welfare state, secularization programs. Most of their challenges to these destructive policies amount to ineffective tinkering around the margins. Much of the time their “solutions” are indistinguishable from those of the liberals.

Consider, for example, the federal Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. With forceful prodding from President Clinton, a massive media boost, and support from supposed conservatives in Congress and the law enforcement community, the 103rd Congress enacted the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The centerpiece of this new federal effort was Clinton’s much-hyped COPS program, with its promise of hiring 100,000 additional police officers to take back America’s streets from violent criminals. To this end, the law provides grants to help fund local police personnel for three years. Initially, the federal contribution covers 75 percent of the salary and benefit expenses of the new officers, with the local communities gradually paying more and more of the burden.

The Republican opposition to the program that has surfaced has centered on issues that have nothing to do with the most important, fundamental issues involved in the legislation. They have criticized the fact that the funding has not gone to the most needy high-crime cities, that the federal grants have been entangled in excessive regulations, that too few cities have participated, that local communities have been saddled with heavy taxes as a result of the matching funds schedule, etc. Yet, virtually none have challenged this legislation on its most vulnerable point — that it is a dangerous, unconstitutional usurpation of power. The federal government’s powers are delegated powers, those specifically granted by the states and the people in the Constitution. Nowhere is the federal government given any authority to involve itself in local law enforcement.

This is exactly the kind of thing President George Washington was warning against in his Farewell Address on September 17, 1796:

It is important ... that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them.

“If in the opinion of the people the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong,” President Washington continued, “let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this in one instance may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.”

Likewise, James Madison explained that “the general government is not to be charged with the whole power of making and administering laws. Its jurisdiction is limited to certain enumerated objects, which concern all the members of the republic, but which are not to be attained by the separate provisions of any.” In *The Federalist*, No. 45, Madison again wrote:

The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce.... The powers reserved to the several States will extend to all the objects which, in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people, and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the State.

In *The Federalist*, No. 47, Madison argued: “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.”

Were Washington, Madison, and the other Founders — many of whom were even more vociferous in their warnings against encroachments by the central government — “anti-government” extremists? Fortunately, no. Rather, they were hard-nosed realists and fervent partisans of liberty. And they made it abundantly clear, in their written and spoken words, that usurpation and encroachment were to be vigilantly guarded against. This is no less true in matters concerning education, agriculture, and medicine than in those regarding unemployment, housing, and child care. But especially would they have been aghast at the prospect of centralized police powers. In other words, even if the president, members of Congress, and the people decided it would be a good idea to have the federal government undertake some new program, it would be unconstitutional (i.e., illegal) for them to initiate that program if the powers to do so were not provided for in the Constitution. Moreover, every federal official who supported such a program would be guilty of violating his oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. If the proposed federal program — and the powers that go with it — is truly wanted and needed, it only may be added through the legal, honest (and more laborious) process of constitutional amendment.



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

Tragically, we have been suffering from a non-stop chain of unchallenged usurpations by the federal executive, legislative, and judicial branches for decades. Federal judges have issued countless rulings that have unconstitutionally thrown out state laws, ordered jails and prisons emptied, crippled police work, mandated police hiring practices and standards, and in countless ways made society less safe and law enforcement more difficult and dangerous.

Study after study confirms what police officers on the beat have long known: Most violent crime is the handiwork of a relatively small class of habitual criminals who are released again and again to victimize society. It is the chronic offenders, the six percent of the criminal population, who are responsible for half of all arrests. According to *The State of Violent Crime in America*, a 1996 report of the Council on Crime in America, between 1988 and 1992, 20 percent of all criminals arrested for killing law enforcement officers were on parole or probation at the time of the offense. Benjamin J. Wattenberg notes in his 1995 book *Values Matter Most* that in 1993, 90 percent of the 200,000 felony convictions in the United States were plea-bargained.

Lawrence W. Sherman cites statistical evidence indicating that only one out of 56 persons arrested by law enforcement officers actually spends time in prison, and that most of those arrested are released within 12 hours.

After the decades of encroachments, usurpations, and social engineering experiments that have produced so much of our current societal disintegration and generated our ongoing crime wave, the federal planners are pushing for ever more control of law enforcement. In the past five years federal legislation has vastly expanded federal criminal law and federal law enforcement agencies. It was just such a course of action that led to the formation of the Gestapo, the infamous police apparatus of Nazi Germany.

In Germany, writes certified liberal historian William L. Shirer in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, the

diets and governments of the separate states ... were ... abolished in the first year of the Nazi regime when the country was unified, and governors for the states, which were reduced to provinces, were appointed by Hitler. Local self-government, the only field in which the Germans had seemed to be making genuine progress toward democracy, was also wiped out. A series of laws decreed between 1933 and 1935 deprived the municipalities of their local autonomy, and brought them under the direct control of the Reich Minister of the Interior.

