

February 3, 2015

Heather Mac Donald has a long overview of the NYPD in "The Mayor Who Slandered the Police." In place of some of today's cartoons, we have five pictures of NYC subways before the "broken windows" policing that made the City a livable place. The end result of de Blasio's foolishness, will be subways that again look like they did in the 1970's. *New York City mayor Bill de Blasio is "comfortable" with himself. So the city learned during the biggest crisis to hit a New York mayoralty in recent memory. "I'm comfortable with the fact that I've always tried to tell the truth and stay true to my values," de Blasio said in mid January, as police officers across New York City continued a work slowdown that had brought discretionary police activity to a virtual standstill. De Blasio's breezy self-assurance was revealing but unfortunate, since it was his belief in his own mission as social-justice truth-teller that had pushed the police into revolt in the first place.*

William Bratton, New York City police commissioner, has now mobilized the considerable management and disciplinary tools at his disposal to force officers to increase their enforcement activity. But the fault lines that led to the slowdown are still there. Law enforcement in New York may be on the rise for now, but in the long term public safety remains at risk from an activist mayor who sees his base as the anti-police Left.

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It began on December 20, 2014, when a thug from Brooklyn assassinated two police officers sitting in their patrol car in a violence-plagued Brooklyn housing project. NYPD cops had been ambushed and assassinated before, but this time felt different, a transit captain observed to me. Those prior assassinations "were carried out by small bands of radicals" who were not operating in a generalized anti-police climate, he said. "Today, the anti-cop atmosphere is at a fever pitch and is fed by elected officials and the media."

The assassinations of officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu was preceded by months of anti-police agitation in New York and nationwide, all dedicated to the absurd proposition that police officers are the biggest threat facing young black men. Riots had twice broken out in Ferguson, Mo.; activists in New York had been allowed by the mayor and police commissioner to shut down major bridges and highways with impunity, to the dismay of the police and vast swaths of the public. Protesters at one Midtown Manhattan march had chanted, "What do we want? Dead cops!" with no word of condemnation from City Hall; at another march commandeering the Brooklyn Bridge, protesters tried to hurl trash cans at officers on the level below them. Two public defenders from the Bronx participated in a rap video extolling cop killings. ...

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Michael Goodwin says de Blasio's chickens have come home to roost.

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By the end, he was battling something more pernicious than either Mother Nature or Gov. Cuomo. That would be political allies whose actions point up once again the dangers of his radical anti-police agenda.

In a decision that earned City Hall and its lawyers a rare but justified outburst from top cop Bill Bratton, de Blasio's team wrote a check to a machete-wielding thug who was shot by cops after he threatened them.

The payoff to Ruhim Ullah to drop his lawsuit was only \$5,000 but the principle it represented — that cops who shot him did something wrong — sent Bratton into orbit.

"It's outrageous that the city Law Department is continuing to not support the men and women of this department as they go about their duties," he thundered. "Our cops work very hard trying to keep this city safe, and if they're not going to be backed up by the city law office, we need to do something about this."

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Good [Washington Post](#) article on whether the investment in attending college always pay off.

Earlier this month, after announcing his plan to make community college free, President Obama lauded a college degree as "the surest ticket to the middle class."

New research in the prolific field of "Is College Worth It?" suggests it's not that simple.

"'Ticket' implies a college degree is something you can just cash in," said Alan Benson, assistant business professor at the University of Minnesota. "But it doesn't work that way. A college degree is more of a stepping stone, one ingredient to consider when you're cooking up your career. ... It's not always the best investment for everyone." ...

... Benson's conclusion: The investment of a college education is generally better for those who graduate — and on time — from a school with healthier resources.

"Students have some control over if they graduate and when," Benson said, so, knowing this, America's youth is better equipped to weigh the risks before making educational plans after high school.

National Review

The Mayor Who Slandered the Police

By Heather Mac Donald

New York City mayor Bill de Blasio is "comfortable" with himself. So the city learned during the biggest crisis to hit a New York mayoralty in recent memory. "I'm comfortable with the fact that I've always tried to tell the truth and stay true to my values," de Blasio said in mid January, as police officers across New York City continued a work slowdown that had brought discretionary police activity to a virtual standstill. De Blasio's breezy self-assurance was revealing but unfortunate, since it was his belief in his own mission as social-justice truth-teller that had pushed the police into revolt in the first place.

