

Echoes of Nazi eugenics: Fox News host calls for “lethal injection” of the homeless

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On August 22, 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutka was fatally stabbed in an unprovoked attack on a light rail train in Charlotte, North Carolina, as she traveled home from her job at a pizza restaurant. Decarlos Brown Jr., 34, a homeless man diagnosed with schizophrenia with a long history of arrests, has been charged with her murder. Scenes leading up to the gruesome attack and its aftermath were captured on surveillance footage, and the video was repeatedly shown by news outlets beginning two weeks later.

On September 10, during a “Fox & Friends” segment discussing the Zarutka killing on Fox News, host Lawrence Jones floated the idea of jailing homeless individuals who refuse social services. Co-host Brian Kilmeade then interjected with his own proposal: “Or involuntary lethal injection, or something. Just kill ‘em.” Kilmeade’s comments came just hours before the killing of fascist political operative Charlie Kirk in Utah, which would be met with escalating calls for retribution against the “radical left.”

Two days later, as public revulsion mounted over his comments, Kilmeade offered a reluctant apology for his “extremely callous remark.” He stated, “I am obviously aware that not all mentally ill, homeless people act as the perpetrator did in North Carolina and that so many homeless people deserve our empathy and compassion.” Only the extremely naïve can accept the sincerity of this forced retraction. Fox News, for its part, has accepted his apology and kept him on the air.

Kilmeade’s remarks were part of a fascistic campaign promoted by the Trump administration. In a press release, Attorney General Pam Bondi declared, “Iryna Zarutka was a young woman living the American dream—her horrific murder is a direct result of failed soft-on-crime policies that put criminals before innocent people.” She announced her intention to

federally prosecute Brown for murder, seeking the “maximum penalty” and vowing he “will never again see the light of day as a free man.”

President Trump described Brown as a “madman” and a “lunatic” who should be executed, exploiting the tragedy to promote his deployment of National Guard troops to American cities and whip up support for his dragnet and deportation of immigrants.

Kilmeade’s abhorrent suggestion to “just kill” the mentally ill homeless carries a chilling historical resonance with the Nazi euthanasia program, known as Aktion T4. This clandestine murder program, initiated in 1939, aimed to eliminate people with mental and physical disabilities whom the Nazis deemed “genetically defective” and a “financial burden” to society—individuals considered “life unworthy of life.”

Initially, disabled children were murdered through lethal overdoses or starvation in designated “killing wards.” The program was then extended to adults in institutions, using six gassing installations where victims perished in gas chambers disguised as shower facilities, their bodies cremated, and false death certificates issued to families. Physicians and psychiatrists, many with significant reputations, played a direct and crucial role in selecting victims and implementing these murders.

The euthanasia program served as a trial run for the Nazi’s subsequent genocidal policies, including the Holocaust, utilizing similar methods and personnel. The very idea of state-sanctioned murder of those deemed a “burden” or “unfit” on account of mental illness, particularly when social services are deliberately starved of funding, directly parallels the fascist dehumanization that led to these atrocities.

Brown’s life is a tragic example of the criminalization of the mentally ill and homeless. He has

a documented history of 14 arrests spanning over a decade and spent six years in prison. He has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and displayed a documented pattern of delusional behavior. In January 2025, he was arrested for repeatedly calling 911, claiming a “man-made material” had been implanted in his body and was controlling his ability to eat, walk and speak. Police, noting concerns about his mental stability, released him without bond. By July, a judge had ordered a competency evaluation, but it was never completed, leaving Brown free until the fatal stabbing. Brown’s sister, Tracy, revealed that in a phone call after his arrest, Brown blamed “materials” inside his body for causing him to kill Zarutsky, someone he had never met until that day.

Brown’s family had desperately sought help. His mother, Michelle Dewitt, stated he was “different” after his 2020 release from prison, displaying violent behavior and talking to himself. She said he was prescribed medication but refused to take it. When she tried to admit him to a mental health hospital, she was told there was no room and they couldn’t take him because he wasn’t threatening to hurt himself. After a 14-day hold ordered by a magistrate, he was again released to his parents’ care, and when he stopped taking his medication, they “dropped him off at a shelter.” Both his mother and sister explicitly blamed the courts for allowing him to remain in the community, with Tracy Brown stating, “If he had the proper care this wouldn’t have happened.”

The Brown family’s experience is not an anomaly. In 2024, the US homeless population reached a record high, with 771,480 people experiencing homelessness on a single night, an 18 percent increase from the previous year, with 36 percent of these individuals remaining unsheltered. This crisis is intrinsically linked to the unavailability of affordable housing, with homelessness rising significantly since 2017 in tandem with surging housing costs.

The prevalence of mental health disorders among the homeless is overwhelming. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 85 studies found that 67 percent of unhoused people have mental health disorders. Other research estimates the mean prevalence of any current mental disorder among homeless persons at 76.2 percent. Specifically, schizophrenia spectrum disorders affect a staggering 12.4 percent of homeless

individuals, a rate significantly higher than in the general population. Homeless people face a 60 percent higher mortality rate and a life expectancy 26 years shorter than the general population, suffering from high rates of infectious disease and mental illness, and often being victims of violence themselves.

Kilmeade’s call for “lethal injection” is an incitement to state violence against an already demonized and neglected segment of the population. It reveals the contempt of the ruling class for those cast aside by its brutal economic system, seeking to scapegoat the victims of systemic neglect, while deliberately failing to address the root causes of homelessness and mental illness: the capitalist system that places profit over human life. Rhetoric such as Kilmeade’s serves to prop up this barbaric system to pave the way for further violent attacks on democratic rights and the most vulnerable in society.



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