

**What Happens Next – Sunday June 13, 2021**  
**War on Cops, Risk in Finance, Be Happy, Casablanca**  
**Heather Mac Donald QA**

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks, Heather. Let's get started about how it's affecting policing. How do police respond when they're attacked as being delegitimize, whether being racist, whether being overly aggressive? Are they less aggressive in policing? Are they not getting in the field? How does it play, day to day, both in the black community and in the white communities?

Heather Mac Donald:

Policing is political. And if cops get the message relentlessly, which comes about every day now, that they are racist for engaging in proactive policing in high-crime communities, things like getting out of your car if you're driving by and you see somebody hitching up his waistband as if he has a gun at 2 a.m. on a known drug corner, the cops don't have to get out of their car. They don't have to make that stop. That's purely discretionary. They're mandated to answer 911 calls when somebody has already been shot or somebody has already been robbed.

When they're told that they're racist for engaging in that proactive discretionary policing, it's quite understandable and arguably proper that they do much less of it. So cops now are in a purely reactive mode. They're driving around in their cars, waiting for the next 911 call to come out of their radio, and they are not engaged in those types of stops, which actually discourage violence, which try to intervene in suspicious behavior before it ripens into a felony.

So you have now a massive drop in stops and arrests and you can graph it. I mean, there is a discrete, obvious, inverse proportion between the amount of proactive activity of cops and the amount of violent crime. Violent crimes, as I said, last year had the largest percentage increase in homicides. We're likely to hit about 20,000 homicide victims. Over half of those will be black, even though blacks are only 12% of the population. When cops back off of policing, it's the law abiding residents of high-crime neighborhoods who suffer most.

I mean, I have been to numerous police community meetings in high-crime neighborhoods, whether it's Central Harlem, South Central LA, Brooklyn, Chicago, South Side of Chicago. What I hear again and again is those good, law abiding people begging for more police protection. They want more officers, but more importantly, they want more proactive activity. They say, "Why aren't you arresting the dealers?" or, "You arrest them and they're back on the street the next day. Why aren't you getting those kids who are hanging out by the hundreds on a block, fighting? Why don't you move them on? Why don't you arrest them? Whatever happened to truancy laws? Whatever happened to loitering laws?"

So it is primarily people in those neighborhoods that are hurt when the cops back off, but this thing is spreading. It's spreading now through carjackings. Carjackings are out of control in Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and elsewhere. And eventually, it's possible that these drive-by shootings will be coming to a neighborhood near you.

Larry Bernstein:

We had Peter Moskos on our call a few months ago. I don't know if you know Peter, but he wrote a book called *Cop in the Hood: My Year of Policing Baltimore's Eastern District*. And he's a sociologist, a professor, and he took a job at the police academy and was trained to be a policeman. And he describes how he would drive up to a corner where some African-American drug dealers were hanging out and he would say, "Listen, guys. When I come around the block, I want to see you guys gone." Is that sort of telling people to disperse, is that also going down? Is that sort of asking for identification, asking, "What are you doing at this place? Explain yourself," using discretionary police tactics to try to ascertain who the bad actors are and getting them away from the corner?

Heather Mac Donald:

Well, I know Peter Moskos and he's done some great work. And I would imagine, yes, because cops now, they fear that any interaction that gets out of control, if they're caught on a cell phone video using more than just verbal commands, they can blow up and they just don't want to put their careers at risk. You have now a massive flight from the profession. People are taking early retirements. Recruiting is over. I mean, it's over. Defunding is kind of an irrelevancy because, even if a police department wants to beef itself up, which may now do, nobody's going into this job. The longstanding cop families are telling anybody they know, "Don't even think about it because, from the day you start this job, you're a racist and there's nothing you can do to clear your name."

So I would imagine that, yes, those types of discretionary ... And you're absolutely right, Larry, to note that you do not have to make an arrest. If you see somebody drinking from a bottle in public, which is a misdemeanor, you don't have to make an arrest. You can just pour out the scotch or whatever it is and say, "I don't want to see you do this again," and good cops know to use that discretion. I would imagine that that sort of activity is also down.

