

THE QUESTION ONE DARES NOT ASK IN

BALTIMORE

(OR OTHER MURDEROUS CITIES)



by Dan Gifford

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When high schoolers took their guns to school and real military assault rifles were widely available with few if any questions asked, why didn't Baltimore have today's murder rate?

The last time I went to Baltimore was for a 1999 screening of my Oscar nominated, Emmy winning film "Waco: The Rules of Engagement" at the Charles Theater. If you missed it, "Waco" is about the same thing director Barbara Trent said her film, "The Panama Deception," was about when it won the 1992 Best Feature Documentary Oscar: "Your government and media lied to you."

Hold that thought.

Now I'm headed to The Monumental City again for the fiftieth anniversary reunion of my Baltimore Polytechnic Institute graduating class. That city moniker was first used sarcastically and that is how I use it now as an expression of tough love for a city that holds memories I revere.

But the ordered and relatively safe Baltimore I enjoyed as a teen gofer for former mayor "Big Tommy" D'Alessandro (Nancy Pelosi's father), student body president of Poly and as a reporter at WBMD and WCBM before committing journalism at MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, ABC News and CNN now has a monumental murder rate and an equally massive case of denial about the cause of that carnage.

That is why almost all of the murder reduction solutions I see promoted by the city's idealistic politicians and chattering class punditry — those Baltimore's H.L. Mencken called "the uplifters" in his day — are the sort of 1925 gun ban proposals that Mencken called "jackass legislation" that "would simply take them [guns] out of the hands of honest men."

High minded uplifters like Charles Krauthammer and George Will believe honest men and women have no moral right to own guns and that all should be

confiscated. Their view reflects the stated confiscation goal of gun control activism's founder once registration is achieved via the ruse of never ending "reasonable controls" or "gun safety" measures. Those and similar phrases are activist dog whistles for registration and confiscation.

However, Mencken's real world observation was correct then and still is as you shall read. So is Mencken's take on the part government and media prevarications — that thought you held — play in scaring the public into believing false facts and simpleton fixes: "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence, clamoring to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary."

Having been stabbed during the early 1960s while waiting for a Baltimore bus, I can attest the city's murderous street crime has never been fictional in my memory. But the idea that gutting a constitutional right will reduce or end the mounting murders committed by its hardened criminals is as unreal as the promises of the Murphy men and strip joint hawkers that used to work The Block.

As gun hating Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz told me years ago, "foolish liberals (and others) who are trying to read the Second Amendment out of the Constitution by claiming it's not an individual right or that it's too much of a public safety hazard, don't see the danger in the big picture. They're courting disaster by encouraging others to use the same means to eliminate portions of the Constitution they don't like."

Ask West Virginia Democratic U.S. Senator Joe Mancin about that.

"[D]ue process is what's killing us right now" Manchin says regarding his desire to prevent gun sales to those merely suspected of harboring criminal intentions. Pope Francis concurs: "Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individ-

uals and society?" But sans evidence, how are we to know what anyone is planning? So keep Dershowitz' warning in mind that other rights like privacy are also susceptible to the same appeal.

How can one defend a right to privacy when crimes that endanger both public safety and national security are planned in privacy? If it saves just one life, how can deadly secrets priests hear in confession be withheld from police? Package those as emotional pleas and they are as easy to sell as Maryland Institute professor Firman DeBrabander's discredited contention that "Easy access to guns fuels urban violence."

That wasn't true when guns were far more available, so why would it be now?

This is a photo of Poly's 1965-1966 rifle team.



Poly team members did then what was common practice all over America. They carried their rifles on the city buses to school and the shooting range. Any one of the pictured — or those at other schools — could have gone on a shooting rampage.

But they didn't.

The front seat of the school bus I boarded in North Carolina before moving to Baltimore usually had several rifles and shotguns on it. And the same was true all over the U.S.

They could have been used to shoot-up the school, but they weren't.

