

## Sowing the Sixties Winds, Reaping Today's Whirlwind

Today's disorder reflects just how successful the leftist "long march through the institutions" has been.

Thu Jun 25, 2020 [Bruce Thornton](#) Frontpagemag.com

<https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/2020/06/sowing-sixties-winds-reaping-todays-whirlwind-bruce-thornton/>

***Bruce Thornton is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center.***

From one perspective, the surreal absurdity of the current protests, vandalism, and riots is not even close to the disruption and mayhem of the political violence in the Sixties and Seventies. We have not yet seen the kidnappings, murders of judges, and scores of bombings that roiled that era. In 1967 alone there were 159 riots, and in the Seventies 14 people were killed and 600 wounded by politically motivated bombings.

But what's going on today is more dangerous, for the ideologies driving the disorder reflect just how successful the leftist "long march through the institutions" has been at corrupting American education and culture over the last half a century. As a result, ideas and behaviors that by consensus were out of bounds then, have now been normalized and abetted by civic leaders and politicians, as well as popular culture, schools, and even sports.

I spent the Seventies in college and graduate school, so I had a front-row seat for the "long march." In the early years there were, of course, radical professors who opposed the war in Vietnam and hated free-market capitalism. They preached abandoning the bourgeoisie virtues like self-restraint of desires and appetites, especially of sex. Those virtues were redefined as tools of political oppression. As cultural Marxist Herbert Marcuse put it, "The civilized morality is reversed by harmonizing instinctual freedom and order: liberated from the tyranny of repressive reason, the instincts tend toward free and lasting existential relations—they generate a *new* reality principle."

Such opinions were a minority among an otherwise liberal faculty. But as the decade progressed, they steadily became more mainstream. One reason is that a consumer-driven economy had long found sex to be a great marketing tool, and impulsive behavior to be good for business. And so this corrosive politicizing of promiscuity was promoted by many big businesses. The powerful sex-drive, recognized as a potential force of destruction by our Greco-Roman and Hebraic traditions alike, was legitimized and idealized as

fashionable “liberation.” Leftist ideology now had a potent ally in subverting all authority, and in masquerading its illiberal politics in the rhetoric of liberation and freedom. “If it feels good, do it” became the foundational mantra of politics and consumerism alike, one we see taken to excess in the wanton and gleeful destruction and vandalism of the current disorder. More important, political freedom as ordered liberty founded on law was transformed into what the Founders called “license,” the freedom to do what one wants, no matter how destructive to one’s self and others.

The rejection of traditional sexual morality and mores thus extended to all authority, particularly that of tradition and religion. This rejection of the past is ideal for utopianism, the notion that there can be a perfect politico-social order with perfect equality and justice; as the Elvis Costello lyric has it, “Let’s talk about tomorrow now we’ve put the past away.” History now becomes the systematic demonization of our ancestors for their flawed humanity and failure to create an impossible utopia. The West now is notable only for its crimes against that idealism, while its unique transcendence of those crimes, its recognition that certain behaviors and institutions *are* crimes, is forgotten.

For example, slavery, the historical evil that so exercises the “woke” protestors and rioters, is an historically unexceptional, universal institution. In the past it was no more problematic than the domestication of animals. But the rejection of slavery happened only in the West, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek rhetorician Alcidamas, who said “The god gave freedom to all men, and nature made no man a slave”; to the Christian American and British abolitionists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, who finally brought about the end of slavery in the West.

But because the left sees only the West’s flaws, today we are watching the violent assault on public monuments to people from the past, even statues of Lincoln, who ended slavery in the U.S. In the Sixties and Seventies left-wing terrorists bombed military recruiting offices and university labs that allegedly served the “military-industrial complex.” Apart from a few police precincts, today’s Jacobins are focusing their rage on private businesses and public statues, the latter the tangible and communal celebrations of our past and the all too human people who now don’t measure up to the exalted expectations of callow, entitled, badly educated young people. The goal is to “cancel” Western Civilization.

