

The Roots of the Michael Brown and Eric Garner Tragedies

The grand jury's decision not to indict the police officers involved in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner have resulted in mass protests and revived the old narrative of racism in America. Some of these protests are not spontaneous, but the result of some radical groups who were prepared to use the old racial narrative to gather the troops to bring chaos to what they deem is an unjust society built upon systemic inequity.

This is taken out of the playbook of the Marxists and radical socialists who view history merely in terms of dialectical materialism: that world history is mainly driven by economics rather than moral ethics in which the "haves" unjustly take advantage of the "have nots". They believe it is the role of the state to equally distribute wealth and bring about social justice, which could inevitably marginalize the family unit and religion, which they deem are rivals to the state.

Of course there are also many protesters who are gospel centered Christ followers who believe these two incidents highlight the issue of systemic racism that still exist in our society and at some level in individual police officers.

However, what few politicians and community activists want to touch is the root reasons for these tragedies (perhaps because some activists are blinded by their Marxist/socialist ideologies). I doubt any person with knowledge of the sociological data regarding crime, poverty and violence in urban America would honestly be able to blame systemic poverty in communities of color solely on white racism from the police force. (For example: the New York City Police Department are

probably the most ethnically diverse in the world and not just made up of Caucasians.)

As a matter of fact, more than 90% of the deaths of people of color happen to come from other people of color. (Of course, every ethnic community probably has more statistical crime reflective of their demographic. For example white communities will have more white on white crime, Asian communities will have more crime within their own ranks, etc.)

Hence, in black communities, there is more of a threat of a black young man dying at the hands of another person of color than there is at the hands of a white police officer. As a matter of fact, I would guess that most mothers in these urban areas are far more concerned with drug and gang-fueled violence than they are of a white police officer shooting their innocent children. Consequently, if some activists leading the protests frame the narrative to suit their own agenda, one result is it can potentially deteriorate police/community relations in a way that can be hard to repair.

We need prophetic voices of reason that can call out the police department for excessive force (i.e. Eric Garner), without white washing other primary systemic issues that are root issues of crime and conflict with the police.

Another horrible issue at stake may be the fact that these perceptions could set back relations between people of color and the white community for many years. (I pray this does not happen!)

Unfortunately, perception always trumps reality. When it comes to the Eric Garner death, I almost cried every time I saw the video of the encounter leading to his death. However, to be fair, he was also obese, had a severe case of diabetes, asthma and a serious heart condition. Hence some may doubt the validity of the claim that the only cause of his death was a

chokehold. (Police expert Bo Deitl also disputes the claim that it was a chokehold, but called it a legal headlock. I don't know what to think of this because this is out of my area of expertise, but I must highlight this to be fair to the context given.)

In my opinion, the video seems to indicate an extreme use of force and possible neglect by those bystanders who did not even attempt to aid Garner when he had a hard time breathing and lying on the floor dying. (Something that doesn't seem to be mentioned much by the media.)

Whatever the truth of the matter is, many of the protesters, politicians, and community activists like Al Sharpton consistently only deal with one aspect of the problem when they only highlight injustice with the police department and legal system.

The following in my opinion are the main roots of the Brown and Garner tragedies.

For one, why are few (if any) activists and the mainstream media mentioning the fact that the fragmentation and breakdown of the African-American family have left voids in the lives of their young men that are being filled by drug dealers and gangs? Michael Brown's life trajectory, if not prematurely cut short, seemed to be such that he was on his way to following a violent path of destruction to himself and others. Why are these protesters not calling for healthier families, for men to be responsible at home, and for intact, committed marriages? To put 100% of the blame upon racism in the police department is scapegoating and missing the point altogether.

This breakdown of the family unit leads to a dependency upon state handouts and a further disintegration of marriage, since a single mother can get more benefits alone than if she was legally married. This breakdown of the family also leads to endless cycles of poverty, which then leads to more violence

and more crime.

Another issue related to rampant crime and systemic poverty is the poor educational choices the minority community usually has in inner cities. School choice in education is non-existent. While President Barack Obama and Al Sharpton can afford to send their children to private schools (they certainly don't send their kids to the local public schools), most people of color are stuck sending their children to overcrowded schools that are havens for drugs, gangs and are replete with youth bent on dropping out of school. Why are the protesters and community activists not calling on the president and local government to provide school choice vouchers that enable parents of at-risk children to use a portion of our tax dollars for tuition to attend private schools? Why are these protesters not advocating for the community proliferation of charter schools that outpace public schools at every level?

The Christian community has a unique opportunity to provide real solutions to age-old root issues. But, unfortunately, many are just following the loudest voices who gather support through emotional rhetoric with the aid of a liberal mainstream media, while the only ones who receive any benefits are the few activists who make a living organizing marches, stereotyping and scapegoating others, and who never provide real solutions to the problems of the communities they claim to represent.

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