

July 23, 2013

Shelby Steele takes the civil rights leadership to task.

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Today's black leadership pretty much lives off the fumes of moral authority that linger from its glory days in the 1950s and '60s. The Zimmerman verdict lets us see this and feel a little embarrassed for them. Consider the pathos of a leadership that once transformed the nation now lusting for the conviction of the contrite and mortified George Zimmerman, as if a stint in prison for him would somehow assure more peace and security for black teenagers everywhere. This, despite the fact that nearly one black teenager a day is shot dead on the South Side of Chicago—to name only one city—by another black teenager. ...

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There are vast career opportunities, money and political power to be gleaned from the specter of Mr. Zimmerman as a racial profiler/murderer; but there is only hard and selfless work to be done in tackling an illegitimacy rate that threatens to consign blacks to something like permanent inferiority. If there is anything good to be drawn from the Zimmerman/Martin tragedy, it is only the further revelation of the corruption and irrelevance of today's civil-rights leadership.

Now we're finding out the IRS chief counsel met with the president two days before the new policy was announced towards Tea Parties. **Daily Caller** has the story.

The Obama appointee implicated in congressional testimony in the IRS targeting scandal met with President Obama in the White House two days before offering his colleagues a new set of advice on how to scrutinize tea party and conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status.

IRS chief counsel William Wilkins, who was named in House Oversight testimony by retiring IRS agent Carter Hull as one of his supervisors in the improper targeting of conservative groups, met with Obama in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on April 23, 2012. Wilkins' boss, then-IRS commissioner Douglas Shulman, visited the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on April 24, 2012, according to White House visitor logs.

On April 25, 2012, Wilkins' office sent the exempt organizations determinations unit "additional comments on the draft guidance" for approving or denying tea party tax-exempt applications, according to the IRS inspector general's report.

Jennifer Rubin with the skinny on the VA gubernatorial debate.

In a slugfest on Saturday, Virginia gubernatorial candidates Ken Cuccinelli and Terry McAuliffe faced off. Most voters still aren't paying attention to the race, but the face-off gave us a good sense of where the race is heading:

1. *This is about each candidate's flaws, not their policies. The Post noted: "Although McAuliffe and Cuccinelli have stark differences on policy, much of the debate focused on the personal — a preview of the largely negative, character-focused battle the two men will continue through November."*

2. *McAuliffe is his own worst enemy, seemingly unable to stop exaggerating or even fabricating allegations. On the Star Scientific gift scandal, a problem for Cuccinelli turned into a McAuliffe stumble when he overreached. The Post cited the debate's "most obvious misstep": ...*

Pickerhead has been saying for years the public safety goobers are out of control.

Radley Balko with a WSJ OpEd provides some examples.

On Jan. 4 of last year, a local narcotics strike force conducted a raid on the Ogden, Utah, home of Matthew David Stewart at 8:40 p.m. The 12 officers were acting on a tip from Mr. Stewart's former girlfriend, who said that he was growing marijuana in his basement. Mr. Stewart awoke, naked, to the sound of a battering ram taking down his door. Thinking that he was being invaded by criminals, as he later claimed, he grabbed his 9-millimeter Beretta pistol.

The police say that they knocked and identified themselves, though Mr. Stewart and his neighbors said they heard no such announcement. Mr. Stewart fired 31 rounds, the police more than 250. Six of the officers were wounded, and Officer Jared Francom was killed. Mr. Stewart himself was shot twice before he was arrested. He was charged with several crimes, including the murder of Officer Francom.

The police found 16 small marijuana plants in Mr. Stewart's basement. There was no evidence that Mr. Stewart, a U.S. military veteran with no prior criminal record, was selling marijuana. Mr. Stewart's father said that his son suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and may have smoked the marijuana to self-medicate.

Early this year, the Ogden city council heard complaints from dozens of citizens about the way drug warrants are served in the city. As for Mr. Stewart, his trial was scheduled for next April, and prosecutors were seeking the death penalty. But after losing a hearing last May on the legality of the search warrant, Mr. Stewart hanged himself in his jail cell.

The police tactics at issue in the Stewart case are no anomaly. Since the 1960s, in response to a range of perceived threats, law-enforcement agencies across the U.S., at every level of government, have been blurring the line between police officer and soldier. ...

The Economist reports on open admission free online college courses and the challenge they mount to traditional universities.

