

Law and Order and Race

by Phillip W. Weiss

Since at least 2020, in the wake of the George Floyd incident, law and order has been linked with racism. Any talk about taking more effective measures to combat violent street crime is labeled by some as racist and a cynical ploy on the part of the white racist power structure to unfairly target, oppress, and detain persons of color (who also are disproportionately the victims of violent street crime).

Violent street crime is also seen as an inevitable consequence of a racist society, which oppresses persons of color and gives them cause to act out as redress for past injustices, thus shifting blame for violent street crime from the predators who commit the violent acts to the victims who, along with the racist police, bear full responsibility for their victimization.

Not surprisingly, this racial rhetoric has had a chilling effect on efforts to control crime and ensure public safety. For instance, in New York City, the Manhattan DA will no longer prosecute a whole series of serious offenses. Street people are allowed to loiter almost EVERYWHERE and act out with impunity and WITHOUT RESTRAINT. The use of drugs has been decriminalized and the odor of marijuana, the possession of which was once considered a serious crime, is now found everywhere.

Any politician who even hints that there is a crime problem risks becoming the target for vitriolic attack from organizations which use the rhetoric of racism to promote a political agenda. If you believe that we at CUSNY are overstating or exaggerating the situation, let us recall the results of the 2022 New York State governor's race in which the law-and-order candidate lost to the other candidate who had links to organizations that supported defunding the police and cashless bail for persons accused of violent crimes. The law-and-order candidate was accused of running a racist campaign, which was enough to guarantee his loss.

Nevertheless, regardless of all the verbiage surrounding the issue of race, ultimately the government's response to the growing problem of violent street crime boils down to the question of what it is the people want. If the majority of the people truly want more law and order, then public policy should be crafted that reflects the will of the majority. But if people are afraid to speak out for fear of being called a racist, then the will of the majority may never be heard, resulting in policies that marginalize the majority and only makes the crime problem worse.