

Note from New York City

We fear what may be coming but also feel passive about changing this awful scenario.

by Phyllis Chesler



I recently watched a documentary about the amazing British suffragists narrated by Lucy Worsley. As the government and police clamped down on their peaceful, and increasingly mass protests, these brave women responded with greater and greater militancy. They began to fire-bomb property, destroy private property, break windows, physically fight the police, and harass Cabinet members both at home and on the street.

Sound familiar?

However, the suffragists had a goal in mind and a strategy for achieving it. They wanted votes for women and they needed an act of Parliament in order to obtain it.

The documentary strongly suggests that none of their militant tactics, including hunger strikes in prison that led to torturous forced feedings, won female suffrage. However, it did change more and more people's minds on the subject. But, it was ceasing their campaign and patriotically joining the war effort (1914-1918) that Worsley suggests may have softened male hearts and minds.

Those who are rioting in our streets today, do not have a single goal in mind, nor do they have a single solution in sight. True, they want to destroy America because it is too far from perfect. But they have no single solution for race or class injustice. I wish I could write: Gender injustice, but that does not seem to be on the minds of Antifa, criminal looters, or peaceful protestors. All the women marching are marching primarily for racial justice, not for justice for women.

So very curious.

Toppling statues and destroying police stations will not solve injustice although doing so may alter consciousness—in many contradictory ways, turning some potential American voters towards the Democrat or towards the Republican party.

Burning down police stations, destroying small businesses, stopping traffic, creating an environment in which chaos and danger are normalized will not do so either.

The weather is glorious in New York City. The streets resemble Rome and Paris in their best days.

And so, here we sit, fiddling as Rome burns; here we gaily sit at cafe tables, under umbrellas, all over New York City, still masked but outside, carefree, relieved to experience a mere semblance of our former lives—dining outdoors together—as our infrastructure continues to crumble and people continue to die from criminal violence or from Covid-19.

We all understand that life will never return to what it once was. We fear what may be coming but also feel passive about changing this awful scenario.

How much blood will flow in the street the day after the election? And for how long?

And that old question: Can we have both peace and justice, order and truth—and at the same time?

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