

California Republican mayor calls for the extermination of the homeless

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In language that echoes that of the Nazis against those “unworthy of life,” the long-serving Republican mayor of Lancaster, California, R. Rex Parris, recently suggested that the city’s homeless population should be given “free fentanyl ... as much as they like” and expressed his desire for a federal “purge” to eliminate them.

Parris is not just a deranged individual. He has been elected repeatedly as mayor of Lancaster, an industrial city of 167,000 located in northern Los Angeles County, and a production hub for the US military, home to facilities run by Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin and Honeywell.

During a City Council meeting in February, Parris declared that one solution to homelessness would be to “give them free fentanyl ... all the fentanyl they want.” As grotesque as this suggestion was—proposing to accelerate the death of the most vulnerable by allowing them to overdose on the drug—Parris had not yet touched bottom.

In an interview with Fox LA last week, Parris doubled down, issuing a bloodcurdling demand: “Quite frankly, I wish the president would give us a purge. Because we do need to purge these people.” The language could not be more explicit. Borrowing from the dystopian fantasy of a violent, lawless extermination spree popularized in the film series *The Purge*, Parris has called for state-sanctioned mass murder.

Attempting to dress up his sociopathic sentiments as concern for “public safety,” Parris made sure to demonize the homeless population as a criminal menace. “They are responsible for most of our robberies, most of our rapes, and at least half of our murders,” he claimed, offering no evidence for this vile smear.

Adding religious incense to cover the stink, Parris concluded his interview by invoking the Bible, paraphrasing a passage in the New Testament, 2 Thessalonians 3:10, which states: “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.’” Accordingly, death by starvation to supplement death by overdose.

A licensed attorney who has held office since 2008, Parris is a seasoned operator in the ways of the American political establishment. Authoritarian posturing is his element. This is the same man who in 2020 argued that anyone who knowingly spread COVID-19 should be charged with murder, a position that substituted law-and-order rhetoric for public health measures, which were being abandoned by the Trump administration.

The mayor has repeatedly fused religion and governance, advocating policies that trample the separation of church and state. His city has led the way in high-tech surveillance of its residents, deploying drone patrols under the pretext of “public safety,” long before the mainstreaming of such dystopian tools.

And yet, as repellent as Parris’s character is, this is not merely a story of one man’s reactionary pathology. His remarks are a symptom of a diseased political order: a capitalist system in advanced decay, incapable of addressing the social crises it has produced and only able to respond with escalating repression and violence.

Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, American cities have become laboratories for social cleansing. Far from opposing Parris’s barbaric logic, the Democratic Party has paved the way for it, California Democrats in particular. Last month, the city of Fremont, site of the first Tesla vehicle plant, voted to ban outdoor sleeping altogether, based on last year’s Supreme Court decision. The

ordinance was repealed after a public outcry.

In neighboring San Jose, the largest city in northern California, the city council has given preliminary approval to a measure proposed by Democratic Mayor Matt Mahan that would authorize police to arrest homeless people if they refused to go to shelters three times. “Homelessness can’t be a choice,” he told the *New York Times*. “Government has a responsibility to build shelter, and our homeless neighbors have a responsibility to use it.”

Last week the San Jose City Council voted unanimously to clear the city’s largest homeless encampment, including cars and RVs parked in Columbus Park, despite protests that there was nowhere else for the homeless to go, since there aren’t enough shelter beds to accommodate them.

In Los Angeles, the Democratic political machine, led by Mayor Karen Bass and bolstered by California Governor Gavin Newsom, has waged a relentless campaign against the homeless. Newsom, in particular, has overseen the brutal destruction of encampments across the state. Under the false flag of “public health” and “clean streets,” the homeless are displaced, criminalized, and left to die on the margins.

Even as the rhetoric from Democratic politicians is cloaked in the language of compassion, the reality is one of profit-driven cruelty. Los Angeles has shifted its approach to homelessness from a public welfare model to a private business model. The defunding of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and the rise of the Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (LACAHS) represents not a solution to homelessness, but the transformation of human misery into a lucrative revenue stream for private contractors and developers. Homelessness is now a business, and human lives are the commodity.

The fascistic bile spewed by Parris finds resonance in the broader political atmosphere shaped by the Trump administration. Trump’s open incitements to violence, his attacks on democratic rights and immigrants, and his celebration of lawless police brutality emboldened the far-right across the country. But the Democrats’ complicity is no less damning. They have given bipartisan cover for the steady march of authoritarianism while trying to launder their policies in the rhetoric of “equity” and “reform.”

Parris’s “purge” fantasy is a warning. The attacks on

the homeless are only the beginning. The ruling class is preparing to extend this violence to all sectors of the population that capitalism finds inconvenient or unprofitable: the disabled, the elderly, the unemployed, the working poor, and ultimately, the working class as a whole. The decades of hard-won social programs and protections—the fruits of bitter class struggle—are under assault, with homelessness being used to reintroduce openly eugenicist ideas into official politics.

This is the logic of capitalism in crisis. A system that cannot guarantee housing, healthcare, or dignified work for millions, even in the wealthiest country in the world, has no solutions beyond violence. Its defenders, whether wearing a business suit or a mayoral sash, whether they speak from the halls of Congress or the local council chamber, will escalate their brutality as the social contradictions deepen.



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