

Obama's Opposition to 'Defund the Police' Is Common Sense

Former President Barack Obama took a bold step the other day when he [suggested that calls to defund the police](#) might alienate a number of voters.

"You lost a big audience the minute you say it," Obama noted in a Snapchat interview, "which makes it a lot less likely that you're actually going to get the changes you want done." The former president also implied it's often more effective to take nuanced approaches to issues in order to "get something done," rather than simply spewing talking points that only excite the base.

That base did not respond kindly to Obama's remarks, erupting on Twitter with indignant responses. One of these responses came from [Rep. Ilhan Omar, who declared](#): "We lose people in the hands of police. It's not a slogan but a policy demand. And centering the demand for equitable investments and budgets for communities across the country gets us progress and safety."

It's an interesting statement coming from Omar, particularly as the defund-the-police movement started in her own congressional district covering downtown Minneapolis following the death of George Floyd there. Perhaps Omar could enlighten us as to how that policy is working out in her community.

Actually, she doesn't have to, for the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* provides an interesting picture. On the same day Omar doubled down on defunding the police, the *Tribune* ran a story about the [537 percent increase in carjackings](#) in Minneapolis compared to the previous year. "The numbers are staggering," police spokesman John Elder told the paper. "It defies all civility and any shred of common human decency."

The article shockingly includes photo and audio of one of these carjackings, including the pop of gunfire and screech of tires. These are alarming sounds, especially since this crime took place during broad daylight in an upscale neighborhood.

Locals Rick and Alicia Reuter told the *Tribune* that “they support police reform efforts,” however, they “don’t believe fewer officers is the answer.” Indeed, other neighbors believe “that politicization of the issue has stalled any real attempts to curb the violence.”

The situation is ironic. In searching for justice by seeking to defund the police, the community received the exact opposite.

Why did this happen?

[*The Roots of American Order*](#), by the late historian Russell Kirk, provides us with some answers. In the last chapter, Kirk writes about Orestes Brownson, a former socialist whose “social ideas went through a succession of changes” over the years. Paraphrasing Brownson, Kirk writes, “Justice, he said, requires Authority.”

It seems quite possible that by rejecting authority (i.e., the police) we have also rejected our opportunity for justice, and are now seeing the fruits of injustice in heightened crime rates exemplified by these carjackings against unsuspecting, innocent people.

But then Kirk provides a check. Brownson, he explains, is not talking about “the authority of a soldier or policeman, but the authority of religious truth.”

No people can enjoy a just society without some standard of judgment superior to the mood of the moment; and this is especially true in democratic states, which have no hereditary class of magistrates to sustain the laws. ... Simple popular opinion never can maintain Justice....

Our nation has certainly done its best to abolish the authority of religious truth. This has been happening in schools and the public square for decades, and recently this crusade has been expanded via restrictions made on religious gatherings during the pandemic. Is it possible such suppression is finally coming home to roost in the lawlessness overtaking our cities?

We can yell for justice and the abolishment of the police until we're blue in the face, but unfortunately it seems to only make life in America more miserable and fearful. Perhaps that's because, as the Founders warned us, [our system of government](#) "was made only for a moral and religious People." When the morality and religiosity of Americans goes out the door, we shouldn't be surprised when lawlessness and injustice sweep in to fill the void.

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