

The Baltimore Paradigm: Wall Street's Kill Zones

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

May 4—On May 1, Baltimore's State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby, the city's top prosecutor, announced criminal charges against six Baltimore City police officers in the death of Freddie Gray, the 25-year-old man who suffered a fatal spine injury while in police custody, and whose death sparked rioting and unrest in the city. The charges range from second degree murder, assault, and false imprisonment to lesser charges of misconduct in office.

She gave a preamble before reading the charges:

To the people of Baltimore and demonstrators across America, I heard your call for no justice, no peace. Your peace is sincerely needed as I work to deliver justice on behalf of this young man. To those that are angry, hurt or have their own experiences of injustice at the hands of police officers, I urge you to channel the energy peacefully as we prosecute this case. To the rank and file officers of the Baltimore City Police Department, please know that these accusations of these six officers are not an indictment on the entire force.

She meant it. Only on the job since January, Mosby, was raised by a single mother whose own mother, father, grandfather, and uncles were all Baltimore police officers.

The announcement brought calm to a city that had suffered six days of rioting, looting, and arson, and was welcomed by local civic, religious, and political leaders, as well as by Mr. Gray's family, as the first step in satisfying the demand of "Justice for Freddie Gray," whose only

crime seemed to be making eye contact with a policeman.

However, in order to understand the Gray case, and its aftermath, and in order to even begin to satisfy the demands for "justice," one has to consider just how Baltimore, and cities across the nation, have come to this point. Ultimately, the Gray case isn't about police policy. It is about a battle over the defined mission of the United States and the very conception of man, a battle that has raged since the nation's birth.

Not About Race

For Baltimore to be the setting for the latest in this recent spate of high-profile police-involved deaths makes clear that, while there are undeniably racial issues involved, this is not about race. After all, Baltimore is not Ferguson, Missouri. The city's mayor, chief prosecutor, the majority of the city council, and the police chief are all African-American. More than 50% of Baltimore city police officers are African-American. Indeed, the driver of the van that provided what Baltimoreans refer to as the "nickel ride" (an intentionally rough and violent ride



When Baltimore saved the nation. The militia which stopped the British army cold after it had burned Washington, musters in Patterson Park in central Baltimore in September 1814.



EPA

When Baltimore built the nation. At Sparrows Point, the steelmaking process was first integrated from the arrival of tankers with iron ore, to the shipment of finished steel, producing more than 3500 combinations and grades of steel—and enabled most Baltimore families to live on the income of one wage earner.

in a paddy wagon) that resulted in Gray's severed spine and ultimately, his death, was also black.

But, Baltimore is a city victimized by Wall Street's conscious policy of deindustrialization and globalization unleashed in leading manufacturing cities in America over at least the past 40 years. That policy, now in its end-phase of collapse, has created neighborhoods that are petri dishes for disease, drugs, and crime, often spread through the medium of a very large, revolving prison population, which brings hepatitis, HIV, drug-resistant TB, resurgent syphilis, and high-risk pregnancies out of the prisons and into the general population of extremely impoverished neighborhoods.

Baltimore residents refer to these neighborhoods as "Death Zones."

A Great Labor Force Discarded

It wasn't always this way. From the 1600s, Baltimore, 12 miles inland from the Chesapeake Bay, served as a centrally located port for the original colonies. As the new nation grew, Baltimore grew in importance in manufacturing, commerce, and shipping. It was home to the nation's first railroad, with key rail links to the west, north, and south.

During those early days, the battle also raged between what Robert Ingraham identifies as the New York leadership that created the U.S. Constitution and defined the nation's mission under George Washington's Presi-

dency, and the anti-human Slavocracy of the South (see p. 4). The War of 1812's famous Battle of Baltimore in 1814 saw local citizens manning the guns of Fort McHenry, and ultimately forcing the retreat and humiliating defeat of Britain's mighty naval armada. It was, of course, during that battle that Francis Scott Key penned what was later to become the National Anthem.

Less than 50 years later, the Slavocracy had entrenched itself in the city to such an extent that, by 1861, the guns of Fort McHenry were turned against the city, to guarantee that the train carrying President Lincoln to his inauguration be allowed safe passage.

Following the Civil War, the American System once again prevailed. In 1887, the Pennsylvania

Steel Company brought the steel process to a facility on Baltimore's southeast tip known as Sparrows Point. There, in an advance over British steel production, the steelmaking process was integrated in a single facility, from the arrival of tankers with iron ore, to the shipment of finished steel, eventually producing more than 3,500 combinations and grades of steel. During World War II, the Sparrows Point plant (then owned by Bethlehem Steel) produced more than 17 million tons of steel.