DOTCOM mania was slow in coming to higher education, but now it has the venerable industry firmly in its grip. Since the launch early last year of Udacity and Coursera, two Silicon Valley start-ups offering free education through MOOCs, massive open online courses, the ivory towers of academia have been shaken to their foundations. University brands built in some cases over centuries have been forced to contemplate the possibility that information technology will rapidly make their existing business model obsolete. Meanwhile, the MOOCs have multiplied in number, resources and student recruitment—without yet having figured out a business model of their own.

Besides providing online courses to their own (generally fee-paying) students, universities have felt obliged to join the MOOC revolution to avoid being guillotined by it. Coursera has formed partnerships with 83 universities and colleges around the world, including many of America's top-tier institutions. ...

... Alison, an Irish provider of free, mostly vocational education founded in 2007, before MOOCs got their name, is generating plenty of revenue by selling advertising on its site. "Ads propelled radio and TV, why not education? There is a lot of misplaced snobbery in education about advertising," says Mike Feerick, Alison's founder.

Another important category of MOOC providers are publishers, says Rob Lytle of the Parthenon Group, a consultancy. He says firms like Pearson (part-owner of The Economist) that run educational businesses such as textbook-publishing may thrive by offering free MOOCs as a way to get people to buy their related paid content.

Besides the uncertainty over which business model, if any, will produce profits, there is disagreement over how big the market will be. Some see a zero- or negative-sum game, in which cheap online providers radically reduce the cost of higher education and drive many traditional institutions to the wall. Others believe this effect will be dwarfed by the dramatic increase in access to higher education that the MOOCs will bring. ...

WSJ

The Decline of the Civil-Rights Establishment

Black leaders weren't so much outraged at injustice as they were by the disregard of their own authority.

by Shelby Steele

The verdict that declared George Zimmerman not guilty of murdering [Trayvon Martin](#) was a traumatic event for America's civil-rights establishment, and for many black elites across the media, government and academia. When you have grown used to American institutions being so intimidated by the prospect of black wrath that they invent mushy ideas like "diversity" and

"inclusiveness" simply to escape that wrath, then the crisp reading of the law that the Zimmerman jury displayed comes as a shock.

On television in recent weeks you could see black leaders from every background congealing into a chorus of umbrage and complaint. But they weren't so much outraged at a horrible injustice as they were affronted by the disregard of their own authority. The jury effectively said to them, "You won't call the tune here. We will work within the law."

Today's black leadership pretty much lives off the fumes of moral authority that linger from its glory days in the 1950s and '60s. The Zimmerman verdict lets us see this and feel a little embarrassed for them. Consider the pathos of a leadership that once transformed the nation now lusting for the conviction of the contrite and mortified George Zimmerman, as if a stint in prison for him would somehow assure more peace and security for black teenagers everywhere. This, despite the fact that nearly one black teenager a day is shot dead on the South Side of Chicago—to name only one city—by another black teenager.

This would not be the first time that a movement begun in profound moral clarity, and that achieved greatness, waned away into a parody of itself—not because it was wrong but because it was successful. Today's civil-rights leaders have missed the obvious: The success of their forbearers in achieving social transformation denied to them the heroism that was inescapable for a Martin Luther King Jr. or a James Farmer or a Nelson Mandela. Jesse Jackson and [Al Sharpton](#) cannot write a timeless letter to us from a Birmingham jail or walk, as John Lewis did in 1965, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., into a maelstrom of police dogs and billy clubs. That America is no longer here (which is not to say that every trace of it is gone).

The Revs. Jackson and Sharpton have been consigned to a hard fate: They can never be more than redundancies, echoes of the great men they emulate because America has changed. Hard to be a King or Mandela today when your monstrous enemy is no more than the cherubic George Zimmerman.

Why did the civil-rights leadership use its greatly depleted moral authority to support Trayvon Martin? This young man was, after all, no Rosa Parks—a figure of indisputable human dignity set upon by the rank evil of white supremacy. Trayvon threw the first punch and then continued pummeling the much smaller Zimmerman. Yes, Trayvon was a kid, but he was also something of a menace. The larger tragedy is that his death will come to very little. There was no important principle or coherent protest implied in that first nose-breaking punch. It was just dumb bravado, a tough-guy punch.

The civil-rights leadership rallied to Trayvon's cause (and not to the cause of those hundreds of black kids slain in America's inner cities this very year) to keep alive a certain cultural "truth" that is the sole source of the leadership's dwindling power. Put bluntly, this leadership rather easily tolerates black kids killing other black kids. But it cannot abide a white person (and Mr. Zimmerman, with his Hispanic background, was pushed into a white identity by the media over his objections) getting away with killing a black person without undermining the leadership's very reason for being.

