

Day 32 Devotion

*They crush the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way....
They stretch out ... on garments taken as security; ... they drink wine taken as fines they imposed.*
Amos 2:7-8

Israel in Amos' day was a barter economy. Today, the systemic money extractions from over policing and expenses from the court system, recreate that economy. In addition to African American families having “the talk” with their children (on how to act when stopped by the police so the police don't feel threatened and overreact with lethal violence), there is urgency for family members to do whatever they can to avoid getting arrested.

Entering the legal system begins the monetary extractions. Fines, court costs, counseling evaluations, expensive drug or anger management classes, probation fees to private vendors - all are preceded by bail bond fees and lawyer fees that can extend into thousands of dollars. That is if the family doesn't want to trust the case to an overburdened public defender ill equipped to get more than a settlement filled with many related costs. The situation quickly turns into a crisis for a family living paycheck to paycheck. The bail bond fee doesn't return to the family. Lawyers require advance payment. How to pay the court costs and fines? If unpaid, subsequent fees mount in bench warrants, more arrests, more fees, with additions to their criminal record. Such is our modern way of crushing the head of the poor into the dust and pushing them out of the way.

The court system depends on this income. Private contractors and service providers use this as a revenue stream. The jobs of police, prosecutors, defense lawyers, judges, and clerks provide a decent living fed, in part, by these low-level arrests which are meted out disproportionately to people of color. These professionals are generally not bad people. But often those who are put in their presence get tagged as thugs and no-counts and treated harshly by making the extractions even more punitive. Our system is set up to insulate most of us from the sight of how justice grinds out. Our societal divisions isolate us from those caught up in its shake down.

Statistically, African Americans get the greater share of this 'justice'. Poor whites can be subject to it as well, but they are more likely to get a break from ticketing, arrest, and prosecution. A lot of the anger behind the Black Lives Matter movement is fueled by resentment over the modern version of the sins of Israel that the LORD ordered Amos to prophesy against.

Bob Morgan, Honorably Retired

O God, save me. Please get me out of this mess.

I don't know what to do. Is there anything I can do for you so you will get me out? Things are looking bad, much worse than I deserve - much worse than my loved ones who are trying to get me out deserve or can pull off. Mercy me Lord - Mercy. Mercy ...

RESOURCE: [2020-Deep-Policy-Brief-FINAL_digital-1.pdf \(deepcenter.org\)](https://www.deepcenter.org/2020-Deep-Policy-Brief-FINAL_digital-1.pdf)