During FDR's transformation of the U.S. economy into the "Arsenal of Democracy" for World War II, Baltimore employed 260,000 workers in manufacturing activity. Three shipyards employed 77,000 workers; the aircraft industry, which included a converted GM assembly plant, employed 50,000, and the Sparrows Point integrated steel complex employed 29,000.

The city became a magnet for workers. Thousands of African-Americans from all over the rural South travelled to Baltimore for high-paying manufacturing jobs, joining Germans, Poles, Irish, Italians, and others migrating south from Pennsylvania coal country. Wages were high enough for all these workers to purchase homes and raise their families on the income of one person. The cultural outlook was one of production and was prevalent throughout the school and college systems, with training in metallurgy and other kinds of science and technology. Post-war, the steel and general

manufacturing base of the Baltimore metropolitan area continued to thrive.

The Death Spiral

And then, it all changed.

The deindustrialization of Baltimore began in the 1970s with the shrinkage of steel, shipbuilding, auto, and other industrial producers, and a city that had been a center of innovation and industry since the American Revolution, was progressively turned into a decayed shell, whose population is living out a 21st-Century death spiral.

Over the last 40 years, Baltimore has been taken apart and reassembled, with no high-paying manufacturing industry and a loss of over one-third of its population. Among those who have jobs, 90% work in service industries related to tourism and the Johns Hopkins Medical complex, which is now the city's largest employer. Much of the population lives in what are essentially slave quarters, servicing entertainment complexes as ticket takers, food service workers, and janitors. According to the last census, about 30% of the city's households are headed by single mothers who live in poor, segregated neighborhoods created by deindustrialization, in which a majority of the adults are either unemployed or have dropped out of, or never been a part of, the labor force.

Baltimore's black population has undoubtedly suffered the worst of it. Last year, the *Baltimore Sun* documented a litany of police abuse of black people as routine as it was savage, with compensation payouts of \$5.7 million since 2011 for the few cases pursued and vindicated. This, in the city where Wells Fargo paid millions to settle a lawsuit claiming it steered black homeowners, in particular, into subprime mortgages they could not afford.

In Sandtown-Winchester, the West Baltimore neighborhood where Freddie Gray grew up and was chased by the police, life expectancy is 69.7 years, on par with Iraq and Kazakhstan. According to the 2010 census, more than half the households had incomes less than

FIGURE 1

Baltimore 'Death Zones'—Areas (Circled) of High Disease, Poverty, and Death Rates, Inside the City Borders

(Base Map Shows Percentages of Households with Annual Incomes Under \$30,000, by Census Tract, 2000)



When Wall Street destroyed Baltimore. It's not race: With employment shipped south and abroad under "free trade," Sparrows Point shut down, the high rates of unemployment, incarceration, and health problems have created "death zones."

\$25,000. Unemployment was double the city average (already one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation). A more recent study found that Sandtown-Winchester had the highest rate in the city of residents who were incarcerated. Long before Freddie Gray was treated to the nickel ride that led to his death, he and his twin sister were plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the city because they suffered lead-paint poisoning in substandard city housing.

But the shocking reality is that Sandtown is typical of the neighborhoods—or more appropriately, the Killing Zones—across a city where less than 50% of those who make it to high school actually graduate. Still more shocking is the fact that the same pattern prevails nationwide.

Why Has It Happened?

Thirty-five years ago, the U.S. ranked 13th among the 34 industrialized nations that are today in the OECD, in terms of life expectancy for newborns. Today it ranks 29th. In 1980, the infant mortality rate in the U.S. was the same as in Germany. Today, American babies die at twice the rate of German babies. A report by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine says, “On nearly all indicators of mortality, survival and life expectancy, the United States ranks at or near the bottom among high-income countries.”

If there is anything positive to come of the tragedy of Freddie Gray, it is that it has forced at least some of America’s political leaders to confront this reality. Many would prefer to just talk about racism or, as Hillary Clinton did, judicial reform. And both issues deserve discussion. More importantly, though, is that the tragedy has moved the discussion of the underlying causes of what happened in Baltimore to the fore.

Martin O’Malley, who served as both Mayor of Baltimore and Governor of Maryland before considering a run for the Democratic presidential nomination, cut short a speaking tour of Ireland to return to Baltimore when the riots broke out. Before taking to the streets to talk to residents, O’Malley issued a statement, insisting:

The burning anger in the heart of our city—broadcast around the world—reminded all of us of a hard truth. It is a truth we must face as a nation. Because it is a truth that threatens our children’s future. It is the reality that eats away at the heart of America and the very survival of the American Dream we share.

The hard, truthful reality is this: growing numbers of our fellow citizens in American cities across the United States feel unheard, unseen, unrecognized—their very lives unneeded.

This is not just about policing in America. This is about everything it is supposed to mean to be an American.