The next key step was to centralize the police. According to Shirer:

On June 16, 1936, for the first time in German history, a unified police was established for the whole of the Reich — previously the police had been organized separately by each of the states — and [Heinrich] Himmler was put in charge as Chief of the German Police. This was tantamount to putting the police in the hands of the S.S. [Schutzstaffel, or Blackshirts], which since its suppression of the Roehm 'revolt' in 1934 had been rapidly increasing its power. It had become not only the praetorian guard, not only the single armed branch of the party, not only the elite from whose ranks the future leaders of the new Germany were being chosen, but it now possessed the police power. The Third Reich, as is inevitable in the development of all totalitarian dictatorships, had become a police state.

The terrifying police power of Nazi Germany, or of the murderous Communist regimes of China, Russia, and Cuba, may seem far removed from America today. But if we ignore the warnings of our forebears



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

and the lessons of history and continue on the path we are taking, the totalitarian nightmare will not be that far off.

Washington Post reporter Jim McGee, writing in August 1997 of the FBI's vast new expansions of power, noted: "The bureau's budget has soared, increasing 47 percent from \$2.1 billion when [Louis] Freeh took over to \$3 billion in the current fiscal year. Jurisdiction over new areas of federal law enforcement has been assigned to the FBI. The CIA has been integrated into the FBI's operating system, the FBI is opening new foreign offices [and the] FBI has negotiated a de facto merger with the Drug Enforcement Administration."

"Piece by piece," McGee wrote, "the Clinton Administration and Congress are completing the full federalization of the nation's criminal justice system. They are building something America has never had before: a robust national police system. The FBI stands at the center."

"For many years," McGee continued, "federal law enforcement police power was spread among several competing agencies. Now, important assets of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies are being combined with those of the intelligence community and parts of the military — creating an integrated system whose powers of investigation, intelligence collection, and electronic surveillance will be unprecedented." McGee quoted Army Colonel John J. Ellis, who serves as deputy section chief of the FBI's huge new counterterrorism center, as saying, "The one federal agency I guarantee has one person in every community is, in almost every case, the bureau." But is an omnipresent, national military-police-spy agency compatible with limited, constitutional government?

Still more foreboding is the fact that this vast, rapid expansion has been accompanied by a perilous politicization of the FBI and the Justice Department, making these powerful instruments the personal tools of the president. In an unprecedented, naked power grab that should have elicited thunderous opposition from Congress, the media, and the people, president Clinton, soon after taking office, fired every U.S. attorney in the country and FBI Director William Sessions. This has allowed him to get away with such scandals as FBI Filegate and IRSgate, in which his administration engaged in extraordinary and illegal attacks on political adversaries. "There's a very dangerous, almost cavalier attitude toward civil liberties and personal freedom and privacy rights by this administration," charges Congressman Bob Barr (R-Ga.). "I think it's systemic," says Barr, a former federal prosecutor, "unlike Watergate, which was personal."

This is especially worrisome in light of the Clinton administration's breathtakingly audacious agenda for convergence of the "new" FBI with the secret police apparatuses of so-called "former" communist countries. On July 4, 1994, FBI Director Freeh was in Moscow to sign a protocol for a "police-to-police bridge" between the FBI and the "former" KGB. Sergei Stepashin, chief of Russia's Federal Counterintelligence Service (the successor organization to the KGB), declared jubilantly: "Together, we're invincible." Since then, Freeh has opened FBI offices in, and entered into "partnerships" with, dozens of other foreign countries. His FBI is now cooperating with the former communist police-state commissars in China, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Poland, Romania, (Soviet) Georgia, and elsewhere. Unfortunately, it appears that the FBI and the Clinton Justice Department are adopting more of the characteristics of these regimes, rather than the other way around. The Clinton administration has pushed for immense new federal wiretapping authority, warrantless searches, federal encryption keys to private computer communications, computer profiling of airline passengers, and many other surveillance and intrusion measures.

The kind of government a country has can be determined by the attitude the citizens have toward their



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

police. In a free society the police are viewed as friends, while in a totalitarian society they are greatly feared. In the one case, the police are hired by their fellow citizens to help protect their rights from criminals; in the other, police are agents of the central government, and their purpose is to keep the dictators (official criminals) in power.

“The police officer in America has been the target of a huge pincer attack for many years,” says John F. McManus, president of the John Birch Society. “Local law enforcement has been caught between the twin forces of anarchy and despotism, between the street revolutionaries and common thugs on the one hand with their radical lawyer contingents, and the federal bureaucrats and politicians on the other who want to force or entice all of the local police departments into one centralized apparatus. That is why we launched our Support Your Local Police movement in the early 1960s. Back at that time, the police were coming under incredible attacks — physical attacks, charges of police brutality, being labeled as ‘pigs.’ The ‘thin blue line’ desperately needed the organized, vocal support of the vast majority of law-abiding citizens. And that’s what we tried to provide.” Through films, speakers, media resources, billboards, bumper stickers, and literature, the Society’s Support Your Local Police slogan became as well known as its “Get US out of the United Nations” rallying cry. “But the other half of our well-known police slogan was at least as important then, and is even more so now,” says McManus. “It states, ‘And Keep them Independent.’ Back at that time, we were warning our fellow citizens about the very real danger to local law enforcement from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), a federal agency that was rapidly federalizing local police departments nationwide. Thanks in large measure to the efforts of our Support Your Local Police program, the LEAA was eventually abolished. And Americans can be very happy about that. Unfortunately, there are a host of federal programs today that are aimed at accomplishing the same dangerous and unconstitutional objectives.”