The purpose of today's civil-rights establishment is not to seek justice, but to seek power for blacks in American life based on the presumption that they are still, in a thousand subtle ways, victimized by white racism. This idea of victimization is an example of what I call a "poetic truth."

Like poetic license, it bends the actual truth in order to put forward a larger and more essential truth—one that, of course, serves one's cause. Poetic truths succeed by casting themselves as perfectly obvious: "America is a racist nation"; "the immigration debate is driven by racism"; "Zimmerman racially stereotyped Trayvon." And we say, "Yes, of course," lest we seem to be racist. Poetic truths work by moral intimidation, not reason.

In the Zimmerman/Martin case the civil-rights establishment is fighting for the poetic truth that white animus toward blacks is still such that a black teenager—Skittles and ice tea in hand—can be shot dead simply for walking home. But actually this establishment is fighting to maintain its authority to wield poetic truth—the authority to tell the larger society how it must think about blacks, how it must respond to them, what it owes them and, then, to brook no argument.

The Zimmerman/Martin tragedy has been explosive because it triggered a fight over authority. Who gets to say what things mean—the supporters of George Zimmerman, who say he acted in self-defense, or the civil-rights establishment that says he profiled and murdered a black child? Here we are. And where is the authority to resolve this? The six-person Florida jury, looking carefully at the evidence, decided that Mr. Zimmerman pulled the trigger in self-defense and not in a fury of racial hatred.

And here, precisely at the point of this verdict, is where all of America begins to see this hollowed-out civil-rights establishment slip into pathos. Almost everyone saw this verdict coming. It is impossible to see how this jury could have applied the actual law to this body of evidence and come up with a different conclusion. The civil-rights establishment's mistake was to get ahead of itself, to be seduced by its own poetic truth even when there was no evidence to support it. And even now its leaders call for a Justice Department investigation, and they long for civil lawsuits to be filed—hoping against hope that some leaf of actual racial victimization will be turned over for all to see. This is how a once-great social movement looks when it becomes infested with obsolescence.

One wants to scream at all those outraged at the Zimmerman verdict: Where is your outrage over the collapse of the black family? Today's civil-rights leaders swat at mosquitoes like Zimmerman when they have gorillas on their back. Seventy-three percent of all black children are born without fathers married to their mothers. And you want to bring the nation to a standstill over George Zimmerman?

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Mr. Steele is a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Among his books is "White Guilt" (HarperCollins, 2007).

Daily Caller

[Embattled IRS chief counsel met with Obama 2 days before agency changed targeting criteria](#)

by Patrick Howley

The Obama appointee implicated in congressional testimony in the IRS targeting scandal met with President Obama in the White House two days before offering his colleagues a new set of advice on how to scrutinize tea party and conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status.

IRS chief counsel William Wilkins, who was named in House Oversight testimony by retiring IRS agent Carter Hull as one of his supervisors in the improper targeting of conservative groups, [met with Obama in the Roosevelt Room of the White House](#) on April 23, 2012. Wilkins' boss, then-IRS commissioner Douglas Shulman, visited the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on April 24, 2012, according to White House visitor logs.

On April 25, 2012, Wilkins' office sent the exempt organizations determinations unit "additional comments on the draft guidance" for approving or denying tea party tax-exempt applications, according to the IRS inspector general's report.

Between 2010 and 2012, the IRS sent letters demanding groups' training materials, personal information on groups' donors and college interns, and even the content of a religious group's prayers.

Wilkins' meeting with Obama on April 23 was attended by 13 people.

Wilkins, who is one of only two Obama appointees at the IRS, is [a former lobbyist](#) with the firm WilmerHale, where he spent his time "counseling nonprofit organizations, business entities, and investment funds on tax compliance, business transactions, and government investigations." At the firm, [Wilkins defended Rev. Jeremiah Wright's](#) Chicago-based United Church of Christ from a 2008 investigation into whether Wright violated his church's nonprofit status by speaking in favor of Obama. Wilkins successfully defended Wright's church pro bono.

The White House did not return a request for comment.

Right Turn

[Virginia gubernatorial debate: Five takeaways](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

In a slugfest on Saturday, Virginia gubernatorial candidates Ken Cuccinelli and Terry McAuliffe faced off. Most voters still aren't paying attention to the race, but the face-off gave us a good sense of where the race is heading:

1. This is about each candidate's flaws, not their policies. [The Post noted](#): "Although McAuliffe and Cuccinelli have stark differences on policy, much of the debate focused on the personal — a preview of the largely negative, character-focused battle the two men will continue through November."