William Bratton, New York City police commissioner, has now mobilized the considerable management and disciplinary tools at his disposal to force officers to increase their enforcement activity. But the fault lines that led to the slowdown are still there. Law enforcement in New York may be on the rise for now, but in the long term public safety remains at risk from an activist mayor who sees his base as the anti-police Left.

The New York Police Department slowdown was born of two emotions: fear and anger. And it triggered an outburst of hypocrisy on the part of the political and media elites that was breathtaking to behold.

It began on December 20, 2014, when a thug from Brooklyn assassinated two police officers sitting in their patrol car in a violence-plagued Brooklyn housing project. NYPD cops had been ambushed and assassinated before, but this time felt different, a transit captain observed to me. Those prior assassinations “were carried out by small bands of radicals” who were not operating in a generalized anti-police climate, he said. “Today, the anti-cop atmosphere is at a fever pitch and is fed by elected officials and the media.”

The assassinations of officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu was preceded by months of anti-police agitation in New York and nationwide, all dedicated to the absurd proposition that police officers are the biggest threat facing young black men. Riots had twice broken out in Ferguson, Mo.; activists in New York had been allowed by the mayor and police commissioner to shut down major bridges and highways with impunity, to the dismay of the police and vast swaths of the public. Protesters at one Midtown Manhattan march had chanted, “What do we want? Dead cops!” with no word of condemnation from City Hall; at another march commandeering the Brooklyn Bridge, protesters tried to hurl trash cans at officers on the level below them. Two public defenders from the Bronx participated in a rap video extolling cop killings.

Ismaaiyl Brinsley, the killer of Ramos and Liu, had echoed the protesters’ hate-filled rhetoric against the police before gunning the officers down. After the killings, threats of copycat murders poured in to the NYPD; Brinsley was celebrated as a hero in tweets and Facebook postings. In the weeks following the assassinations, a criminal from Pennsylvania tried to run over two Port Authority officers, yelling, “I want to kill cops,” and vandals loosened the lug nuts on police cruisers in hopes of causing them to crash.

The reaction of the department’s 20,000 patrol officers to the killings was anguished and immediate. “All of us have sat with our partner in a patrol car for eight hours being a deterrent,” says a deputy inspector. Officers started texting one other daily: Be on your guard, always carry your service weapon, don’t go out on solo patrol. If one officer is writing a ticket, with his head buried in his summons form or activity log, his partner should keep a lookout.

Particularly worrisome were low-level misdemeanor arrests for offenses such as public urination or turnstile jumping. This so-called broken-windows policing was a frequent target of invective in New York following the death of Eric Garner on Staten Island. Garner, who had been picked up about 30 times before for misdemeanor crimes, this time refused to be arrested for illegally selling loose cigarettes. The police brought him to the ground with what many observers deemed a banned chokehold maneuver. The 350-pound asthmatic went into cardiac arrest and died. Garner’s death was horrific and heart-wrenching, but it hardly represented the norm in broken-windows enforcement. In the first half of 2014, the police used force — which can mean simply putting hands on a suspect — in 0.6 percent of all public-order arrests; force was used zero times in the 321 arrests for loose-cigarette sales. Nevertheless, the *New York Times*, channeling the most hysterical impulses of the anti-police protest movement, declared that the “siege-based tactics” of broken-windows policing were not only responsible for Eric Garner’s death, they were also a prime way that the New York Police Department oppressed minority males.

Such rhetoric, the cops rightly believed, increased the chances that offenders would resist arrest. And if that resistance escalated into violence, and if the arrestee was black, the arresting officer could expect no support from the mayor or the media.

Indeed, following a grand jury's decision on December 3 not to indict New York police officer Daniel Pantaleo for the arrest that led to the death of Eric Garner, de Blasio attributed the incident to "centuries of racism." De Blasio then personalized his racism charge against the NYPD. The mayor worried "every night," he said, about the "dangers" that his biracial son, Dante, might face from "officers who are paid to protect him."