Larry Bernstein:

We just got a question from the audience. This one is from my good friend, Neil Ross. Neil wants to know, would ending the War on Drugs substantially reduce the murder rate? Is it the drug wars that's driving this epidemic?

Heather Mac Donald:

No, it's not. The drive-by shootings that we're seeing now are just kids with beef and grudge matches that have offended each other on social media or whatnot and you get a chain of retaliation. It's also, let me just fend off another question, the media loves the explanation this, because of the pandemic, now they're quickly saying, "Okay. Well, violence went up because of the pandemic," as if these kids are out there shooting each other because they're out of a job, that they would otherwise be putting bread on the table and they're just struggling for subsistence. No, they all have smartphones. Smartphones are the police's best friend. They throw gang signs on their smartphones. They show off their money and their guns.

But we've been hearing that this is all because of the pandemic. Now that the pandemic is ending, the New York Times has been writing articles saying, "Well, expect crime to go up because the pandemics and lockdowns are ending." So they've got it covered in both directions. The drug war, I have not written a lot on decriminalization of drugs. I'm, frankly, an agnostic. All I can tell you is this. If you look at the work of Michael Fortner or others, James Forman at the Yale Law School, they document in just massive detail that the impetus for the War on Drugs has come again and again from the black community, who says, "We want the dealers off the streets."

And the cops, it would be racist not to respond to those requests. They're not making those policy decisions. We can have that high-level policy decision, but do not blame the cops for enforcing drug laws because that is what they hear. I've been in police community meetings in the 41st Precinct of the South Bronx where somebody stood up and said, "I smell pot in my apartment corridor. Can you do something about it?" People that live with open-air drug trade and drug use, generally, feel like it's a pall on their community.

I don't think that that's the main thing driving it. At this point, it is kids that never learned self-control. Their gun is their power and they are using it in an utterly grotesque, callous, cruel ways.

Larry Bernstein:

Let me try a different direction. We had a book club with, I can't recall the woman's name, but a New York Times reporter who wrote a book, who is opposed to these new gun courts in New York. Bloomberg passed some very strong anti-gun laws and the result is that they have arrested a number of African Americans for illegally having a gun and that can result in prison time for people who are caught with these illegal guns, but now the progressive left does not want to enforce the gun laws. Where should we be on gun laws and how does that enforcement follow the same sort of script as the one you've described?

Heather Mac Donald:

Yeah. It's amazing. On the one hand, if there's one of these very rare mass shootings, the left love mass shootings because they have a greater percentage of whites, although they're still disproportionately committed by blacks. They'll go on about gun laws, but then in Chicago, as well, under Rahm Emanuel and some of his police commissioners, they wanted to have stricter enforcement of gun laws and the black caucus in Springfield wouldn't let them do it because of disparate impact.

That's the two things. Take away the benchmark issue. Take away, as well, disparate impact. Disparate impact is the concept now that is unwinding every single standard in our civilization when it comes to behavior, academic achievement. And criminal law, it is true, has disparate impact on blacks. That's not because the legal system is racist. It's because there are vast gaps in criminal offending. The solution to that is to remit the family, but if you unwind the law, which is what's happening on a de facto basis now, it is black lives that are taken. These kids that are shot, it's utterly heartbreaking.

So gun laws, we can enforce them. I'm not a gun nut, to be honest. On the other hand, I am going to notice this, something that Bernie Sanders noticed before he really was as prominent as he is, politically, that everybody in Vermont owns a gun and they have virtually no serious street-level, violent gun crimes. Gun crime is a function of social breakdown. It is not a function of owning guns. But that having been said, I'm certainly open to more restrictions, but I don't think it's going to make a damn bit of difference because these guns that are being used are often overwhelmingly illegal.

Larry Bernstein:

The Black Lives Matter Movement became huge last year. I mean, the demonstrations here in Chicago, where I'm from, were massive. Thousands and thousands of people turned out after George Floyd was murdered. What do you make of the success of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the context of their demands for defunding of the police? Why has such a substantial portion of the population bought into the Black Lives Matter thesis?

Heather Mac Donald:

Well, as I say, as an initial matter, it's because they don't know anything about what the real data is with police and criminal violence and police use of force. I remember, several years ago, the head of the Congressional Black Caucus stood up, it was around 2016 and 2017, and said, "Well, as we all know, the vast majority of victims of fatal police violence this year have been black." And at that point, it was maybe 21% of victims of fatal police violence were black.

