

INCIVILITY IS THE NEW NORMAL

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The ubiquity of incivility is the new normal.

Walking the streets of New York City these days can be treacherous. It used to be that pedestrians had to be wary of cars, but now they are confronted with bicycles, mopeds, scooters, and skateboards. These folks come out of nowhere, and from all sides.

Now we have the advent of the e-bike industry, the presence of electronically powered bikes that four-year-olds are allowed to drive. Most of these bikes go 20-28 miles per hour. There are an estimated 65,000 e-bikes in New York City and many drive as if they are the only ones on the road. As these bikes proliferate, so do fires: lithium-ion batteries are exploding with regularity.

There have always been reckless car drivers who speed and tailgate. But today we have a large segment of the population that texts and drives almost all the time. Looking at your phone to read or respond to text messages takes an average of five seconds. At 55 miles per hour, that means the driver has traveled the length of a football field, without looking at the road.

“More and More Teenagers Are Coming to School High, N.Y.C. Teachers Say.” That was the headline of a *New York Times* story in May. “Jersey Shore Towns Say State’s Marijuana Law Handcuffs Police and Emboldens Rowdy Teens.” That was the headline of a story by the Associated Press in June.

It’s not hard to figure out what’s happening. They’ve legalized marijuana in New York and New Jersey. In the latter case, this has meant “emboldening groups of teenagers to run amok on beaches and boardwalks, knowing there’s little chance

they'll get in trouble for it." To top things off, the cops have no way of testing erratic drivers for marijuana use, making apprehension difficult.

The surge in fentanyl use makes matters worse. In some cities, it is out of control. We now have the specter of fentanyl being used with xylazine—the animal sedative known as “tranq.” This “zombie drug” is also popular with cocaine users.

Adding to this troubled population is the explosion of migrants, mostly young men. They are now housed in over 100 hotels in New York, and many are sleeping on the sidewalks. Over 100,000 migrants have made their way to New York since the spring of last year, with more than 2,500 arriving each day.

Not far from where the Mets play there is a section of Queens that is being overrun by prostitutes. The hookers are employing children to lure customers, handing out business cards on the sidewalk. Drugs and alcohol are rampant. Meanwhile, New York Governor Kathy Hochul is launching a “pilot program” that would give hookers free medical and dental care.

Teachers are quitting in record numbers, partly because they are rendered impotent in dealing with unruly students. It is not the behavior of disruptive and violent students that is seen as the problem; rather, disciplinary measures are considered the problem.

Concert-goers often get excited about their favorite performers, and sometimes they get out of hand. But today they are more likely to throw objects at musicians, some of which are dangerous.

There has been an explosion in airline passengers who have become totally uncontrollable, endangering everyone on the plane. Fights are breaking out, people are overdosing on alcohol and drugs, emergency exits are being tampered with,

sexual acts are taking place—and little is done about it.

Shoplifting is so out-of-control in New York City that some storeowners are securing ice cream by installing a heavy-duty chain and padlock. Others are locking up freezers so thieves can't steal the ice.

The most serious expression of incivility is violence.

Now the head of the NAACP in Oakland blames “the movement to defund the police, our District Attorney’s unwillingness to charge and prosecute people who murder and commit life-threatening serious crimes, and the proliferation of anti-police rhetoric” for creating these conditions. She names “progressive policies and failed leadership” for these problems.

Why is this going on? The ruling class, as I point out in my book, [War on Virtue: How the Ruling Class is Killing the American Dream](#), no longer believes in holding people accountable for their behavior, and they certainly don't believe in promoting virtue. The word has spread fast—we can do pretty much what we want and the penalties for infringing on the rights of others are minimal.

We have created a culture of incivility, indeed lawlessness. It is not so much narcissism that we are breeding as it is selfishness. When self-absorption is celebrated, appeals to the common good fall on deaf ears.

What former FBI Special Agent, and air marshal, Jonathan Gilliam, has to say about unruly airline passengers is true about other examples of incivility. “They really don't care. And I think you see people treat police officers the same way. This type of stuff is self-centered, self-indulgent behavior is everywhere now. I mean, we see it everywhere.”

He's right. Unless we hold people accountable, and make the inculcation of virtue a priority, this insanity will continue.