At the time, these remarks — based in thorough ignorance of the facts about policing and crime — were a body blow to the rank and file. But after the Ramos and Liu assassinations, carried out in the name of Eric Garner and Ferguson teen Michael Brown, they became a source of visceral rage, as they fed the atmosphere of escalating cop hatred that led to the killings.

They were also the last straw in a series of insulting actions de Blasio had taken since gaining office on a platform of bashing the NYPD. De Blasio's fawning praise of Al Sharpton as a "blessing for this city [and] a blessing for this nation"; his elevation of Sharpton to City Hall policing adviser; his hiring of Sharpton's press agent as his wife's chief of staff, and his stubborn defense of that hire despite her lies on her background check and the "off the pigs" rhetoric spewed by both her convicted-murderer boyfriend and her son — these and other alliances with the anti-police Left convinced officers that the mayor would not support them when they were forced to make controversial split-second decisions on the streets. Better, then, to walk by low-level offenses, especially public-order violations, than to risk their careers and possibly their lives making a discretionary arrest that could be opportunistically turned into a racial flashpoint.

In the weeks after the assassinations, the number of summonses written for misdemeanor and traffic offenses dropped nearly 95 percent citywide and 100 percent in many precincts. A former precinct commander who now works at police headquarters explains what was going on: "We do not want to put ourselves at risk for a City Hall we perceive as illegitimate. Why deliver a [public-safety] utopia to an ingrate who does not support us?"

De Blasio was facing a major crisis of legitimacy. But acknowledging that fact would undercut a darling of the progressive movement and keep attention focused on the assassinations and the slanderous attacks on the police that led up to them. De Blasio himself was the first to throw out an alternative explanation for the slowdown. It was simply a bargaining tactic engineered by union chiefs to get a better contract with the city, he suggested. Bratton echoed this charge on national TV, and the press ran with it. Conor Friedersdorf summed up the conceit on *The Atlantic's* website: "What's unfolding in New York is, at its core, a public-employee union using overheated rhetoric and emotional appeals to rile public employees into insubordination. The implied threat to the city's elected leadership and electorate is clear: Cede leverage to the police in the course of negotiating labor agreements or risk an armed, organized army rebelling against civilian control."

This narrative was utterly false. The slowdown was a spontaneous, grassroots reaction to the cop assassinations, born of fear and disgust. It had nothing to do with contract negotiations. Many NYPD officers have spent most of their careers working without a contract, without that fact's triggering a work slowdown. No union chief brought up a single item of contractual contention in response to the Ramos and Liu assassinations. They did, to be sure, blast de Blasio for his contribution to the anti-cop hysteria that led to the assassinations. "There is blood on many hands, from those who incited violence under the guise of protest all the way to the mayor's office at City Hall," the president of the officers' union, Patrick Lynch, said after the officers' deaths. It is also true that union delegates in the precincts were telling officers to "give [the bosses] nothing" if an officer felt that a particular intervention on the streets would be unsafe. But the union representatives were as much following their members as leading them.

The funerals for officers Ramos and Liu produced another public-relations fiasco for the mayor. Thousands of officers in the streets for the Ramos funeral, the first held, turned their backs to the video screens during de Blasio's eulogy. The press usually inflates protest numbers; in this case it reported a few hundred turned backs, whereas eyewitnesses at the scene put the number in the thousands. "I don't know a single cop who didn't turn his back," says a commander.

After the Ramos funeral, Bratton took a risk and circulated a memo urging officers not to repeat their protest at Liu's funeral. Thousands of cops turned their backs anyway, infuriating the mayor and his commissioner. At a press conference on January 5, de Blasio complained: "I can't understand why someone would do something like that in a context like that. I think they were disrespectful to the families who had lost a loved one and disrespectful to the people in this city who honor the NYPD." Bratton denounced the "selfishness" of a "labor action being taken in the middle of a funeral." If you want to protest, he said, "come put on your uniforms and demonstrate outside City Hall."

