

This willingness to tolerate individual irresponsibility under any circumstances other than insanity, can crumble the walls of a constitutional democracy. For democracy is sustained through one great premise: the premise that civil rights are balanced by civil responsibilities. My right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is secure only so long as I respect your right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I can claim no right as a human or a citizen that you cannot claim under the law.

In excusing individual responsibility we condone lawlessness and encourage cynical leaders to exploit the madness of the mob. We tacitly endorse such inflammatory statements as Rap Brown's "Violence is as American as cherry pie." Remarks like this, widely and cheerfully disseminated by the media, have created an aura of belief that rioting is the inalienable right of the ghetto resident.

If one wants to pinpoint the cause of riots, it would be *this* permissive climate and the misguided compassion of public opinion. It is not the centuries of racism and deprivation that have built to an explosive crescendo but the fact that lawbreaking has become a socially acceptable and occasionally stylish form of dissent.

Just how stylish rioting has become is reflected in a further report from the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, released just three days ago. This report indicates that about 18% — instead of the commonly believed 1 or 2% — of Negro residents in major 1967 riot areas participated in the disorders. It shows that the rioters were not outside agitators and "riffraff" but were representative of the young, adult, Negro males in the urban ghetto. They were not newly arrived immigrants from the rural South, *they were not unemployed*, and they were not predominantly young teenagers. Most shockingly, the report shows that the overwhelming majority of Negroes do not unequivocally oppose riots. They are ambivalent and deplore the violence in riots, but a majority feel that the riots will have a beneficial consequence for improving the Negroes' social and economic conditions.

Ironically, it was the orderly demonstration of civil disobedience, praised and participated in by our nation's civic, spiritual and intellectual leaders that gave impetus to civil disorder.

As Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black wrote in 1966, "Once you give a nervous, hostile and ill-informed people a theoretical justification for using violence in certain cases, it's like a tiny hole in the dike; the rationales rush through in a torrent, and violence becomes