

The Face of Rebellion: George Floyd and the Struggle Against Racism

By [Donald Monaco](#)

Global Research, June 04, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

America burns. Its streets are inflamed by an existential rage born of violence, dehumanization and despair. Trampled underfoot of a police jackboot for too long, the oppressed are striking back with a ferocious anger that has simmered for decades. The spark that ignited the mushrooming conflagration is the police murder of George Floyd. The public execution of yet another African-American man by thugs in blue was so routine that the main perpetrator, Derek Chauvin appeared nonchalant as he kneeled on the neck of the helpless Floyd who, pleading for his life, uttered the now infamous words of [Eric Gardner](#), "I can't breathe." Floyd lay face down, handcuffed, beneath the weight of three Minneapolis law enforcers who extinguished his life in nine horrifying minutes of sadistic cruelty.

The broadcasting of a cell phone video of the incident ignited a firestorm of protest. The poisonous stench of racism that fouls the American homeland radiated across the country. Weeks earlier, white vigilantes murdered a young Black jogger, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, a state whose name evokes the memory of its former governor, George Wallace who once invoked the legacy of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy to utter the words that epitomize White Supremacy, "[segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever](#)" in the face of a Black rebellion that confronted the system of Southern apartheid during the turbulent year of 1963. The historical memory of that struggle lives on, fed by daily reminders of life in a nation divided for over two centuries by race. Essentially, the owning class in the United States has not figured out what to do with the African population its forefathers had enslaved prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. As they will not grant freedom, they resort to oppression.

With the murder of Floyd, a seething rage that lie coiled beneath the surface of the 'American Dream' turned nightmare exploded across a nation with an economy that was shattered by three months of state mandated coronavirus lockdown. The lockdown comes amidst the wreckage of five decades of globalized destruction.

The subsequent rebellion expresses the anger of people who confront a stifling social reality that threatens their very existence, their backs pressed against the proverbial wall by decades of racial injustice. Some insurgents are speaking the language of confrontation and violence to leaders of a government who understand no other vernacular. Others are raising their voices and their fists with African-Americans who refuse to be murdered with impunity. They include many of the nation's youth who are outraged by systemic brutalization of America's racial underclass. And there are the voices of those for whom the murder of Floyd was an affront to human dignity and whose minds are tormented by a culture so racist as to inspire dread. The rage playing itself out on the streets of America is a stark display of social rebellion, a convulsive refusal to be targeted, humiliated and

murdered by killer cops who are invariably exonerated by racist District Attorneys.

Among its most conscious participants, the protests represent a decisive rejection of a repugnant political system whose leaders lie with impunity so relentlessly as to inspire the very rebellion they seek to diffuse. Among its least politically conscious are the dispossessed who have seized the opportunity to expropriate the material goods they are denied in the ghettos that reek of poverty and desperation.

In his introduction to Albert Memmi's seminal work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, the existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre remarks that racism is imbedded in a system of colonialism that subjects the colonized to violence, misery and destitution. Racism, according to Sartre, is ingrained in all actions and institutions of a colonial system that depends upon super-exploitation of its wage-slaves who live without human rights, and because they are without those rights, are abandoned to the inhumane forces of the market. They are abandoned by the colonial relations of production to a vicious competition for jobs that breeds poverty, malnutrition, sickness and ignorance. In short, they are abandoned to an inhuman condition of sub-humanity.

The neo-colonial system of imperialism replaces the direct enslavement of peoples by colonial administrators and their military apparatus with enslavement of entire countries by free market servitude and debt. The overlords of the system are corporate executives, financiers, hedge fund managers, global investors and [economic hitmen](#). They manage the imperial system on behalf of a corporate plutocracy that owns the world's portfolio. And they continue to abandon a majority of the world's population to an inhuman condition of sub-humanity, as did their colonial predecessors.