If de Blasio and Bratton were angry, the *New York Times* was positively apoplectic. "Mr. de Blasio isn't going to say it," an editorial thundered, "but somebody has to: With these acts of passive-aggressive contempt and self-pity, many New York police officers, led by their union, are squandering the department's credibility, defacing its reputation, shredding its hard-earned respect." The *Times's* sudden concern for preserving the department's "hard-earned respect" was hilarious, coming from a paper that has spent the last 15 years lambasting the cops as racist oppressors of minority communities.

The cops and many of their commanders weren't buying the charge that the back-turning "disrespected" the dead and their families. "Liu and Ramos would have turned their backs as well," asserts an official at One Police Plaza. "This was how we honored Ramos and Liu: by silently acknowledging that they lost their lives for a mayor who has contempt for officers." A cop from Brownsville, Brooklyn, argues that Bratton lost credibility in the episode. "Bratton misfired with his request not to turn our backs," he says. "The cops know that Bratton has to support de Blasio, but where else will we be all together to show our feelings?"

As the slowdown entered its second week, the *New York Times* called on the Justice Department to investigate the police for civil-rights violations. This was standard fare for the *Times*, but for one twist: The officers' alleged civil-rights violations *this* time consisted of "withdrawing policing from minority communities." The irony was stupendous. The *Times's* usual charge was that the NYPD was overpolicing "minority communities," particularly with low-level misdemeanor stops and arrests. Yet here it was complaining about a drop-off in misdemeanor enforcement. In fact, the charge of selective depolicing was spurious. The enforcement drop occurred equally across the city — in southern Manhattan precincts as well as in Central Harlem and East Brooklyn.

And it also occurred equally among officers. The nearly 100 percent decline in summonses could not have happened without a universal backing off. Black, Hispanic, white, Asian, and female officers, college graduates and officers with only a high-school diploma — all signaled their unwillingness to engage in proactive policing during a period of heightened threat under a mayor who they believed had repeatedly undermined them. This unanimity signaled yet again how out of touch de Blasio's administration was with cop culture. City Hall, saturated with identity politics, had assumed that minority officers would support the mayor's policies. It turns out that most cops identify more with their badge than with the presumed dictates of skin color. Says a newly retired captain: "At least 95 percent of the New York City cops that I know, regardless of ethnicity, despise the mayor."

Officers were still putting their lives on the line for felonies, however. On January 5, a call came out over the police radio about an armed robbery in progress at a bodega in the South Bronx. Five plainclothes cops from the local precinct who had already ended their tour of duty sped to the scene to apprehend the assailants. One of the robbers, who had posted anti-police diatribes online, opened fire at the officers and shot two of them in the back and chest before hijacking a getaway car at gunpoint. This time, the officers survived.

At first, Bratton sent conflicting messages about whether a policing slowdown was in fact occurring. On January 8, however, he paid a visit to the department's weekly Compstat meeting, the revolutionary crime-analysis gathering that was pioneered during Bratton's first tour as NYPD commissioner in the mid 1990s. Bratton usually left the management of Compstat to the chief of department, so his appearance there signaled that something important was afoot. He announced that he expected precinct commanders to get summons and arrest numbers back up. New York's two-decades-long crime conquest was in jeopardy if the slowdown continued, he said, and he would not allow the city to slide back to the bad old days.

Sergeants and lieutenants, who were ignoring the slowdown at roll calls, would now be under pressure to induce enforcement with moneymaking overtime and other plum assignments as a reward, while withholding such assignments from officers with low activity numbers. This was another irony. De Blasio and Bratton had come to office criticizing former police commissioner Ray Kelly for an allegedly numbers-driven approach to enforcement, but now they were pushing for numbers (albeit from a lower base) themselves.

Summons and arrests started inching back up in mid January, though to nowhere near pre-assassination numbers. Misdemeanor criminal summons were down "only" 70 percent in the week of January 5 compared with the same week in 2014, as opposed to being down nearly 100 percent in the previous weeks. Gun arrests were down "only" 21 percent. Even without the additional pressure from their supervisors, cops would likely have upped their activity on their own, driven by their sense of duty. "Cops don't want to keep doing this," says an officer assigned to headquarters.