2. McAuliffe is his own worst enemy, seemingly unable to stop exaggerating or even fabricating allegations. On the Star Scientific gift scandal, a problem for Cuccinelli turned into a McAuliffe stumble when he overreached. The Post cited the debate's "most obvious misstep":

Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney Michael N. Herring (D) last week reported that he found no evidence Cuccinelli had violated the law when he failed to disclose his stock holdings in Star Scientific and gifts from its chief executive, Jonnie R. Williams Sr., the man at the center of the investigations of Virginia Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R).

"If you read the whole report, which I have, it says here that the attorney general should have been prosecuted," McAuliffe stated incorrectly.

McAuliffe also claimed that because of Cuccinelli's ties to Williams, "a judge took the case away from him because of a conflict of interest," referring to a civil tax case the company filed against the state. But Cuccinelli's office requested recusal from the civil tax case.

3. Cuccinelli's most successful attack at this stage is on McAuliffe's slippery business record, which evinces no particular concern for the Commonwealth. (On locating McAuliffe's GreenTech business: "Okay, you picked Mississippi, so run for governor of Mississippi.")

4. McAuliffe's hope rests with ginning up his base and convincing voters Cuccinelli is, as the Democrat claimed, a "Trojan's horse" for an extreme social agenda.

5. Cuccinelli, the small-government Republican, ironically attacks McAuliffe for his aggressive business activities while touting his own government experience, which won't require a "little tour" of state government.

This is an odd race in which Virginians know relatively little about the two candidates, despite their national profiles, and what they will hear will be largely negative. That might turn off a lot of voters, leading to a low turnout election that theoretically will benefit Cuccinelli (off-year election voters in Virginia tend to be older, whiter and more conservative). At some point one of these guys will win, but the predominant attitude in the state so far can be summed up as: "Is this really the best Virginia can do?"

WSJ

Rise of the Warrior Cop

Is it time to reconsider the militarization of American policing?

by Radley Balko

On Jan. 4 of last year, a local narcotics strike force conducted a raid on the Ogden, Utah, home of Matthew David Stewart at 8:40 p.m. The 12 officers were acting on a tip from Mr. Stewart's former girlfriend, who said that he was growing marijuana in his basement. Mr. Stewart awoke, naked, to the sound of a battering ram taking down his door. Thinking that he was being invaded by criminals, as he later claimed, he grabbed his 9-millimeter Beretta pistol.

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Early this year, the Ogden city council heard complaints from dozens of citizens about the way drug warrants are served in the city. As for Mr. Stewart, his trial was scheduled for next April, and prosecutors were seeking the death penalty. But after losing a hearing last May on the legality of the search warrant, Mr. Stewart hanged himself in his jail cell.

The police tactics at issue in the Stewart case are no anomaly. Since the 1960s, in response to a range of perceived threats, law-enforcement agencies across the U.S., at every level of government, have been blurring the line between police officer and soldier. Driven by martial rhetoric and the availability of military-style equipment—from bayonets and M-16 rifles to armored personnel carriers—American police forces have often adopted a mind-set previously reserved for the battlefield. The war on drugs and, more recently, post-9/11 antiterrorism efforts have created a new figure on the U.S. scene: the warrior cop—armed to the teeth, ready to deal harshly with targeted wrongdoers, and a growing threat to familiar American liberties.

The acronym SWAT stands for Special Weapons and Tactics. Such police units are trained in methods similar to those used by the special forces in the military. They learn to break into homes with battering rams and to use incendiary devices called flashbang grenades, which are designed to blind and deafen anyone nearby. Their usual aim is to "clear" a building—that is, to remove any threats and distractions (including pets) and to subdue the occupants as quickly as possible.



Today the U.S. has thousands of SWAT teams. A team prepares to enter a house in Vallejo, Calif., on March 20, above.

The country's first official SWAT team started in the late 1960s in Los Angeles. By 1975, there were approximately 500 such units. Today, there are thousands. According to surveys conducted by the criminologist Peter Kraska of Eastern Kentucky University, just 13% of towns between 25,000 and 50,000 people had a SWAT team in 1983. By 2005, the figure was up to 80%.

The number of raids conducted by SWAT-like police units has grown accordingly. In the 1970s, there were just a few hundred a year; by the early 1980s, there were some 3,000 a year. In 2005 (the last year for which Dr. Kraska collected data), there were approximately 50,000 raids.

A number of federal agencies also now have their own SWAT teams, including the Fish & Wildlife Service, NASA and the Department of the Interior. In 2011, the Department of Education's SWAT team bungled a raid on a woman who was initially reported to be under investigation for not paying her student loans, though the agency later said she was suspected of defrauding the federal student loan program.