Ironically, organizations like the John Birch Society which have a long history of strongly supporting the Constitution and legitimate law enforcement — be it local, state, or federal — are now being targeted as “anti-police” and “anti-government” by elements of the Clinton/Reno Justice Department. In publications, seminars, conferences, and other programs on “hate crimes” and “domestic terrorism” funded by and/or sponsored by federal agencies, the John Birch Society and other groups who espouse a principled, constitutionalist viewpoint, are being unfairly and maliciously linked to racist, fascist, and neo-Nazi and other extremist groups. “I think it’s interesting,” notes McManus, “that the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance publication entitled *A Policymaker’s Guide to Hate Crimes* is filled with acknowledgements to outfits like the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and other groups and individuals with long histories of opposing local law enforcement and favoring big, socialist government. These groups and individuals have definite political agendas that involve poisoning local law enforcement against patriotic organizations that support the Constitution and the rule of law, while at the same time promoting the idea that a benevolent Big Brother in Washington should become more deeply involved in ‘helping’ them in their law enforcement duties. This is typical of more and more of the materials and programming we are seeing come out of Washington.”

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Unfortunately, the American people appear to be completely oblivious to these insidious, concerted attacks on the “thin blue line” that is an essential guarantor of their liberty. Now, more than ever, it is time to “Support Your Local Police and Keep Them Independent.”

**Sidebar: A Change That Starts With the Heart**

“Scientific studies show that religious practice reduces crime, curbs drug abuse, and lowers recidivism for prison inmates,” notes Robert L. Maginnis of the Family Research Council, in an important survey entitled *Religion and Crime: Age-old Enemies*. Writes Maginnis:

The liberal establishment attributes the upsurge in deviant behavior to unemployment, racism, poor housing, too little schooling, and a lack of self esteem. Proponents of this ‘victim’ philosophy have tried to reverse the crime wave by changing people from the ‘outside’ rather than from the ‘inside.’ After 30 years of social experiments there is still no data showing that less racism, better housing, or greater education makes a difference. Religion, however, changes people from the inside out. It goes below the surface to influence people’s beliefs and behavior.

But the liberal secularist jihad against religion continues. Making matters worse, the same liberal secularists have carried out a devastating campaign against the family, the bedrock of society and the source of training in religion and morals. A 1994 Justice Department study entitled *Family Life, Delinquency, and Crime* reported that the best hope for crime prevention is to be found (surprise!) in strong families and sound moral development. “Delinquency is more likely,” says the study, “when normative development is incomplete, and when children are unable to distinguish right from wrong, feel little or no obligation toward standards of behavior, and have little respect for the rights and welfare of others. Parents play a critical role in moral development.”

UCLA Professor James Q. Wilson, one of the most trenchant writers on crime and public policy, concurs. “Almost every account we have from psychologists of the moral development of the child emphasizes reinforcements and imitation,” says Wilson. “Children acquire rules of conduct by having compliance with those rules rewarded and violations punished and by observing and imitating the behavior of their parents and friends.”

But the liberalization of divorce laws over the past several decades is exacting a terrible price in moral decline, crime, and social disruption. “Since the passage of no-fault divorce,” says Phyllis Witcher, founder and president of Protecting Marriage, Inc., “every social pathology has predictably risen to a frightening level: crime, illegitimacy, female poverty, suicide, academic failure, economic decline, mental hospital admissions, foreclosures, etc. All have been established to have a strong causal link to something called Family Breakdown or what can be called the coded term for Divorce.”

Witcher is not the only expert to come to this conclusion. Over the past several years, study after study has shown the same alarming results. As John J. DiIulio, a professor of politics at Princeton University, wrote last year: “The research shows that children of divorce have an increased likelihood of dropping out of school; suffering depression and other mental and emotional problems; engaging in precocious sexuality; getting hooked on alcohol or drugs; procreating out of wedlock; slipping economically below the poverty line; committing suicide; and, last but not least, getting divorced.”

Equally sobering are the statistics on illegitimacy in America, where approximately 33 percent of all live births now take place outside of wedlock. In 1960, by comparison, illegitimate births totaled five percent. For blacks, the figure is now 70 percent nationally, and in excess of 80 percent in some inner cities. For whites, it is 25 percent. The research shows that problems for illegitimate children are even more severe than for children of divorce.

Professor Charles Murray states that present-day trends with regard to illegitimacy portend the



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on May 11, 1998

emergence of a new, vast underclass, made up not only of members of various minority groups, but of whites as well. According to his research, a severe disruption of the societal structure becomes more evident when a population's illegitimacy rate passes the 25 percent mark. That does not augur well for our future; it virtually guarantees an increasing population of fatherless youth, imbued with values imparted by television, government schools, gangs, and the purveyors of popular, pagan, nihilistic culture. But the liberal welfare programs which have produced, subsidized, and promoted this deadly trend continue unabated.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.