This vandalism of the past, moreover, is a visible sign of what has happened to the profession of history beginning in the Sixties: It has been turned into a Leninist “who, whom” melodrama, with crude, moustache-twirling Western

villains endlessly tying to the railroad tracks of history an equally crude roster of innocent victims “of color.” Human complexity, mixed motives, failed good intentions, and unforeseen consequences—the tragic heart of good history ever since Thucydides—are all cast aside for therapeutic bedtime stories comprising the creepy, sadomasochistic theater of guilty whites and their victims “of color.” This vandalizing of history has now triumphed, for today it dominates the curricula of schools from kindergarten to university.

In addition to vandalizing monuments, we have the spectacle of mayors, governors, and Congressmen abasing themselves before the “woke” dominatrices “of color,” and shedding crocodile tears for offences they never perpetrated and their punishers never suffered. Worse yet, such empty moral preening changes nothing for the people they’re supposed to help. The dysfunctional conditions of the black underclass—a product of the Sixties’ abandonment of traditional morality and virtue, denigration of fatherhood, and destruction of character through failed antipoverty programs—continue to destroy thousands of black lives a year that don’t “matter” to the “woke” shock-troops. Meanwhile, a president who has done more for “black lives” than Barack Obama and the Black Congressional Caucus put together, is slandered as a “racist” and “white supremacist.”

Next, we are witnessing the most blatant examples of the leftist principles that flourished in the Sixties: “any means necessary” and “never let a crisis go to waste.” The former explains what seems to be the pointless protests and violence. Even the so-called “peaceful protests” have no legitimate purpose other than hysterical virtue-signaling. The protestors say, and even some conservatives agree, that the protests and accompanying violence are legitimate since they express the “grief and anger” of the people, and they force the nation to confront a serious crisis. But does anyone really believe that the issue of police encounters with blacks males is unknown to anyone, especially since Rodney King nearly 30 years ago? Or that public displays of alleged “grief and anger” on the part of strangers have any practical utility? The culprit in Minneapolis was fired and charged with second degree murder in a week. What other practical actions are supposed to follow? And how does killing and beating people, or vandalizing and looting small businesses, advance the “conversation” we allegedly refuse to have?

As for the crisis, it is not just being taking advantage of, as was the Vietnam war in the Sixties, in order to promote a leftist political agenda. Today the crisis is being manufactured. All the available data show that police shootings of unarmed black men are rare—9 in 2019—and usually happen when a suspect resists arrest. In fact, police shootings in general are down almost by

half over the last few decades. Yet videos of police arrests that are atypical of the millions of police contacts with citizens every year saturate the internet, social media, and cable news, creating the illusion that such lethal abuses of force are common.

The purpose, then, of the protests and violence has little to do with correcting a widespread abuse, or the mythic “systemic racism” responsible. It’s about leveraging the rare dramatic instances of police misbehavior into political power—not letting the crisis go to waste. Black Lives Matter, which has been at the forefront of this “crisis,” has been raking in millions of dollars from corporations eager to pay the danegeld. As well as enriching the movement’s leaders, this lucre will be spent on fomenting even more protests and disturbances, and on promoting an explicitly Marxist agenda that the movement cannot as of now persuade enough voters to accept at the ballot box.

Finally, the response of civic authority these days is very different from how disorder was handled in the Sixties. Back then, despite some sympathy from progressive politicians, most state and federal government officials understood that keeping order and protecting citizens was their primary responsibility. Today, mayors, governors, and police chiefs in blue states have stood down in the face of violence, and even issued public declarations of support and sympathy for the rioters and their goals, including the preposterous proposals like “defunding the police” or redirecting resources to non-lethal responses to dangerous spousal abuse emergencies. And most of the few criminals who are arrested are not charged or held, but instead put back on the street.

This mostly blue-state dereliction of civic duty is unprecedented, and illustrates just how thorough the multigenerational corruption of education has been. We are now entering the third generation of those who have been indoctrinated rather than educated, which means that the political ideologies of a minority in the Sixties, today are more widespread and embedded in the halls of government, as well as in popular culture and entertainment.

We sowed that wind in the Sixties, and now we are witnessing the whirlwind. The longer we appease public violence and disorder, the bolder the rioters become, and the more death and destruction will follow. At some point there will have to be a reckoning to restore the prestige and deterrent power of civil authority. For now, that possibility has to wait on the choices we the people make on November 3.