So, as I say, the public is completely in the dark about the reality of police use of force. They are completely in the dark about the degree of violence that is going on in inner-city neighborhoods. It is astonishing to me and the media will not cover it. It is astonishing that we continue to talk about phantom police racism when every single day there are two dozen blacks being killed in these drive-by shootings that nobody gives a damn about, except for the cops. Kids, I mean, in Minneapolis over three weeks in May, three children, a six-year-old, a 10-year-old, and a nine-year-old, were shot in the head. Two of them have now died. The boy, the oldest one, the 10-year-old, is still on life support. He'll be a vegetable for the rest of his life.

In Chicago, you have 10 children already, under 15, have killed this year. That's three times more than last year. That's more than all children killed in 2019. This is happening on a daily basis. Nobody wants to talk about it. They would rather focus on the idea of systemic racism. Americans so far from being white supremacist turn their eyes away in shame and embarrassment for the breakdown of social norms in the inner city that is leading to levels of violence. If white parents had to put up with what black parents put up with, there would be a national revolution. It wouldn't last for a day. But the country turns its eyes away and talks about ... We are shooting the messenger, which is the police.

The police are not the problem in these communities, criminals are. And yet, we've been having this completely deceptive discourse for the last three decades about phony police racism in order not to talk about a far more difficult problem, which is exponentially higher rates of black violent street crime.

Larry Bernstein:

We have a question from an audience member, Irwin Warren. He asks, "Why are African-American mayoral candidates, as well as district attorneys, overwhelmingly running on defunding the police and not enforcing minor crimes or prosecuting minor crimes if the victims are, in general, African Americans?"

Heather Mac Donald:

Yes. That's a great question, Irwin. It's a mystery. Now, there's a few that break, but generally, at this point, political power that flows from the victimhood narrative is so vast, why would anybody give it up? Crying systemic racism is a ticket to power and media attention and federal dollars. It is amazing to me. It's a political failure. It's a lacuna. I urge anybody, find out when there's a police community meeting in your neighborhood, your city's ... one of its high-crime neighborhoods and I can guarantee you, you will hear exactly what I have reported. You will hear people begging for more police and more aggressive enforcement. And that just never filters up. I don't know. It seems like nobody else cares, but the police and a few voices on the conservative media side.

And again, disparate impact is the name of the game. The only way to avoid disparate impact in law enforcement is not to enforce the law. That's the sad fact, but that's the case. And as I say, the disparate impact concept, whether it comes to academic standards or behavioral standards, is what's driving our culture today.

Larry Bernstein:

If you had to predict how this is going to play itself out, how do you see it? Do you imagine a world where, when you have less policing, greater and greater incidents of violent crime in certain communities? Will there be white flight? Will there be black flight? How do you see this thing playing out and will there be a counterbalance to return to policing or do you suspect that what we have here will be long lasting?

Heather Mac Donald:

Well, there's definitely white flight going on right now. The Times says it's all from sort of pandemic, but no, there's a heck of a lot happening in cities and black families that can get out are also getting out. And this summer is going to be unbelievable. The crime rates are going up much higher. And let me also just inoculate your listeners again against the pandemic explanation. Crime went down in the western world. Violent crime went down, property crime went down in every place other than the United States during the lockdowns. And it only went up in this country after the George Floyd riots. It was going down here, too.

So, this is not because of lockdowns. This is because the police have backed off. Crime has gone up much faster in 2021 than it did in 2020, following the George Floyd riots. This is going to be a bad summer and it's not going to change, as I say, until whites start getting shot. They're getting carjacked like crazy now and there's random shootings. We had one in Times Square, but the only thing that will get the public's attention, the media attention, is if this starts happening to white people because we basically have a racist press that does not give a damn about black victims, unless they've been killed by a cop.

Larry Bernstein:

I just want to repeat that question in a different way. Why isn't the African-American community up in arms when the violence increases dramatically in their own communities? As you kind of described, there's one segment of the community that's anti-policing and there's another one, the law-abiding ones, that so desperately want the police. Why isn't that latter segment have a voice making their needs and concerns known?

