

MORAL CRISIS IN NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is "celebrating" 300 years of moral crisis, but many of its citizens, elected officials and the tourists they host daily assume otherwise. Their ideas are Trump-flavored rather than properly seasoned with the holy trinity of Creole/Cajun cuisine. They simply transgress. Thus, Timothy David Ray's recent plea for support of City Council Resolution R-18-344 can appear to be a poignant supplement to prayer to Our Lady of Prompt Succor for help in dealing with violence, murder, and racism. Or it may appear as a supplement to admonitions from Lloyd Dennis and the Silverback Society. It is easy to forget the gravity of Ray's plea as you get out there and listen to live, local music.

"The psychological trauma of constant violence witnessed by young children," Ray contends, "does not only breed an inclination to violence in them, but also an apathy towards human life and respect for one's own community or the property of others." That trauma, however, is not limited to young children. It is distributive and democratic. It afflicts all of us who breathe air in NOLA. Our silence about our self-fashioned apathy is barbaric. And perhaps the horror and damage created by 300 years of history as process and narrative in NOLA is beyond human remedy. The conditions that drive being beyond are not mere accidents of Nature; they are the consequences of choice. It is hardly possible to cheer for the Saints and grieve for the children in an identical moment. If you try to do so, you will choke on your red beans and rice. Or violently regurgitate your gumbo.

Long ago, Tom Dent rightly said that New Orleans is weird. And too few NOLA citizens are conversant with Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* and, therefore, capable of addressing what is wicked, corrupt, and broken in the Crescent City. Neither Dent nor Agamben, of course, can provide us with the comfort of humor or the extreme unction of political philosophy. But they can remind us of how crucial are some of the topics being addressed at the Congressional Black Caucus Institute, August 9-11, in Tunica, Mississippi -----opioid addiction, public health and mental health emergencies, criminal justice crisis, the future of work and human capital, emerging technologies, 21st century skills and chartered education, corporate greed and social irresponsibility, gentrification, ecological racism, and crumbling infrastructure----significant topics which violently jazz young children in New Orleans and all American urban arenas. Should we be optimistic about anything? Yes. We should be optimistic that absurd moral crisis in our city will prevail and endure and remain beyond human remedy. Now "celebrate" the enigma of New Orleans in the hurricane of capitalism.

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