The details of the case aside, the story generated headlines because of the revelation that the Department of Education had such a unit. None of these federal departments has responded to my requests for information about why they consider such high-powered military-style teams necessary.

Americans have long been wary of using the military for domestic policing. Concerns about potential abuse date back to the creation of the Constitution, when the founders worried about standing armies and the intimidation of the people at large by an overzealous executive, who might choose to follow the unhappy precedents set by Europe's emperors and monarchs.

The idea for the first SWAT team in Los Angeles arose during the domestic strife and civil unrest of the mid-1960s. Daryl Gates, then an inspector with the Los Angeles Police Department, had grown frustrated with his department's inability to respond effectively to incidents like the 1965 Watts riots. So his thoughts turned to the military. He was drawn in particular to Marine Special Forces and began to envision an elite group of police officers who could respond in a similar manner to dangerous domestic disturbances.

Mr. Gates initially had difficulty getting his idea accepted. Los Angeles Police Chief William Parker thought the concept risked a breach in the divide between the military and law enforcement. But with the arrival of a new chief, Thomas Reddin, in 1966, Mr. Gates got the green light to start training a unit. By 1969, his SWAT team was ready for its maiden raid against a holdout cell of the Black Panthers.

At about the same time, President Richard Nixon was declaring war on drugs. Among the new, tough-minded law-enforcement measures included in this campaign was the no-knock raid—a policy that allowed drug cops to break into homes without the traditional knock and announcement. After fierce debate, Congress passed a bill authorizing no-knock raids for federal narcotics agents in 1970.

Over the next several years, stories emerged of federal agents breaking down the doors of private homes (often without a warrant) and terrorizing innocent citizens and families. Congress repealed the no-knock law in 1974, but the policy would soon make a comeback (without congressional authorization).

During the Reagan administration, SWAT-team methods converged with the drug war. By the end of the 1980s, joint task forces brought together police officers and soldiers for drug interdiction. National Guard helicopters and U-2 spy planes flew the California skies in search of marijuana plants. When suspects were identified, battle-clad troops from the National Guard, the DEA and other federal and local law enforcement agencies would swoop in to eradicate the plants and capture the people growing them.

Advocates of these tactics said that drug dealers were acquiring ever bigger weapons and the police needed to stay a step ahead in the arms race. There were indeed a few high-profile incidents in which police were outgunned, but no data exist suggesting that it was a widespread problem. A study done in 1991 by the libertarian-leaning Independence Institute found that less than one-eighth of 1% of homicides in the U.S. were committed with a military-grade weapon. Subsequent studies by the Justice Department in 1995 and the National Institute for Justice in 2004 came to similar conclusions: The overwhelming majority of serious crimes are committed with handguns, and not particularly powerful ones.

The new century brought the war on terror and, with it, new rationales and new resources for militarizing police forces. According to the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Department of Homeland Security has handed out \$35 billion in grants since its creation in 2002, with much of the money going to purchase military gear such as armored personnel carriers. In 2011 alone, a Pentagon program for bolstering the capabilities of local law enforcement gave away \$500 million of equipment, an all-time high.

The past decade also has seen an alarming degree of mission creep for U.S. SWAT teams. When the craze for poker kicked into high gear, a number of police departments responded by deploying SWAT teams to raid games in garages, basements and VFW halls where illegal gambling was suspected. According to news reports and conversations with poker organizations, there have been dozens of these raids, in cities such as Baltimore, Charleston, S.C., and Dallas.

In 2006, 38-year-old optometrist Sal Culosi was shot and killed by a Fairfax County, Va., SWAT officer. The investigation began when an undercover detective overheard Mr. Culosi wagering on college football games with some buddies at a bar. The department sent a SWAT team after Mr. Culosi, who had no prior criminal record or any history of violence. As the SWAT team descended, one officer fired a single bullet that pierced Mr. Culosi's heart. The police say that the shot was an accident. Mr. Culosi's family suspects the officer saw Mr. Culosi reaching for his cellphone and thought he had a gun.

Assault-style raids have even been used in recent years to enforce regulatory law. Armed federal agents from the Fish & Wildlife Service raided the floor of the Gibson Guitar factory in Nashville in 2009, on suspicion of using hardwoods that had been illegally harvested in Madagascar. Gibson settled in 2012, paying a \$300,000 fine and admitting to violating the Lacey Act. In 2010, the police department in New Haven, Conn., sent its SWAT team to raid a bar where police believed there was underage drinking. For sheer absurdity, it is hard to beat the 2006 story about the Tibetan monks who had overstayed their visas while visiting America on a peace mission. In Iowa, the hapless holy men were apprehended by a SWAT team in full gear.