Heather Mac Donald:

Well, it tends to be people that are more elderly, that are terrified now to go out and go to the store. I've seen so many elderly women. One woman stood up in the 40th Precinct of the South Bronx and said, "How lovely when we see the police. They are my friends." This came out of nowhere, just apropos of nothing. And I think, for a lot of young people, there's just the power of ideology. There's the power of this narrative. As I say, the racism narrative is the key to power now and people would rather have that power than deal with the problems on the ground. I don't purport to be able to understand it. I can just describe it.

And you're absolutely right. It's a very bizarre disconnect in what's going on, but you do have some pushback. I mean, Detroit now has announced that it is going to be cracking down on those low-level broken windows type offenses because the shootings are so out of control and people are begging for the loud parties, out of which you get these drive-by shootings occurring, the street racing, the insane driving that's going on and noise, there are complaints coming out. And the police chief there, to his credit, is saying, "We are going to do an absolute crackdown on this."

So those things happen. And then what happens is the media gets its hands on the numbers and say, "Aha, they're disproportionately making arrests or issuing summons in black neighborhoods." There's one of the great police chiefs, Ed Flynn, who was a Milwaukee police chief for a long time, also he was in Arlington, Virginia, other places, and he's been one of the few police chiefs that are willing to talk about the dilemma that police chiefs face. And he said, "If we listen to the community, those voices that do want enforcement, we will generate the arrest and activity data that the ACLU can use against us in the next racial profiling lawsuit."

So it's a very hard thing for the cops. Which voices do they listen to, the media and the activists and the politicians or the elderly woman who is scared to death by the kids that are hanging out in her lobby, selling weed? I spoke to a cancer amputee in the Mount Hope section of the Bronx, who said to me, "Please, Jesus, send more police," because the only time she felt safe to go into her lobby was when the police were there. She said, "When you can come down, you can talk to the good people and everything's A okay." People were begging to have a surveillance watchtower put back up on their block, which the police would use to try and watch to see who was shooting whom.

Bernard Harcourt of Columbia Law School will look at that police surveillance watchtower and say, along with Michelle Foucault, "Ah, the panopticon. This is oppressing blacks with the surveillance state." They're putting it there because that's what the good people want. Hello?

Larry Bernstein:

We had a book club a few months ago about the 1964 police city riots. And the African-American community demanded more black cops and more blacks in senior roles of the police department. In Chicago today, where I'm from, we have a black police Chief, and many African-American police officers, did this dampen this defunding, or anti-police, rhetoric.

Heather Mac Donald:

No, it hasn't. Not that I can see. I would also say that the demand for more diversity on police forces is self-defeating. It doesn't matter. In fact, the Obama justice department did a study of Philadelphia Police. That was one of these voluntary. They brought them in. It wasn't a consent decree type pattern, or practice, investigation. They found that black and Hispanic officers were more likely to engage in what's known as threat misperception. That is shooting somebody who has a cell phone, because you think it's a gun, than white officers were. There's no evidence that there's less use of force if you have more minorities, but in order to get more minorities on a force at this point, this is painful to say, but it's just simply the case. They end up getting rid of criminal background check requirements, or clean record requirements, and lower the cognitive testing, or educational background for getting into the academy. Neither of those are good solutions. I think policing hiring should be completely colorblind and just take the best candidates.

Larry Bernstein:

I'd like you end you're chat on a note of optimism. Heather, what are you optimistic about?

Heather Mac Donald:

That presents that I'm optimistic about something. I don't know. I guess I do see that there's maybe some pushback now against the white supremacy narrative. Certainly, when it comes to the diversity training, and people being brainwashed with this idea that all socioeconomic disparities today are due to systemic bias, rather than to cultural differences, behavioral differences. There does seem to be some awakening to the poison of that. If that goes forward, that may be some pushback against what I think is a very dangerous narrative. I have to say, I fear things are going to get worse when it comes to crime before they get better, but pendulums do swing. If New York City could come back from its late 1980s, early 1990s, and become the safest big city in the country, maybe we can do that again.

Larry Bernstein:

Heather, thank you so much.