But the tentative return toward the status quo ante means that the rank and file has compromised in its feud with de Blasio without the mayor's taking responsibility for his part in that feud. De Blasio has not only refused to apologize for his remarks after the Eric Garner grand-jury decision, he has portrayed himself as the victim in the dispute. He characterized the "blood on many hands" comment of union head Lynch as "totally inappropriate, totally inaccurate, and totally unfair." Lynch went too far in the heat of the moment, but the idea that de Blasio's son is at any significant risk from the NYPD is also "totally" false. If Dante de Blasio is at risk, it is from criminals, not the police. In 2013, criminals in New York City committed 1,103 shootings, wounding or killing 1,299 victims. NYPD officers, by contrast, shot 17 people and killed eight, despite having been dispatched 80,000 times to investigate weapons reports and having encountered guns and other weapons in over 30,000 arrests.

Almost all those victims of police shootings had extensive and serious criminal records; most had threatened the officer with deadly force. Whites were far more likely to be shot by the police than blacks when their crime rates are taken into account. Whites were 5 percent of all suspects shot by the police in 2013 though they committed only 2 percent of the city's shootings — a 250 percent disparity. Blacks were 75 percent of criminal shooters and 79 percent of police-shooting victims — virtual parity. (To put those crime figures in perspective: Blacks make up 23 percent of the city's population, and whites 35 percent.) Far from being the main threat faced by minority males, the police have been their savior. Ten thousand more minority males would be dead today had the NYPD not brought New York's homicide rate down 80 percent since the mid 1990s. The question

“Is Dante safe?” has become a bitter joke among officers who would like nothing better than to be dispatched on a gun run and find a white perpetrator.

De Blasio has also continued to portray the NYPD as in need of civil-rights correction — from himself, of course. “In 2013, we had a debate in this city about the direction we needed to go in. I believe . . . that what we had to do was build a different kind of approach [to policing], . . . so that was the way forward — that was the right path, the fair path, the safe path for everyone involved,” he said on January 5. Of course no city agency has been more committed to “fairness” than the NYPD, which focuses relentlessly on how to bring to housing projects and other poor neighborhoods the same levels of public safety that New York’s wealthy take for granted.

De Blasio, however, still embraces the idea that the NYPD’s enforcement actions are driven by race, not crime. In an ill-timed slap to the department, he is settling the last outstanding lawsuit against the NYPD for its stop-question-and-frisk practices. Fighting the suit, as the previous mayoral administration did, not only would have been the right thing to do legally, it would have been a perfect opportunity to show his support for the department. The presiding federal judge, Shira Scheindlin, ruled against the department in the previous two stop-question-and-frisk suits before being ignominiously removed from those cases for the appearance of judicial impropriety. Her participation in the third case was ground enough for resistance, even had the lawsuit’s claims not been so ludicrous. The litigation, assisted pro bono by the tony law firm Paul, Weiss, challenged trespass patrols in public housing. The plaintiffs argued preposterously that the police singled out housing projects for enforcement because their residents were black. In fact, the NYPD intensely patrols public housing because it is the most dangerous territory of the city, its stairwells and roofs the regular sites of rape, robbery, and shootings.

Law-abiding residents of housing projects understand that the police are the only thing standing between them and anarchy — something that Paul, Weiss partners, who live in doorman-protected apartment buildings, apparently cannot grasp. “People would be out of control otherwise. We need the police,” says Geraldine Parker, the chairwoman of Staten Island’s council of presidents of public-housing tenants. The proposed settlement of the suit would place new burdens on the ability of officers to intervene against lawless behavior, all in the name of fighting phantom racism within the NYPD. That Bratton acceded to the settlement suggests that he has to carefully marshal his political capital with the mayor.

In the abstract, it would have been useful to demonstrate what a depoliced city — the advocates’ desideratum — looks like. Though the administration denied it, significant categories of crime were already climbing. Shootings were up 82 percent in the week of January 5 through January 11, 2015, compared with the same week during the previous year. In the 28 days leading up to January 11, shootings were up 12 percent over the same period in 2013–14. This 12 percent spike was an improvement over the 28-day period ending January 4, when shootings were up 17 percent over the previous year.