Unfortunately, the activities of aggressive, heavily armed SWAT units often result in needless bloodshed: Innocent bystanders have lost their lives and so, too, have police officers who were thought to be assailants and were fired on, as (allegedly) in the case of Matthew David Stewart.

In my own research, I have collected over 50 examples in which innocent people were killed in raids to enforce warrants for crimes that are either nonviolent or consensual (that is, crimes such as drug use or gambling, in which all parties participate voluntarily). These victims were bystanders, or the police later found no evidence of the crime for which the victim was being investigated. They include Katherine Johnston, a 92-year-old woman killed by an Atlanta narcotics team acting on a bad tip from an informant in 2006; Alberto Sepulveda, an 11-year-old accidentally shot by a California SWAT officer during a 2000 drug raid; and Eurie Stamps, killed in a 2011 raid on his home in Framingham, Mass., when an officer says his gun mistakenly discharged. Mr. Stamps wasn't a suspect in the investigation.

What would it take to dial back such excessive police measures? The obvious place to start would be ending the federal grants that encourage police forces to acquire gear that is more appropriate for the battlefield. Beyond that, it is crucial to change the culture of militarization in American law enforcement.

Consider today's police recruitment videos (widely available on YouTube), which often feature cops rappelling from helicopters, shooting big guns, kicking down doors and tackling suspects. Such campaigns embody an American policing culture that has become too isolated, confrontational and militaristic, and they tend to attract recruits for the wrong reasons.

If you browse online police discussion boards, or chat with younger cops today, you will often encounter some version of the phrase, "Whatever I need to do to get home safe." It is a sentiment that suggests that every interaction with a citizen may be the officer's last. Nor does it help when political leaders lend support to this militaristic self-image, as New York City Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#) did in 2011 by declaring, "I have my own army in the NYPD—the seventh largest army in the world."

The motivation of the average American cop should not focus on just making it to the end of his shift. The LAPD may have given us the first SWAT team, but its motto is still exactly the right ideal for American police officers: To protect and serve.

SWAT teams have their place, of course, but they should be saved for those relatively rare situations when police-initiated violence is the only hope to prevent the loss of life. They certainly have no place as modern-day vice squads.

Many longtime and retired law-enforcement officers have told me of their worry that the trend toward militarization is too far gone. Those who think there is still a chance at reform tend to embrace the idea of community policing, an approach that depends more on civil society than on brute force.

In this very different view of policing, cops walk beats, interact with citizens and consider themselves part of the neighborhoods they patrol—and therefore have a stake in those communities. It's all about a baton-twirling "Officer Friendly" rather than a Taser-toting RoboCop.

The Economist

Higher Education - The attack of the MOOCs

An army of new online courses is scaring the wits out of traditional universities. But can they find a viable business model?



DOTCOM mania was slow in coming to higher education, but now it has the venerable industry firmly in its grip. Since the launch early last year of Udacity and Coursera, two Silicon Valley start-ups offering free education through MOOCs, massive open online courses, the ivory towers of academia have been shaken to their foundations. University brands built in some cases over centuries have been forced to contemplate the possibility that information technology will rapidly make their existing business model obsolete. Meanwhile, the MOOCs have multiplied in number, resources and student recruitment—without yet having figured out a business model of their own.

Besides providing online courses to their own (generally fee-paying) students, universities have felt obliged to join the MOOC revolution to avoid being guillotined by it. Coursera has formed partnerships with 83 universities and colleges around the world, including many of America's top-tier institutions.

EdX, a non-profit MOOC provider founded in May 2012 by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and backed with \$60m of their money, is now a consortium of 28 institutions, the most recent joiner being the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai. Led by the Open University, which pioneered distance-learning in the 1970s, FutureLearn, a consortium of 21 British, one Irish and one Australian university, plus other educational bodies, will start offering MOOCs later this year. But Oxford and Cambridge remain aloof, refusing to join what a senior Oxford figure fears may be a "lemming-like rush" into MOOCs.

On July 10th Coursera said it had raised another \$43m in venture capital, on top of the \$22m it banked last year. Although its enrolments have soared, and now exceed 4m students, this is a huge leap of faith by investors that the firm can develop a viable business model. The new money should allow Coursera to build on any advantage it has from being a first mover among a rapidly growing number of MOOC providers. "It is somewhat entertaining to watch the number of people jumping on board," says Daphne Koller, a Stanford professor and co-founder of Coursera. She expects it to become one of a "very small number of dominant players".