It is the state that protects the portfolio of the corporate rich and the state is militarized. The government's heavy-handed response to mass protests graphically reveals its hideous character. The United States is a [police state](#). A terror state. A racist state. The police state is operating in full view of its citizens as heavily armed robo-cops, camouflaged U.S. Marshalls and SWAT teams patrol the streets of American cities in armor plated vehicles suitable for war-zones to quell burgeoning protests that are erupting over the murder of George Floyd. Military tactics that include the firing of tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper bullets and flash grenades show a strategy of ruthless suppression U.S. police forces learned from their [Israeli counterparts](#). [Twenty-four states](#) and the District of Columbia have called out 62,000 National Guard Troops to repress social protest. Helicopters hover over the mayhem as thousands of peaceful protesters have been brutalized, gassed and arrested by the American Gestapo.

Running battles in the streets of Minneapolis, Seattle, San Jose, Los Angeles, New York, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Atlanta and dozens of other cities are reminiscent of uprisings on the West Bank, with militant youth hurdling stones at occupation forces. Police cruisers have been torched. Buildings set ablaze. The streets of America are occupied territory no less than the streets of Palestine.

The violence of the oppressed is confronted by the violence of the state. Insurrectionary violence is confronted by repressive violence. The political and media elite pretend sympathy with peaceful protests while decrying the looting and mayhem exploding in the streets. Media analysts make no distinction between attacks on symbols of police power and the smashing of department store windows and looting of merchandise. Establishment

elites condemn looting in the streets with the same tenacity they used to defend looting in the suites by Goldman Sachs, the Blackstone Group, Citibank, JPMorgan Chase, General Electric, Raytheon, Northrup Grumman, Lockheed Martin and the Carlyle Group. Mass deviance is criminalized while elite deviance is protected by law.

It should be understood that elite deviance and the predatory financialization, militarization and deindustrialization of the U.S. economy is generative of mass deviance because it creates the conditions of poverty and despair that breed insurrection and street criminality. The working and middle classes are caught between the twin assaults of predatory violence by the rich from above and the poor from below. Predatory violence of the poor is [criminalized](#) while predatory violence of the rich is legalized. It is the poor, particularly those who are Black and Latino, who are targeted by militarized police and interred within a sprawling prison-industrial-complex that has created a new '[Jim Crow](#)' system of racial caste in America. Or they are murdered outright. In this manner, the seeds of insurrection are planted.

Ominously, on June 1, 2020, Donald Trump threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 as the first step in ordering military deployment and declaring martial law. He did so while standing on the well-manicured lawn of the White House Rose Garden. Trump justified his threats by claiming to be a "law and order" president who wanted to protect peaceful protesters. Then he marched across the street to the St. John's Episcopal Church to hold up a bible and pose for photographs. The great muckraking writer [Sinclair Lewis](#) is quoted as having said, "When fascism comes to America it will wrapped in a flag and holding a cross."

That the streets outside the White House had to be cleared of peaceful protesters for Trump's visit to St. John's by mounted police firing tear gas, rubber bullets and flash grenades illustrates the point that fascism will attack the people while claiming to defend them.

The lesson was on display during the [Attica Prison rebellion](#) in 1971 when New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered State Troopers to re-take the prison. Helicopters flew overhead during the initial phases of the assault, with loudspeakers that instructed prisoners to raise their hands and give themselves up so they would not be hurt while simultaneously dropping tear gas on the inmates. The second phase of the assault saw State Troopers and prison guards firing 12 Gauge shotguns to blast many of those prisoners to pieces. Those who were not shot were systematically tortured.

Trump's description of himself as a 'law and order' president, conjures images of Richard Nixon who uttered the identical phrase when confronted by domestic unrest caused by the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements. The racist Nixon responded by criminalizing Blacks and anti-war protesters to get elected in 1968 while the racist Trump criminalized Mexicans, Muslims and immigrants to win office in 2016.