As Dr. Martin Luther King once said, ‘a riot is the language of the unheard.’ And, this week the people of our city and our entire country were forced to listen.

Listen to the anger of young American men who are growing into adulthood with grim prospects of survival and even lesser prospects of success.

Listen to the fears of young men with little

hope of a finding a summer job, let alone, a job that might one day support a family.

Listen to the silent scream within the vacant hearts of young American boys who feel that America has forgotten them, that America doesn’t care about them, that America wishes not to look at them, that America wishes they would go away or be locked away.

Make no mistake about it, the anger that we have seen in Ferguson, in Cleveland, in Staten Island, in North Charleston, and in the flames of Baltimore is not just about policing.

It is about the legacy of race that would have us devalue black lives—whether their death is caused by a police officer or at the hand of another young black man.

It is about declining wages and the lack of opportunity in our country today.

It is about the brutality of an economic system that devalues human labor, human potential, and human lives.

It is about the lie that we make of the American Dream when we put the needs of the most powerful wealthy few ahead of the well-being of our nation’s many.

Extreme poverty is extremely dangerous.

This is not just about policing. Not just about race.

In a May 3 appearance on NBC’s Meet the Press, O’Malley, who has made the restoration of Glass-Steagall the cornerstone of his campaign, added, “Look at the structure that we have in our economy, the way we ship jobs and profits abroad, the way we fail to invest in our infrastructure and fail to invest in American cities. We are creating these conditions. Surely we are capable of more as a nation.”

Needed: A New Presidency

But even O’Malley, who clearly recognizes the problem, has yet to lay out a detailed solution for the nation as a whole, despite the fact that the solution is readily available.

American economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized that that solution will require assembling a “Presidential team,” of which O’Malley’s Glass-Steagall commitment is just one aspect; Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s war on Wall Street is another. More than simply naming poverty and past deindustrialization is necessary. For example, there is the crucial issue

of water—creating water for the West, stricken by a drought which could do to our nation’s most productive regions, what Wall Street did to Baltimore.

Instead, Baltimore could revive by again helping build the infrastructure to bring water to the West.

But this requires action guided by scientific principles and technological discoveries; LaRouche’s Science Team has laid them out for that next “Presidential team.”

Even George Washington, in the Presidency, was not enough: Without Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton’s credit policy and Hamilton’s New York

team, the nation’s historically unprecedented economic growth and strength would not have been launched from 1790 on.

President Obama will have to be forced from office to stop the destruction of his and Bush’s endless wars. And that Presidential team will have to take the United States into the new world economic order being fashioned by the BRICS nations and new institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

If we do that, then, and only then, can we be satisfied that we have won some justice for all the Freddie Grays of these United States.

When America Started Downhill

In April 1968, Robert F. Kennedy was on a plane heading for a campaign rally in Indianapolis when he was told that Martin Luther King was shot dead. He was told to call off the rally. The chief of police warned him not to go into the ghetto. His police escort abandoned him as he entered the ghetto. The crowd that gathered had not heard the news of King’s death. Kennedy told them. He ended:

Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: To tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of the world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that.

Over the next days there were riots in 110 cities. Thirty-nine people were killed, mostly black. There were 75,000 troops in the street. There were no riots in Indianapolis where Kennedy was campaigning. He went to Cleveland and said,

Violence goes on and on. Why? What has violence accomplished? What has it ever created? No martyr’s cause has ever been stilled by his assassin’s bullet.

RFK’s biographer writes:

He flew back to Washington, a city of smoke and flame, under curfew, patrolled by troops. He walked through the Black districts. Burning wood

and broken glass were all over the place. Walter Fauntroy said, “The troops were on duty. A crowd followed behind us, following Bobby Kennedy. The troops saw us coming at a distance, and they put on gas masks and got their guns at ready, waiting for this horde of Blacks coming up the street. When they saw it was Bobby Kennedy, they took off their gas masks and let us through. They looked awfully relieved.”

During the worst of the urban riots of 1967 Kennedy, though advised not to, toured the Black and Hispanic areas. When asked what he would do if he became President, Kennedy said he would make the media show what it was like to live in the ghettos. He said:

Let them show the soul, the feel, the hopelessness, and what it’s like to think, you’ll never get out. Show a Black teenager, told by some radio jingle to stay in school, looking at his older brother who stayed in school and is out of a job. Show the Mafia pushing narcotics; put a candid camera team in a ghetto school and watch what a rotten system of education it really is. . . . Ask people to watch it—and experience what it was like to live the most affluent society in history—without hope.

On June 6, 1968, RFK won the California primary and was heading for the Presidency. That day he was shot dead.

—Donald Phau

This article is dedicated to Sheilaugh Soules whose current fight with illness is in the fighting spirit of John and Robert Kennedy.