This photo from the 1956 University of North Carolina yearbook shows the annual rifle marksmanship contest on the campus.

Those students kept their rifles in the dorm. A common practice that could have presaged a terror spree. But that didn't happen.



As for those "assault weapons" some want to ban, if they are too dangerous to own now, why were they not years ago?

This 1967 photo so scared the National Rifle Association that it endorsed unheard of gun controls for the times.



It shows a Black Panther Party member holding a semi-automatic M1 Carbine with a 30 round "high capacity" magazine. Some carbines that look just like the pictured one are machine-guns.

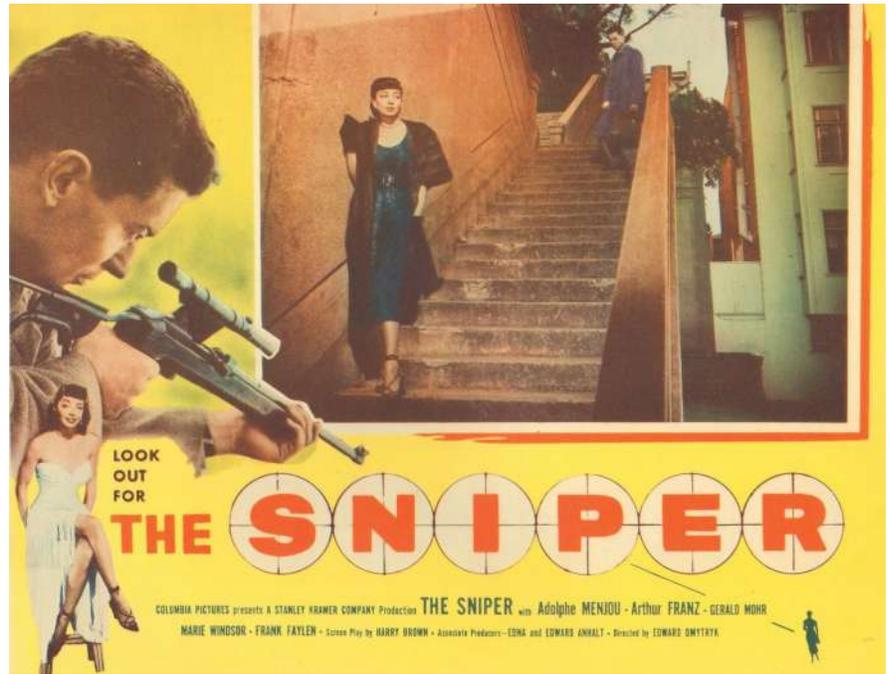
Oscar winner Jimmy Stewart played the inventor of the carbine in the 1952 film "Carbine Williams."



Williams is shown here with Stewart. That is real military weaponry Stewart is holding that was widely available.

How available is part of the story line of the 1952 Oscar nominated film, The Sniper. It concerns the hunt for a crazed man who is shooting women in San Francisco.

Police immediately identify the murder weapon as an M1 Carbine. The case detective, played by the Oscar nominat-



ed actor Adolph Menjou, then voices the futility of using carbine ownership to find the killer:

"There are 100 or more of those in every block of the city." True. And not just in San Francisco.

Millions were made and millions were brought home from our wars.

Millions more were sold for prices ranging from \$20 to \$80.



It's the rifle Malcolm X encouraged blacks to buy as defense against the Ku Klux Klan. It's the rifle I saw blacks did buy in North Carolina for protection from the Klan.

Other military weapons were also in abundance.

There were the semiautomatic M1 rifles and the revolvers and semiautomatic pistols and machine-guns of all sorts stashed in homes.

I knew of about 15 fully operational machine-guns in my North Carolina hometown of Chapel Hill and I knew of almost that many in Baltimore. Any or all could have been used for a mass kill.

But they weren't.

