

Save Us from More Collateral Damage

by
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It would surely seem that there is no end to retributive "dumb on crime" rhetoric propelled by media hype and the usual "knee jerk" legislative proposals in the aftermath of a regrettable and unfortunate death. A death of one member of a "special class" of people. Is it not enough that qualified and/or absolute immunity allows "the long blue line" along with prosecutors and other select governmental employees to terrorize the general population with near impunity (with minimal prospects of prosecution) under the protection of the law and routine absolution by District Attorneys?

With all due respect, sometimes the truth hurts - but, rarely is it popular or politically correct to fully air "what really happened." A fool, not a hero, arrives at a robbery (of costume jewelry) without his protective vest in place - and then decides to give chase and "play cowboy" when "the bad guy" (a bigger fool) has, according to witnesses, "the drop on him." The result, in spite of a plea - "don't do it," is not acceptable by anyone. Politicians of course, and in true form, along with special interest "suck-ups" are outraged and whipped into a feeding frenzy without all the facts. There were no reported (published anyway) autopsies and/or real investigation to find out if the officers injuries were compounded by "friendly fire" (by his own comrades) during the hail of gunfire. How many rounds were fired by all present? How many shell casings were recovered? Were ballistic studies done to determine what guns fired what bullets? And, how many times was the perpetrator shot and where? And, why a gun battle over costume jewelry? Where was the need for deadly force? Who escalated the incident? How many witnesses were present? etc.

And - where is the outrage over the shooting death in Framingham of an innocent man of color - awakened in the night by a SWAT Team breaking and storming into his home. Does anyone care? The double standard is sickening. Where is accountability? Swept "under the rug" as usual? Someone pulled the trigger and some reports have several rounds being fired with one killing the victim. Must be that some peoples lives aren't apparently as relevant as others - and forget about equality under the law. You can surely bet that no parole board would accept an "accidental discharge" of a firearm at a hearing as accepting responsibility in the unlawful taking of a life. Oh, - but it was a police officer that shot and killed (murdered) "the old man," ... and... that's OK?

Everyone looses when accountability and full investigations are tossed out the window. How do the sins (crimes) of one or two miscreants equal perpetual punishment for all the rest? Absolutely no one supports the actions of Cinelli and/or the twenty-seven (27) time looser who was responsible for Melissa's death. Neither of these men however, were serving a sentence for any form of murder prior to parole. They were habitual criminals with long records - not 2nd degree murderers. Why fix something that isn't broken with wholesale changes to the statutes and qualifications of parole board members. As already provided for in existing statutes, members are required to be educated professionals with four year degrees from accredited Colleges or Universities (a hopeful mix of fair, impartial and intelligent members).

The dismissal of the Parole Board members was a politically motivated "grandstanding feel good" stunt amounting to throwing the baby out with the bath water. Plain and simple, this Governor's moxie fits the bill of a lame

duck administrators ambition for another future paycheck at the public trough ...by showing some tough on crime foolishness waving the flag of public safety b-- s---

Special interests cried loud and hard enlisting the willing media to fan the flames of stupidity. One would think Jonathan Elias of WBZ news was auditioning for a job at the FOX network with his level of vitriol for over a week, editorializing rather than reporting the facts. The facts are however, up until "that moment in time," the Board had had a very good statistical record of success, all things considered. Fact, - no humans are infallible, possess clairvoyance or have a crystal ball that can predict the future behavior of anyone. Current parole statutes (on the books) give the Parole Board tremendous power and there is no need to increase the statutory time for parole eligibility. What is needed are objective standards that can be measured and weighed by educated, impartial and intelligent professionals - together with many intangibles.

This writer believes that all of us with a moral compass or a glimmer of goodness, hope for the best outcomes for our loved ones, family, friends, ourselves and for the greater good - but, experience and living life teaches us to expect some disappointments and do the best we can, take the good with the bad and move on, knowing that none of us can be or should try to play GOD. There are no absolutes.

To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln - "You can be right in some matters all the time, you can be right in all matters some of the time, but you cannot possibly be right in all matters all the time." Most people understand that we cannot expect infallibility in one person, that is why we have (over time) appointed boards and committees - for a consensus opinion. Using the collective wisdom of boards and committees usually yields results greater than the sum of its parts. That is providing you have an intelligent, educated, and impartial group to begin with. Changing the statutory composition of the parole board and to weigh it heavily with prosecutors and police not only creates a presumptive bias (potential litigation) but is the most ridiculous and absurd idea to come out of the legislature in recent years. Hopefully, such an idea will be defeated.

Everyone needs to take a "time out" and do a thorough "postmortem" on all aspects (cause and effect) and use intelligence to "tune-up" some fine points while avoiding wholesale wreckage. Draconian quick fixes (that conservatives love until the shoe is on the other foot) (or the bill comes due) will saddle the Commonwealth and the Department of Corruption Oh,.. is that Corrections? ... with an already unsustainable system that will collapse under it's own weight of incompetence, inefficiency, nepotism, patronage and expense in treasure - with many lives ruined unnecessarily - while taxpayers get nothing in return.

And speaking of accountability, what if anything did the aforementioned department (a jobs program for relatives and friends) do for the above mentioned perpetrators during their significant incarcerations? What did the community ever do to welcome them back and help them become productive members? Brand them as ex-felons? Shun them? Refuse them jobs? Give them no choice but to "go Viking" or back to prison? The public deserves a real explanation. How does the State justify spending about \$47,000 per year to incarcerate someone and then put them back on "the street" with \$0 (zero). Would it not make sense to halve that big number and actually provide a stipend to the ex-con to help him get started along with counseling, job training, housing and a job? We also need to seriously consider the governors proposal to put Parole and Probation in the same department under the Executive Branch. In addition, the DOC should be moved back under the umbrella of Health and Human Services. Somewhere and somehow - mercy, compassion, charity and forgiveness sprinkled with intelligence need to be considered and implemented - for a real second chance to succeed.