Crime fluctuations are natural, of course, but to put this recent shooting spike into perspective: A 10 percent shooting increase in the first half of 2014, which many observers attributed to the fall-off of pedestrian stops following the litigation against the NYPD’s stop-question-and-frisk policy, had sent the department into a paroxysm of response. It flooded shooting hot spots with officers over the summer, at considerable overtime expense, and managed to cap the outbreak by early fall. Naturally, the victims of all those shootings were the very minorities whom the advocates purport to represent.

In the real world, however, officers don’t enjoy the luxury of “I told you so” moments. Though their protest was understandable, it is a worrisome precedent when a paramilitary organization rebels

against its civilian overseers. Ideally, and usually, cops perform their duty regardless of their attitudes toward the civilian authority under which they operate. That this tradition of neutrality cracked in this instance shows how deeply de Blasio violated their trust.

The nightly protests against the NYPD have largely evaporated with the assassinations of officers Ramos and Liu, but the dangerous myth of systemic police racism lives on. *New Yorker* editor David Remnick, speaking on National Public Radio last week, compared the post-Ferguson movement Black Lives Matter to the unity rally in Paris after the Islamist attacks on the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. A mayor of a city that has been rescued from catastrophic decline by the efforts of its police force might be expected to do everything he can to rebut such anti-police nonsense. Though de Blasio has modulated his rhetoric in recent days, he remains all too “comfortable” with his core worldview.

NY Post

[Chickens Come Home to Roost for de Blasio](#)

by Michael Goodwin

For Mayor de Blasio, last week was one he'd like to forget. It started with brickbats over a botched plan for a blizzard that fizzled, and it was all downhill from there.

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The commish was still fuming when it emerged that lawyers under contract with the city to represent poor defendants had participated in a video calling for the execution of cops — and lied about it to city investigators.

[The Post broke the December story involving the Bronx Defenders](#), which got \$40 million from the city over two years. At the time, the group denied knowing the video included calls for violence and that it would portray a man putting a gun to the head of a supposed cop, claims revealed as false.

The Department of Investigation also accused the group's executive director, Robin Steinberg, of making "misleading statements" to probers about the extent of the involvement.

For de Blasio, both incidents meant he had to call fouls on his own team. "There can be nothing that suggests any violence towards officers," de Blasio said of the Bronx Defenders. "That's absolutely unacceptable, it's heinous, it's reprehensible, it can't happen."

But it did happen, and the mayor should look in the mirror if he wants to know why. The video emerged during the turmoil of anti-police protests over the Eric Garner case, and de Blasio was defending and even encouraging the crowds right up to the point where two officers were assassinated.

There's also another connection between de Blasio's agenda and the Bronx Defenders. A private lawyer representing the group is a law partner with Richard Emery, whom de Blasio named to head the agency that investigates complaints against police. That partner, Earl Ward, is also board chairman of the Bronx Defenders, a fact [first reported by The Daily Signal](#).

Similarly, just as de Blasio called [the \\$5,000 payoff on the police shooting](#) the result of a "broken policy," it was his policy. He has made no secret of wanting to settle pending lawsuits quickly, without regard to the merits, which invites others to make frivolous claims.

Some settlements he approved have been outrageously expensive, with just three big cases carrying a price tag of \$157 million: \$98 million in a disputed class-action discrimination case in the Fire Department, \$18 million to protesters arrested at the 2004 GOP national convention, and \$41 million to the Central Park Five.

The city had good defenses in all three cases, yet the claims fit the worldview of de Blasio and his top adviser, Al Sharpton, that society is hopelessly racist and unfair.

The settlement of the Central Park jogger case was particularly contentious, with some lawyers arguing the city should not admit any wrongdoing because the teens had confessed and been convicted at trials that were upheld on appeal. Other critics said the \$41 million settlement price was far higher than necessary.

The pattern is the problem. The mayor built his campaign on promises to tackle income inequality, but seems more determined to wage class warfare and handcuff law enforcement.

His attacks on police, followed by the assassinations, earned him the contempt of many in the NYPD and threw into doubt whether de Blasio is capable of making the transition from candidate to mayor.

More than a year into his term, incidents like the \$5,000 payoff and the Bronx Defenders' video underscore his steep learning curve and force him to play defense against his own team. His chickens are coming home to roost.

