

Louisville's Bumbling Authorities Are About To Get a Wake-Up Call

The downtowns of numerous American cities have been burned up. Government buildings have been attacked. Private businesses have been destroyed. And people have even been killed. This has been happening off and on now for many months. And -- perhaps most amazing and horrifying of all -- the news media has decided to largely ignore it.

Detailed coverage would undercut the "mostly peaceful" narrative that many want to cling to. When things get really out of control, the corporate media is forced to report on them in summary fashion, but they have largely abandoned the day-to-day, on-the-ground reporting they would do in virtually any other circumstance. Reporting of that sort is coming from a relatively small number of independent publishers, none more than my own publication, the Daily Caller.

The Daily Caller has sent reporters to every hot spot in America, from Washington, D.C., to Seattle to Portland, Oregon, and Kenosha, Wisconsin. The fact that this medium-sized news outlet has more gruesome footage of what's really going on in our streets than huge corporate media outlets should scare the hell out of you. The corporate media's choice to largely ignore this coverage is, in essence, a decision to distort reality. In the face of this vacuum, we have been filling the void.

Our reporters are in the middle of many dangerous riots, and they are there with only one goal: Tell the truth about what they are seeing. They have told stories of peaceful protestors trying to confront the radical and violent elements. They have told stories of brutal attacks by rioters against police just trying to keep the peace. They have told stories of times when police response seemed too aggressive. They have told stories of organized radical attacks against government buildings. They have told stories of protestors attacking journalists. They have also told stories of right-wing vigilantes attacking innocent people. If it happens on the ground and they see it, they tell it straight. That's the job as it's supposed to be done.

I could not be prouder of the (generally young) reporters we have out on our streets. We never force any reporter to do this coverage. It's flat-out dangerous. We have had reporters threatened, chased, punched and even shot at during these protests that too often turn into riots. One thing that has never happened until now, though, is for our reporters' constitutional right to undertake this coverage to come under attack by government authorities. That all changed last week in Louisville, Kentucky.

Daily Caller reporters Shelby Talcott and Jorge Ventura were on the streets of Louisville on Sept. 23 in the wake of the prosecutors' charging decisions in the Breonna Taylor shooting case. As so many nights sadly do, that night turned violent in Louisville. Two police officers were shot at. Our reporters were out after the protest was declared an "unlawful assembly." They were still out because the protestors and rioters were still on the streets, so they had a job to do covering the chaos that was happening. They were also still out because the Louisville Police themselves had assured them earlier in the day that their rights would be protected. In an official email to press titled "MEDIA UPDATE IN REFERENCE TO CURFEW AND UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY," the Louisville Police Department said:

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Media can absolutely observe and film all activity going on during these protests' events. Media is not subject to the curfew if they are working and providing coverage to a designated audience. When a declaration of an unlawful assembly is given, media is expected to remain as a bystander/observer of the activity, not a participant, or in any way hinder the operations of officers."

Despite this assurance, both of our reporters were arrested on the ground in Louisville. The charges -- completely contrary to the assurances from the Louisville Police earlier in the evening -- are "failure to disperse" and "unlawful assembly."

Upon arrest, our editor-in-chief, Geoff Ingersoll, contacted the Louisville Police immediately. He was surprised and relieved to get through to a real person in all the chaos. He told an officer that there had been a mistake and two of his reporters were arrested despite following guidelines, and he offered to confirm their identities as reporters. Despite this, our reporters were each held overnight and for most of the following day in small cells with rioters -- many of whom may want to do them harm for daring to report on their activities. What's worse, they have now been arraigned, and the charges still have not been dropped.

These two reporters have covered more protests and more riots than any others we are aware of in the entire country. They have traveled the country on a protest and riot coverage tour. They are good at it. They know what they are doing. They have never been arrested or even close to it. They did not break the law. Both charges require the offender to be acting for an unlawful purpose. News reporting is the opposite.

As a practical matter, we should all be glad these reporters are brave enough to do this dangerous work. If they were not, we would not have half the stories and video footage available to show the American people the brutal loss of life and property taking place. Police in every other American city have allowed our reporters to do their jobs and tell these stories. Most police are thankful for our balanced and accurate portrayals, which often show just what a tough situation they are facing night after night. As a legal matter, our Founding Fathers were wise enough to foresee all of this and enshrine protections for the press in the very first amendment to our Constitution. The inept Louisville Police Department and Louisville prosecutors apparently didn't get the memo on this. We are going to teach them all about it.

Neil Patel co-founded The Daily Caller, one of America's fastest-growing online news outlets, which regularly breaks news and distributes it to over 15 million monthly readers. Patel also co-founded The Daily Caller News Foundation, a nonprofit news company that trains journalists, produces fact-checks and conducts longer-term investigative reporting. The Daily Caller News Foundation licenses its content free of charge to over 300 news outlets, reaching potentially hundreds of millions of people per month. To find out more about Neil Patel and read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators website at www.creators.com

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