

Decarceration: A Substantive and Political Disaster

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul delivered one of the most memorable lines of the midterm debates when she said she didn't know why her Republican opponent, Lee Zeldin, cared so much about locking up criminals.

Hochul's highhandedness encapsulated an attitude toward crime and punishment that has been shaped by the decarceration movement.

Progressives have accepted a wholesale critique of the criminal justice system that is deeply flawed, not to say a complete fantasy. Its premises are false, and its effects are destructive. At the same time, it has made -- for the second national election in a row -- Democrats vulnerable to a Republican fusillade on crime.

If the 2022 midterms can drive a stake through the decarceration movement, which gained intellectual ground during the Obama years and seemed set to sweep all before it in the immediate aftermath of the death of George Floyd, they will have done a favor to the country -- and, incidentally, the Democratic Party.

A key erroneous contention of this critique is that the U.S. spent decades arbitrarily locking up millions of people to make itself a deeply unjust carceral state. In reality, as criminologist Barry Latzer points out in his book "The Myth of Overpunishment," the U.S. experienced a massive crime wave beginning half a century ago that naturally resulted in more imprisonments. From 1960-1990, violent crime arrests increased more than 400% and prison commitments more than 270%.

Another myth is that prisons are full of small-time or nonviolent offenders. According to Latzer, more than half of inmates in state prisons have committed violent crimes such as murder, rape or assault. Another 16% have committed significant property crimes, including felony theft and burglary.

How about drug crimes? They account for 14% of imprisonments, and less than 4% are for possession (and those offenders may well be guilty of other crimes).

It's not true that an overly punitive U.S. is always throwing away the key. In his book "Criminal (In)Justice," Rafael Mangual of the Manhattan Institute points out that state prisoners serve a median sentence of roughly 15 months and violent offenders less than two and a half years.

It's not as though, by the way, we are catching every criminal and nailing him to the wall. About half of murderers are arrested and imprisoned, Latzer writes, while only about 6% of other violent offenders are brought to justice.

A tiny percentage of the population, something like 5%, is responsible for about 50% of crime. According to Latzer, 400,000 state prisoners released in 2005 had been arrested 4.3 million times prior to their incarceration and 83% of them got rearrested within nine years of being released.

As the headlines from around the country about monsters with long rap sheets committing terrible crimes emphasize, we should be seeking to put such dangerous people out of commission. And we aren't doing it with requisite seriousness.

Even prior to the tumult of 2020, over the prior decade we had combined decarceration (with the prison population declining by 17%) and de-policing (with 25% fewer arrests).

Robust policing is, of course, an indispensable part of maintaining order. Mangual writes that the simple proposition that "more policing means less crime" is "one of the most consistent and robust findings in the criminological literature."

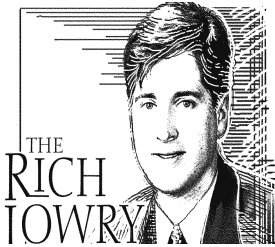
Maybe Democrats will begin to acknowledge this and sue for a formal divorce from the decarceration movement.

Democrats wouldn't have to try to deny their true views, minimize the spike in certain categories of crime, or -- like Hochul -- express bemused contempt for a tough-on-crime position if they simply acknowledged that we need more cops arresting more criminals, and these offenders should be put behind bars more reliably and for longer sentences.

If the party didn't get this after the 2020 election, maybe there is, to paraphrase the folk expression, education in the second kick of the mule.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Lowering BMI Before Surgery Can Provide Better Outcomes

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm 72, and I have had arthritis for three years: two years in both knees, and one year in my right hip and the base of my spine. I am 5'3" and weigh 221 pounds, with a body mass index (BMI) of 39. I lost 23 pounds from January to June.

What is the BMI needed for an orthopedic surgeon to do a hip replacement for someone with osteoarthritis -- without a broken hip? I recently had an assessment of my hip X-rays. I was told I'm at the outer cutoff of a BMI of 39, so I'm eligible for a hip replacement operation. Then, a few weeks later, I saw the surgeon, who ended up rejecting me -- claiming that 39 isn't the outer limit, 35 is.

After a long talk, the surgeon said he'd do it for me, but I'd get a better result if I lose 20 more pounds and get my BMI down to 35. I felt jerked around, but said I'd wait and lose weight. I'm also trying to find a surgeon I like more than him.

So, what is the BMI needed for knee surgery: 35 or 39? -- L.C.

ANSWER: There is no standard cutoff BMI for joint replacement surgery. It is true that people with a BMI over 40 are at higher risk for medical complications; however, it is also true that people with severe arthritis and a high BMI still get improvement in their quality of life with surgery. Denying a person a cost-effective surgery that can greatly improve their quality of life simply because of a BMI number (which, in itself, is a flawed metric) is inappropriate.