Now Trump targets political dissidents. During his June 1st remarks in the Rose Garden, he accused the "radical left" and "Antifa" of organizing and directing violence during the protests. Trump, along with Attorney General William Barr, promised to designate the anarchist group 'ANTIFA' as a "domestic terrorist organization."

First, the most lethal domestic terrorist organization in the United States is the U.S. government and its police forces who routinely [kill over 1,000 citizens](#) per year and brutalize thousands more. The men in blue will even attempt to kill one of their own who dares

expose corruption within the ranks as proven by Frank [Serpico](#) and the Knapp Commission five decades ago.

Second, use of [anti-terror legislation](#) enacted in the post 911 period was specifically designed to restrict civil liberties and political dissent. The genuine aims of post 911 anti-terror legislation were to expand the legal apparatus of domestic repression.

The definition of terrorism in the [USA Patriot Act of 2001](#) was so broad as to include any acts that could be construed by the state to be “dangerous to human life” and “appear to be intended to influence the policy of the government by intimidation or coercion.” What else are militant political demonstrations and protests trying to achieve other than to coerce the government to change its policies?

Trump justifies the threat of deploying U.S. troops on the streets of America by decrying the use of violence by protesters. The sanctimonious warning comes from the chief-executive of the most violent ruling class in history. He pretends to sympathize with the aims of peaceful protesters. Despite his rhetoric, Trump is just as unaware of the genuine grievances of the insurgents he faces as Marie Antionette was of the sufferings of her subjects right up to the moment she was beheaded by French revolutionaries on the guillotine.

The political elite recoil in horror before a rebellion they have created with decades of zero tolerance policing, three strikes you're out felony convictions, mandatory drug sentencing and mass incarceration of a surplus population created by globalization and neoliberal economic prescriptions. Trump claims that it may be necessary to deploy the military to maintain “law and order.” But it is that very “law and order” that protects a predatory economic system whose lifeblood is exploitation and human degradation.

The law is a weapon of the ruling class and they will wield it with wonton abandon to protect their wealth. They knew this day was coming, and they prepared for it with sequential wars on crime, drugs, gangs and terrorism. They knew it when they passed their “Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act in 1996, USA Patriot Act in 2001 and Homeland Security Act in 2002. They knew they would face rebellion when they created the Department of Homeland Security, FBI Anti-Terrorism Task Force, Fusion Centers, NSA Prism Program, militarized police force and their prison gulag. The construction of a legal and institutional architecture of fascism results from sequential wars against the people for the purpose of repressing the people. The techniques that were perfected by the government when racially profiling and suppressing Blacks, Latinos and Muslims, are now being used to target all Americans.

Repression is universalized. So is the emerging rebellion. Protests demanding an end to police violence against the Black population are interracial. [Solidarity protests](#) have gone global. They demand an end to racism. The rebellion unfolding in America is resonating in the streets of London England, Paris France, Copenhagen Denmark, Idlib Syria, Sydney Australia, Amsterdam Netherlands, Berlin Germany, Tehran Iran, Halifax Canada and other cities around the world.

The [globalization of poverty](#) and [war](#) are creating a globalization resistance.

The call to end racism and police brutality can only be realized by disarming America's militarized police state and by opposing its system of mass incarceration, endless wars,

trillion-dollar military budgets, secret intelligence organizations and the predatory economic system of capitalism the military-industrial-security and prison-industrial complexes protect.

As the African-American novelist [James Baldwin](#) once wrote, "A ghetto is improved in one way only – out of existence." The American ghetto, and the capitalistic system that produced it, has to be abolished. The race question is inextricably tied to the class question. Class war, not race war, will settle the issue.

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Donald Monaco is a political analyst who lives in Brooklyn, New York. He received his Master's Degree in Education from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1979 and was radicalized by the Vietnam War. He writes from an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist perspective. His recent book is titled, [The Politics of Terrorism](#), and is available at [amazon.com](#)

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