Although he can never admit he has screwed up, an optimist could argue that he's learning from his mistakes. The pessimist doubts his ability to stop making them.

Washington Post

[Why college isn't always worth it](#)

A new study suggests the economic return on a college degree may be a lot more modest than you think.

by Danielle Paquette

Earlier this month, after announcing his plan to [make community college free](#), President Obama lauded a college degree as "the surest [ticket to the middle class](#)."

New research in the [prolific field](#) of "Is College Worth It?" suggests it's not that simple.

"'Ticket' implies a college degree is something you can just cash in," said [Alan Benson](#), assistant business professor at the University of Minnesota. "But it doesn't work that way. A college degree is more of a stepping stone, one ingredient to consider when you're cooking up your career. ... It's not always the best investment for everyone."

Benson, along with M.I.T.'s Frank Levy and business analyst Raimundo Esteva, co-authored a new paper, [released this week](#), examining the value of public university options in California. Factors like how long it takes to complete a degree — often [longer than four years](#) — and whether students make it to graduation, he learned, can significantly diminish the value of pursuing higher education.

Data from the Census Bureau, the University of California system and the less selective California State University system revealed a gap in the economic return between the schools. Similar disparities [persist nationwide](#), Benson said, exacerbated by scarcer resources at second-tier institutions.

For some students, the gap can make college a risky investment. It's no longer a sure thing that graduation happens on time.

"Applying more realistic assumptions," the researchers wrote, "we show that many students — particularly young men who cannot access top-tier universities — face an economic return to college that, while positive on average, can reasonably inspire caution among student and their parents."

College is still worth it for the average student. But Benson's study found returns are particularly modest for young men at the CSU system, mostly because of high dropout rates, delayed graduation and a lower effect on labor force participation compared with women.

"The return to a college degree in 2010," researchers wrote, "could be less than the interest on unsubsidized Stafford loans."

More students than ever are going to college. But the nation's overall college graduation rate has stayed low. (Check out [this Jeff Guo piece](#) about the heart-breaking forces driving this problem.)

In 2013, 65.9 percent of graduating high school seniors enrolled in a two- or four-year college, a level Benson noted is "only modestly" above the percentage in the early 90s. Weak enrollment could be a symptom of college sliding down on the public's Worth It scale.

Those who do graduate are taking longer and longer to earn diplomas: Less than 60 percent of full-time students who are enrolled in college for the first time graduate within six years, according

to the [Institute of Education Sciences](#). (Part-time, older, low-income and minority students tend to have an even lower completion rate.)

It's not surprising that the study finds students who take out loans and don't graduate on time incur *much* more debt. Two extra years on campus increases the balance by nearly 70 percent, according to data from Temple University and the University of Texas, Austin.

Benson's team saw students in the more selective UC system, which spends twice per student as the less prestigious CSU system, graduate more quickly: 80 percent of entering freshmen finish a degree within six years.

But out of the 34,000 freshmen who entered the CSU system in 1997, only 35.3 percent earned a degree in four years and 62.8 percent earned a degree within 12 years. The researchers partially blame "enrollments that increase faster than spending making it harder to enroll in required classes, harder to get academic help, and so on."

On top of this, UC graduates earned an average of 10 percent more income after graduation, according to data researchers analyzed from [payscale.com](#). The higher pay — and higher chance you'd graduate in a timely fashion — offset the higher tuition in scenarios where graduates scored jobs in lucrative fields.

Nationally, the pay gap between college graduates and people lacking degrees recently reached a record high, according to [Labor Department statistics analyzed](#) by the Economic Policy Institute. Americans with four-year college degrees made 98 percent more per hour on average in 2013 than people without diplomas, up from 89 percent five years earlier and 85 percent a decade earlier. This gap is growing, in large part, because [wages for non-college grads](#) are shrinking faster wages for college grads.

Benson's conclusion: The investment of a college education is generally better for those who graduate — and on time — from a school with healthier resources.

"Students have some control over if they graduate and when," Benson said, so, knowing this, America's youth is better equipped to weigh the risks before making educational plans after high school.







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