I can understand why you would want to see a different surgeon, as it sounds like you were not treated well. However, the surgeon was right that surgical outcomes are better if a person can lose at least 20 pounds, according to a 2019 study. This included shorter lengths of stay in the hospital and a lesser chance of needing surgical revision. I wonder, though, if part of the benefit seen in the study was due to increased exercise prior to surgery, which is known to be beneficial in surgical outcomes.



DEAR DR. ROACH: My 45-year-old son has hemochromatosis. The treatment is phlebotomy of a pint of blood, sometimes every two weeks, until the iron level is normalized. My understanding is that the blood is discarded. Is there anything wrong with the blood? If not, I would think blood banks would welcome the donation. What are your thoughts on this subject? -- E.B.

ANSWER: Hereditary hemochromatosis is caused by the body absorbing too much iron due to a genetic defect. With no way to get rid of iron, it builds up and damages many organs, especially the heart, bone marrow, joints and adrenal gland. As you say, the best treatment is to remove iron in the form of red blood cells. This is effective at preventing most of the organ damage if started quickly enough.

There has never been anything wrong with the blood of people with hereditary hemochromatosis, and the FDA here in the U.S. has always allowed the blood to be donated. However, until recently, the American Red Cross has not accepted blood donations from people with hereditary hemochromatosis. I am pleased to say that they have just changed their policy and will now be using this precious resource to help others, so long as the person meets all the criteria for being a blood donor. The blood will undergo all the standard and rigorous testing prior to being pronounced safe for use.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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SWA’s November Household Hazardous Waste Tip –After the Feast, Recycle the Grease

Fried turkeys are a Thanksgiving treat, but that used cooking oil? Not so much.

All home cooking oils - fry-

ing oil and bacon and hamburger drippings - can cause problems with plumbing, sewage collection systems and septic systems. If dumped

down any drain, these oils can clog pipes, even if washed down with hot water. Blocked pipes can also cause sewage backups – an unappetizing

thought and potentially expensive repair.

Fortunately, Palm Beach County residents can recycle their used cooking oil for

FREE, including canola, corn, olive, peanut and vegetable oils, as well as lard.

To recycle your oil:

- Allow the used cooking oil to cool.

This used cooking oil drop off program is for residential cooking oil only. Commercial and industrial customers must contact a licensed commercial grease hauler for cooking oil disposal. Call 561-687-1100 for disposal options.

- Carefully pour the cooled cooking oil into a large, sturdy plastic or wax-coated leak-proof container no larger than 5 gallons, such as the original container or a juice carton.
- Cap the container securely.
- Don't mix the used cooking oil with any other liquids or products.
- Take to any of the SWA's seven Home Chemical and Recycling Centers.

In the last fiscal year, Palm Beach County residents recycled more than 49,000 pounds of cooking oil at the SWA's Home Chemical and Recycling Centers. For more information on recycling cooking oil, go to SWA.org/CookingOil.

Overall, the SWA's Home Chemical and Recycling Centers either recycled or safely disposed of 4.9M pounds of household hazardous wastes each year.

The SWA's local locations include:

West Palm Beach Home Chemical and Recycling Center, 6161 N. Jog Rd, West Palm Beach. Monday-Friday: 7 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday: 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

Lantana Central County Transfer Station, 1810 Lantana Rd, Lantana. Monday - Friday: 7 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday: 7 a.m. - 12 p.m.

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Legal Notice No. 41252

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Notice is hereby given that ADILE'S MORILUS, OWNER, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of AM AIR CONDITIONING MAINTENANCE located at 913 SEABRIGHT AVE, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33413 intends to register the said name in PALM BEACH county with the Division of Corporations, Florida Department of State, pursuant to section 865.09 of the Florida Statutes. Publish: The Lake Worth Herald November 17, 2022

Public Notice

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE

All Star Towing, LLC gives Notice of Foreclosure of Lien and intent to sell these vehicles on 12/18/2022, 9:00 am at 1781 NW 1st Ct, Boca Raton, FL 33432-1723, pursuant to subsection 713.78 of the Florida Statutes. All Star Towing, LLC reserves the right to accept or reject any/or all bids. 2014 CHRYSLER VIN#2C4RC1BG7ER277160 Publish: The Lake Worth Herald November 17, 2022

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Notice is hereby given that EXTERIOR COATING SYSTEMS INC, OWNER, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name of SUPERIOR CONTRACTING SERVICES located at 6591 BOTICELLI DRIVE, LAKE WORTH, FLORIDA 33467 intends to register the said name in PALM BEACH county with the Division of Corporations, Florida Department of State, pursuant to section 865.09 of the Florida Statutes. Publish: The Lake Worth Herald November 17, 2022

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