In America, Privilege is Far More Fatal than COVID

Yesterday, I received a report from Syria. It told of blistering heat and no electricity, of fuel lines, of food shortages and economic suffering by the Syrian people. This is an excerpt:

“I wonder if people in EU, US and UK had to deal with the repercussions of their government sanctions on Syria, would they fight harder to get sanctions banned as a hybrid war, sadistic strategy.

It is 41 degrees in Damascus, the cloud cover makes it heavy and oppressive. Electricity where I am is on for an hour, sometimes two before it cuts for three or four hours, just as the air conditioning makes your environment bearable. For some living close to me, they were without electricity for 14 hours in this sweltering heat. I wet my clothes to keep me cool while I am working, it is the only thing that helps. Mobile phones do not have time to charge. Food goes rotten because the fridge is off much of the time.

Syrians traditionally store enough food in their freezer to last them two or three months. They are having to throw much of it away. At the same time, food prices are sky high. Nobody can afford to eat luxury items like chicken anymore. Lemons have become a luxury item, the price of one kilo has trebled in a few months. Parents do not know if they can feed their kids every day, they are living hand to mouth.
All the roadside kiosks are seeing their livelihood go down the drain, literally, as everything in their freezer section melts or goes bad.

The queues for fuel, while not as bad as before, are still a stressful scrum with cars lining up to take their ration.

These are only a few of the effects of sanctions. Sanctions are designed to hurt, to deprive, to depress and, ultimately, to kill slowly and more painfully than the swift ending of life by a mortar or a bullet. Sanctions strip people of their dignity and leave them beggars in their own home.”

Syria is but one nation targeted by the Trump regime, there are others and the stories like this are in the millions, told by those who still live.

When Syria was attacked, it was not just starvation, it was terrorism as well with up to 400,000 dead and 5 million refugees. Iraq suffered a far worse fate, 2,000,000 dead.

Both nations are still partially occupied by the United States, the nation that engineered this suffering. Now it is all coming home to roost, as here in the United States, what was done to Syria and Iraq, to Yemen and Iran, and to the best of Trump’s ability Venezuela’s people as well, is being deployed against the most vulnerable of Americans.

We had another police killing yesterday, one we know of, there may well be others, in fact it is likely. This was in Los Angeles, another African American, his crime was riding a bicycle “improperly.”

To understand how privilege applies, Dylan Roof, white mass murderer who killed 9 a the Emanuel AME Church was arrested with considerable care and, before being processed, was taken to the local Burger King for lunch by police as Dylan told them that murdering so many people “made him feel hungry.”

As American humorist Jim W. Dean so often says; “You just can’t make this stuff up.”

This is not unusual, this is the norm, this is how things work but you will not know unless you ask people, people who trust you with the truth.

Problem there, the divide in America is so profound that the victims of insanity and brutality that started long before the current epidemic under Trump don’t want to talk to the media, such as it is and have no faith in political process.

You see, political process in America reeks of corruption and privilege as well. Privilege, as with exceptionalism, is a form of corruption whether it is state sponsored apartheid as in Israel or the other version of apartheid, the American one, with walls and children in cages and bodies in the streets.

Let us be clear about something else, while the media tries to smear the most well know victims like Beonna Taylor, every person of color in the United States is victimized unless “hand selected” like Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, a despicable human being reviled for his love of all things fascist.

We might take a moment to discuss Breonna Taylor as well. This is a young woman of color living in Louisville, Kentucky, employed as a paramedic/first responder. Police broke into her home and killed her based on a false warrant.

This is someone who had never committed a crime of any kind, police simply kicked down her door and murdered her for being black skinned, there is no other explanation.

Yesterday, according to reports in the Washington Post, local prosecutor Tom Wine, a Trump backer, offered freedom to a number of drug suspects, if they would falsely incriminate Beonna Taylor, in order to aid Donald Trump in his election chances. Sources tell us Wine would then be nominated as US Attorney by Trump appointee William Barr.

This level of corruption is seen every single day, even reported every single day but as the victims are of color in a land of “white privilege,” those who protest being falsely imprisoned or murdered by police are “violent hooligans.”

Again, “you just can’t make this stuff up.”

To understand the violence that is sweeping America today one can easily look at the violence that has swept the world, not just after 9/11 but long before.
There are two words that are one in the same, one personal, one far greater, both are fatal. They are privilege and exceptionalism.

The nature of “privilege” is insidious. For those who do not have COVID, for instance, who are not on a respirator or mourning the hundreds of thousands now dead, the disease is “fake.”

This is privilege, denialism of the suffering of others because they are “others.”

An unreported fact, nearly 4,000,000 older Americans live in nursing homes or residential facilities. None have been visited by family for nearly 6 months. Over 150,000 have died of COVID but reports that are creeping in speak of malnutrition, bed sores and widespread abuse and there is no one to help as families are not allowed to see their forgotten elders.

The result of this, of course, is that older Americans have now become defacto “people of color” and reside in defacto “cages” like little brown babies ripped away from their mothers to amuse Trump’s political “base.”