"It is commonly hypothesized that

much criminal violence, especially homicide, occurs simply because firearms are readily at hand and, thus, that much homicide would not occur were firearms generally less available. There is no persuasive evidence that supports this view."

That's the conclusion of the Jimmy Carter administration's 1981 blue ribbon study on the relationship between firearms and violence that is universally omitted — again, that thought you held — from news stories and public discourse despite it being widely known.

For instance, President Jimmy Carter's press secretary, Jody Powell, sent a fax discovered in the Clinton Library that warned George Stephanopoulos, Bill Clinton's new press secretary, to back off from gun control because "it just doesn't work." Powell: "Much as I hate to say it, the NRA is effective primarily because it is largely right when it claims that most gun control measures inconvenience and threaten the law-abiding while having little or no impact on violent crime and criminals."

That's why the lead researcher of Carter's report wrote that "a compelling case for gun control cannot be made." Virtually all intellectually honest scholars who have seriously studied the subject agree. There remain some who do not, but their works, like that of disgraced Emory professor Michael A. Bellesiles, who falsified historical records to buttress anti Second Amendment views, have largely been exposed as flawed or fraudulent.

Carter's commissioned researchers had expected to verify the famous 1969

Johnson administration study chaired by retired Johns Hopkins president Milton Eisenhower. It concluded that guns do cause violence and that private ownership of handguns should be banned. What Carter's researchers verified instead was that the Johnson study was "results oriented," that it had reached a predetermined conclusion comporting with the political biases and social views of its researchers. Based on what I heard said at Hopkins when my mother was a professor of epidemiology and subsequent research material from "The John," the Michael Bloomberg funded Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy now continues that tradition.

But gun blame is a fetish that allows us to avoid mention of the cultural rots that largely drive the filling of Baltimore's body bags.

"The game" of drug gang violence portrayed so well in the HBO series "The Wire" is arguably the major factor. The arguable part is that much criminality appears to be encouraged and justified by the counter cultures of Afrocentrism and hip-hop that promote deep seated poisons of ignorance, bitterness and murderous malevolence within the black community

where almost all of the Bodymore carnage takes place.

Those poisons were on full display when Baltimore school superintendent Laurence G. Paquin held a series of 1966 student body president luncheons that were singularly focused on bashing Poly, the city's premier advanced curricula high school, as a "white image school" in need of lowered academic standards or even disbandment.

A common luncheon harangue:

Poly is forcing the black man to learn the white man's mathematics," one Paquin plant screamed at me with much venom.

"We demand Poly teach the black man's mathematics," he continued before launching into a rant about the evil white Greeks stealing the black man's mathematics and then torching the Alexandria library to hide the crime.

Wanna clue about the toxic craziness too many of Baltimore's criminals carry in their heads – that 10% of the population the late, great Baltimore Sun columnist Gregory Kane said "you wish the hell were in bed by 11 p.m." like the rest of the city? There ya go.

Wellesley College classics professor of Mary Lefkowitz wrote "Not Out of

Africa" to counter that sort of revisionist and destructive insanity. If Baltimore is "The City That Reads," as former mayor Kurt Schmoke said, "Not Out of Africa" should be mandatory.

As for the black man's mathematics, I learned there is such a thing from one of the WBMD's hyperventilating preachers when I worked there. It's called supreme mathematics and it is part of a philosophy dreamed-up by a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic who called himself Clarence 13X. His delusions are an integral part of a hip-hop, Afrocentric culture that encourages young black men, the overwhelming group committing Baltimore's murders, to double down on negative stereotypes and be thugs instead of scholars.

"This whole hip-hop generation, it's the devil. It's Satan. It's hedonism. It's the pursuit of pleasure. There's no soul" notes Dahveed Nelson, the man credited as the 1960s originator of the rap music later altered into the hip-hop art form that too often praises criminality and provides a beat for the city that bleeds.

If that reads like the ancient criticisms of earlier counter cultures influenced by jazz, rock and protest music, you're right. But be not naive. This is different.

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