

HERMIT HERALD

VOL 1 ISSUE 37

JUNE 8, 2020

QUOTE FOR THE DAY:

“The threat to controlling the coronavirus is tiny compared with the threat created when governments act in ways that lose community trust.” Dr. Tom Frieden, former head of CDC in the Obama administration.

PANDEMIC AND THE PROTESTS:

Well, that’s an interesting statement from the man who accused Gov. Cuomo of causing 5,400 unnecessary deaths in NYC because he failed to act quickly enough on covid- 19 (CV).

As with so much related to the pandemic and protests, there are such strong views, not on both, but on many sides.

The latest dust up is over how much damage might be done to the CV recovery effort by the tens of thousands of peaceful protestors on

their marches. Dr. Trevor Bedford, an expert on the virus estimates that each day of protests will result in 50 to 1,100 more deaths. Wow! That's a pretty big range. Would love to know more about his computer model. Anyway, it's the old trade off thing, like opening up the restaurants again. In the instance of the protests, a lot of people would feel them justified if only 50 people died for every day of protest. Would they feel the same if 1,100 died for every day?

Other scientists voiced concerned that Dr. Bedford's postings would, "give fodder to those opposing civil rights."

A group of 1,000 medical practitioners signed a letter saying, "Racism and police violence are major threats to public health in this country, and protest is one of the only options available to people who have been systematically disenfranchised."

A different take by Jonah Goldberg, a writer for a conservative publication. "You know what erodes public trust in people like Frieden? When you say that you're a fool who will get

people killed for wanting to go to church, or keep your business open, but you're a hero when you join a protest they approve of."

Of course what none of the debaters is taking into account is, how do we measure the negative health effects of the protests while simultaneously the rest of the economy is reopening and causing more opportunities for increases in CV cases.

The most frightening aspect of the protests is that contact tracing is virtually impossible. CV experts are saying, if you participated in the protests it is imperative that you get tested.

MORE GOOD NEWS ON THE VACCINE SEARCH:

The British laboratory at Imperial College in London is forming a special partnership called VacEquity, Global Health that has a vaccine to be tested in phase one and phase two- to be done at the same time beginning next week. The partnership is sidestepping the conventional drug industry and therefore will be able to make their vaccine available at very low cost, not having to be concerned with

profitability or British licensing fees. A novel developmental approach is being used involving self-amplifying RNA, akin to, but different from, Messenger RNA being worked on by one of the other most encouraging developers, Moderna in Massachusetts. That's more information than we need to know. The good news is they hope to have an approved vaccine in early 2021.

POLICE DEPARTMENTS –WHAT TO DO?

The good news is that 73% of whites and 68% of blacks support their local police. The bad news is that 27% of whites and 32% of blacks do not.

Black on black crime is the scourge of this country, not black on white. There isn't a day in the life of a policeman, white or black when, those assigned to the large inner cities don't go to work with trepidation. 106 police officers were killed in the line of duty in 2018. In the last weekend in May, after George Floyd was killed, 85 civilians were shot and 24 killed in Chicago – tragic and terrifying.

With each additional black killed by a policeman, the protests have mounted, now, exponentially, with the killing of Mr. Floyd.

I'd like to recall my words from issue 35 - by no means original thought, but a statement of what typically happens in these situations. "There will be words meant to comfort, some legislation, police retraining... but it would take years to bring good education to the inner city schools, improve work opportunities, improve health care and improve living standards." I go on to recommend that we should have a Marshall Plan and, by that I don't mean a ten or twenty year program. I mean right now -all stops out.

So, where are we today? Oh yes, new legislation is being worked on as I write, and, words meant to comfort? Today, a full page add by the Partnership for New York City, signed by about 200 of the city's most influential leaders. I don't for a second question their good intentions, but here's the essence of their message. "There's never a wrong time to do the right thing." "By speaking out, we intend to send a message of hope to

young New Yorkers who are acting out their fear, frustrations and anger on the city streets. Let's work together to achieve racial equality and a safe law-abiding Society." "New York has prided itself on being the world's most open and inclusive city, attracting top talent from everywhere to build lives careers, and businesses here. But these opportunities have not been equally accessible to young people of color who have grown up and attended schools in our poorest neighborhoods. In our post-pandemic city, that must change, and we are committed to make that happen."

Bravo!! Beautifully written - now do something about it.

So, on to the legislation - a lot being drafted. One that caught my eye - the City of Minneapolis is outlawing the use of choke holds by police officers. What?? This was legal before? Apparently so. The only possible justification for such force would be if an officer were fighting for his life, one on one against an attacker with no back up to assist. Obviously, not the case with Mr. Floyd. He was already restrained when officer Chauvin

decided to employ the department sanctioned, or, condoned, neck restraint, effectively choking Mr. Floyd to death.

Now, what happens to the Minneapolis Police Department and other PDs throughout the country? It's retraining time - for the umpteenth time. Or, better yet, the Minneapolis City Council voted 9-0 to disband the department, and cities across the country are clamoring to defund the police, including DeBlasio in New York.

I can imagine that a certain percentage of people are drawn to law enforcement because it gives them a great sense of authority and, for a small minority, a compelling desire to use it to excess. That got me wondering what PDs are doing to try to identify such people and keep them off the force. With a little research I discover that approximately 90% of police departments do psychological testing for applicants. That turns out to be a blind alley in trying to find a way to improve police behavior, except to ask, isn't there a better test to identify people prone to abusive behavior?

Of course a propensity to abuse authority is the smallest part of the problem here. The bigger issue is just out and out racism on the part of a small percentage of police officers. How do you screen for that? Neighborhood policing has been effective in some cities – that is, police having the same territory every day, walking the streets and preferably living in the community. Mutual trust is much easier to establish than with a black and white cruiser coming by every half hour.

Minneapolis, please don't disband your police department. You obviously have some good people. It's leadership by example that's needed and strong disciplinary action being taken when called for. And, Mayor, DeBlasio, don't be defunding your department, as if to say, "See my fellow citizens I'm a man of action." To what end? God only knows.

Your faithful scribe,

PB