The industry has similar network economics to Amazon, eBay and Google, says Ms Koller, in that "content producers go to where most consumers are, and consumers go to where the most content is." Simon Nelson, the chief executive of FutureLearn, disagrees. "Anyone who thinks the rules of engagement have already been written by the existing players is massively underestimating the potential of the technology," he says.

Certainly, there is plenty of experimentation with business models taking place. The MOOCs themselves may be free, but those behind them think there will be plenty of revenue opportunities. Coursera has started charging to provide certificates for those who complete its courses and want proof, perhaps for a future employer. It is also starting to license course materials to universities that want to beef up their existing offering. However, it has abandoned for now attempts to help firms recruit employees from among Coursera's students, because catering to the different needs of each employer was "not a scalable model", says Ms Koller.

For Udacity, in contrast, working with companies to train existing and future employees is now the heart of its business model. It has tie-ups with several firms, including Google. It recently formed a partnership with AT&T, along with Georgia Tech, to offer a master's degree in computer science. Course materials will be free, but students will pay around \$7,000 for tuition. EdX is taking yet another tack, selling its MOOC technology to universities like Stanford, both to create their own MOOC offerings and to make physically attending university more attractive, by augmenting existing teaching.

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Alison, an Irish provider of free, mostly vocational education founded in 2007, before MOOCs got their name, is generating plenty of revenue by selling advertising on its site. "Ads propelled radio and TV, why not education? There is a lot of misplaced snobbery in education about advertising," says Mike Feerick, Alison's founder.

Another important category of MOOC providers are publishers, says Rob Lytle of the Parthenon Group, a consultancy. He says firms like Pearson (part-owner of *The Economist*) that run educational businesses such as textbook-publishing may thrive by offering free MOOCs as a way to get people to buy their related paid content.

Besides the uncertainty over which business model, if any, will produce profits, there is disagreement over how big the market will be. Some see a zero- or negative-sum game, in which cheap online providers radically reduce the cost of higher education and drive many traditional institutions to the wall. Others believe this effect will be dwarfed by the dramatic increase in access to higher education that the MOOCs will bring.

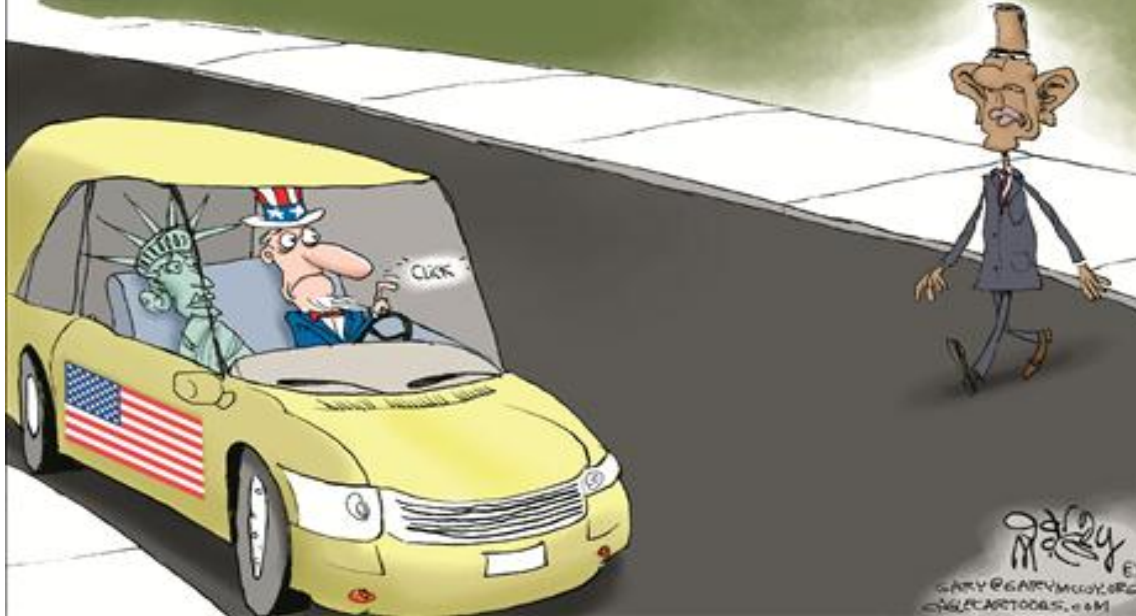
Mr Feerick predicts that the market will be commoditised, spelling trouble for many institutions. But Anant Agarwal, the boss of EdX, reckons the MOOC providers will be more like online airline-booking services, expanding the market by improving the customer experience. Sebastian Thrun, Udacity's co-founder, thinks the effect will be similar in magnitude to what the creation of cinema did to demand for staged fiction: he predicts a tenfold increase in the market for higher education.