The insidious nature of privilege is that it can infect anyone, whatever their race or ethnicity. Privilege has become a hallmark of some religions, such as Christian Evangelism, infecting 35,000,000 Americans who attend church, pray continually but bask in a belief system that feeds exceptionalism and hatred.

Privilege and exceptionalism are most often driven by fear. For some inherited money drives the unearned feeling of superiority, though Trump has, to a large extent, destroyed this concept through his bumbling ineptitude.

Even the drooling Baron Rothschild and his carriage drawn through London by a team of zebras was not able to do that.

If you are poor and white in America, “at least you aren’t black.” Thus, those who are otherwise the most marginal and vulnerable, not in all cases but some, perhaps many, take solace in having someone beneath them.

“The humbleness of a warrior is not the humbleness of the beggar. The warrior lowers his head to no one, but at the same time, he does not permit anyone to lower his head to him. The beggar, on the other hand, falls to his knees at the drop of a hat and scrapes the floor to anyone he deems to be higher; but at the same time, he demands that someone lower than him scrape the floor for him.” - Carlos Castaneda

Turning to Castaneda, whose "Way of the Warrior” defined excellence for so many during the 60’s and 70’s, in a way defines the failures in America’s culture today.

“The basic difference between an ordinary man and a warrior is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge, while an ordinary man takes everything as a blessing or a curse.” - Carlos Castaneda

What can safely be generalized about how things really are in America?

Yesterday I spent time with one of my friends, a painting contractor, American born Hispanic who speaks no Spanish, highly successful, and we discussed local police in my own affluent community.

His experiences with the same police who are to me beyond polite and helpful, not so helpful mind you that I would ever depend on them for protection, are quite the opposite of mine.

I now know there is a problem. Will I do or say nothing and if I find our community subject to disorder because of our collective indifference to the rights of all, will I be surprised?

Am I privileged and exceptionalist?

Were it not for time I spent as a police officer decades ago, a miserable job, his words would seem unreasonable but anyone who has worked in law enforcement knows that the greatest stress isn’t from the public, too often referred to as “potential suspects,” but rather from corrupt and ignorant coworkers.

It does not take long to see that they are the real criminals.

As a former police officer, one is typically never stopped by police or if one is, one is immediately not just released but usually engaged in friendly banter.
To be clear, some departments are better than others, but none are perfect and some, like Kenosha, Wisconsin, are brutally incompetent and dangerous.

What we have also seen at mass killing like Columbine or during the fear driven killings that are sending hundreds of thousands into the streets, many police are quite simply cowards with guns, a very dangerous combination.

Many, however, are not. Many are competent, polite, professional and often end up sacrificing their lives for others. The problem there is that if you are one of these, working with the others is a nightmare. In many cases, “good police” are ostracized and threatened for failing to be corrupt, which is my own experience.

This makes the job impossible and the victims are many, certainly good police suffer as they invariably are commanded by the most corrupt and incompetent but the communities they supposedly serve suffer as well.

This is the case with Kenosha. There, the police department, as a whole, is generally seen by other police as very poor quality, highly corrupt, racially biased and a very bad place to work.

For the community, if you are white, you won’t be arrested unless you do something exceptionally bad and if you are a powerful “insider,” you can never be arrested at all as police are likely to aid and abet in any criminal acts.

In the post George Floyd world, however, it is the community that has allowed its police to degenerate into a “blue gang” that is suffering now, subjected to violent protests which are, quite frankly extremely well deserved.

Each community has a choice, to stand for justice for all, which should be equal enforcement of the law and, if need be, strong but fair and legal crackdowns on criminal elements even if such elements are people of color.

Police are there to investigate and take potential offenders into custody, based on reasonable procedures, where fair courts administer laws.

The truth is everything, but this happens. Police administer punishment, too often based on hatred driven by misguided privilege and institutionalized corruption and extremism.

As cohorts in “blue gang” violence, prosecutors and many judges throw law, justice and the constitution aside to the extent that any attorney representing a criminal defendant feels overwhelmed. Time and time again, trials are a mockery and lying police and fake evidence rule every process, all openly accepted not just by insiders but the media and the privileged and exceptionalist community as well.

Worse still, in many cases those of color who manage to rise into “the system” become the worst of the worst, almost accepted by their white brethren, which is why we included the Castaneda quotes.

The disease, as we define it is privilege. The byproduct is dehumanization and indifference. This is a disease so powerful that very few can stand up to it and fewer still can admit it exists or if they choose to do so, go to great lengths to misdefine it.

We began by discussing Syria but what is happening there, engineered by “privileged exceptionalists” driven by extremism, is terrorism in its purist form.

American policing may well be described as institutionalized terrorism as well.

Every child in America can at some time be caged, certainly if of color or if one’s parents are of questionable ancestry.

Every American can be murdered by police with impunity. In fact, the massive ownership of assault weapons by Americans is driven by a fear of police. Rural and suburban communities, where gun ownership is greatest, are not subject to even the rumor of “racial violence” that the media stokes with every word.

Every spectrum of politics from right or left shares one thing with those of color, distrust of government and fear of assault not by armed criminals but by armed criminal police.

The sad thing is that too many take solace in the fact that they will be the last to go, not the first. From Martin Niemoller:

“First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.”
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”

And so it goes...

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