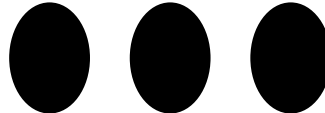




Liberal Columnist “Mugged” by Reality: Still Doesn’t “Get It”

Here’s one for late-night jokester Jay Leno’s weekly “Headlines” segment featuring Stupid Criminals – his favorite target. Although, he might want to consider a sister segment to his repertoire: Clueless Victims.

In what can only be described as a bizarre twist of fate, a burglar (Rodney Knight) broke into, and ransacked, *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fishers (left) house in the District of Columbia (apparently with a weapon). He then posted himself gloating over his grab-bag of plundered goods on the columnist’s laptop and Facebook account, even going so far as to be pictured wearing Mr. Fishers’ new winter coat. The police, Fisher said, responded with startling speed.



Amazingly, the same police that caught the burglar told Fisher: We do not have the resources to take this kind of crime seriously.... The system [is] too overwhelmed by more serious offenses. Sure, [we] dust for fingerprints, but no one [will] ever look at them.

Why, oh why, wondered Fisher in his May 11 [column](#) describing the incident and conviction, some five months after the fact, were such apprehensions and convictions so rare? And why aren’t property crimes taken seriously? Furthermore, why did Knight’s defense counsel, Joel Davidson, ask the judge to go easy on his client? How could Davidson argue, with a straight face, that the 19-year-old really had a fairly minimal criminal history, what with seven arrests in Virginia, New York, and the District, plus two no-shows for court appearances not counting Knight’s juvenile record? How could the Assistant District Attorney praise the burglar’s so-called cooperation when, in fact, he lied about his reason for being in Fishers’ house (he was hungry)?

The judge, however, assured the court that he took property crimes very seriously to wit, 27 months for the miscreant’s burglary and 17 months for the weapons offense. Remarked Fisher in his column:

That, everyone involved told me, is an unusually stiff sentence for a burglary. It is a significant punishment, but listen again to what the police and lawyers were really saying: Even a relatively modest prison term is unusual for a property crime.

Fisher mused that the criminal justice system from the cops to the prosecutors to the judge had already given him plenty of breaks and noted that the primary goal was to avoid a trial rather than to serve justice, no matter how damning the evidence. Having been mugged by reality, Fisher did some research on burglaries and found that more than 2 million are committed annually. Since the advent of DNA evidence, locating culprits is technically easier, but the costs of arraignment, pre-trial detention, the trial itself (including free defense counsel), and, of course, incarceration if convicted trump detective work. Thus do burglars (and other criminals) get repeated reprieves, plea deals, and minimal sentences



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on May 23, 2011

even when they are convicted.

This approach to criminality does something else: The coddling of criminals (including juvenile misdemeanors) promotes a culture of criminality which, in the long run, costs society states, cities, counties and thus taxpayers a whole lot more than whatever is perceived as cost-saving. For example, the Harrisburg *Patriot-News* [reported](#) May 13 that K-eighth-grade students at Camp Curtain School received cold sandwiches for one week as punishment for misbehavior, including failure to clean up after themselves. Such piddling reprimands send youngsters the wrong message and lead to more serious offenses, especially given bully-style excesses such as humiliating exemplary honor students with [strip-searches on the prowl for aspirin in their underpants](#) and suspending 9-year-olds for [wearing a patriotic troop-honoring-hat to school](#).

Fisher writes: Eventually, a crackerjack detective with a strong interest in social-media-related crime [e.g., Facebook] took over and gave the case far more attention than most burglaries get. Turns out police saw Fishers December 2010 [column](#), which was picked up by several news outlets, decrying the sheer gall of the crime. In it, Fisher cited a profusion of threats and deeds involving violence that received only the flimsiest attention from law enforcement and judges. Fisher allowed in his May, post-conviction column that it might be fair to assume we may have gotten more attention than many other crime victims do. (If my own 13-year stint with the Justice Department serves, gotten more attention is a huge understatement; the last thing criminal justice wants is negative coverage by multiple, prominent news outlets. Note to Jay Leno: Are you listening?)

Coddling real criminality sets a fresh precedent every time it happens. The hypocritical combination of coddling and bullying diminishes, ever further, the public's faith in, and respect for, the law and criminal justice. When you pile on now-ubiquitous revenue cameras, TSA overreaches (literally!), warrantless home invasions and a tantamount reversal of probable cause all of which the public lumps together as criminal justice-law enforcement you lay the groundwork for an ungovernable, vengeance-oriented society. At some point, this creates the conditions for a police state something liberals have never understood, beginning with the sit-ins, demonstrations and violent protests of the 1960s and 70s.

But as increasing numbers of liberals, including the famous among them, get mugged by reality, a slow, 180-degree turnabout is occurring. Thus their call for more, not less, government power. This is the ultimate ironic twist that may well spell our collective doom as a Republic.

As for Rodney Knight, the burglar should he ever decide to "go straight" will find that his conviction, jail time and even his Facebook frolic, probably won't hurt him. His choice of victims, however, and the resulting columns will follow him longer than his rap sheet.

*Beverly K. Eakman began her career as a teacher in 1968. She left to become a science writer for a NASA contractor. She went on to serve as a former speechwriter for the Voice of America and do research for of two other federal agencies, including the U.S. Dept. of Justice. She has authored six books, scores feature articles and op-eds covering education policy, mental-health, data-trafficking, privacy and political strategy. Her most recent works include **Walking Targets: How Our Psychologized Classrooms have Produced a Nation of Sitting Ducks** and the blockbuster 2011 Edition of her seminar manual, **How To Counter Group Manipulation Tactics** (Midnight Whistler Publishers). Mrs. Eakman can be reached via her website at www.BeverlyE.com.*



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