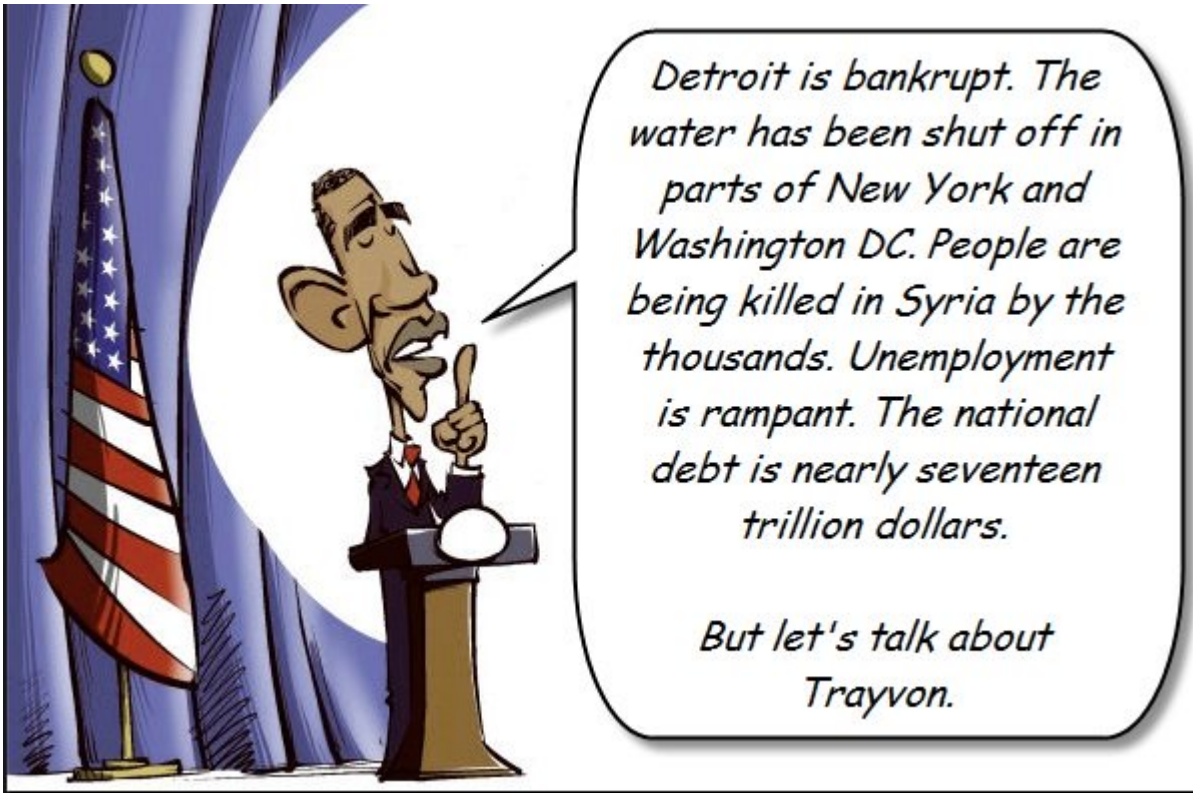
Sceptics point to the MOOCs' high drop-out rates, which in some cases exceed 90%. But Coursera and Udacity both insist that this reflects the different expectations of consumers of free products, who can browse costlessly. Both firms have now studied drop-out rates for those students who start with the stated intention of finishing, and found that the vast majority of them complete the courses.

Besides LearnCapital, a Silicon Valley venture firm, and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation, the participants in Coursera's \$43m fund-raising included Laureate, an operator of for-profit universities. Doug Becker, its boss, reckons that many established universities will soon offer credits towards their degrees for those who complete MOOCs. He thinks this will drive a dramatic reduction in the price of a traditional higher education, that will reduce the total revenues of existing providers by far more than the revenue gained by the start-ups. Still, if MOOCs reduce the cost of higher education by one-third, as he predicts, yet only earn for themselves 1% of that benefit, that would "still be a very nice business," he says.



"THERE ARE VERY FEW AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING ACROSS THE STREET AND HEARING THE LOCKS CLICK ON THE DOORS OF CARS. THAT HAPPENS TO ME..." - BARACK H. OBAMA





**IF I HAD A RACE-BAITING PRESIDENT
HE WOULD LOOK JUST LIKE THIS**



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