

# HOW THE “LAW AND ORDER” TROPE INDIVIDUALIZES RACISM AND INVERTS RACIAL VULNERABILITY

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During the 1968 US presidential campaign, Richard Nixon infamously ran as the “law and order” candidate, invoking in his Republican nomination acceptance speech the domestic protests against racial injustice and the Vietnam war. In the 2020 presidential campaign, Donald Trump revived Richard Nixon’s “law and order” slogan as part of his response to the Black Lives Matter protests after George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis on May 25th. In this paper, we examine how Trump and his supporters use the “law and order” trope to move public discourse about racism away from critical understandings that view racism as embedded in institutionalized practices and policies, and toward the racial ideology encapsulated in what Jane Hill (2008) calls the “folk theory of race and racism.” Whereas the racial justice movement attempts to center public discourse on systemic racism in policing, the “law and order” trope works to decenter that discourse by individualizing racism and thereby minimizing concerns about the system-wide pattern of racism. As it reinforces the dominant understanding of racism that underpins much US public discourse, the “law and order” trope inverts the racial vulnerability so that Black bodies and racial justice protesters are seen as threats rather than victims of state-sanctioned violence. We illustrate these ideas by drawing from examples of public discourse in response to the summer 2020 racial justice protests, including excerpts from Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham’s shows on Fox News in the days immediately following Floyd’s killing through Ingraham’s interview of Trump at the end of the summer. Our analysis explains how the discourse spawned by the “law and order” trope reinscribes key assumptions about racism, dismisses calls for racial justice, and perpetuates the racial status quo — thereby posing a substantial barrier to changing the policies and practices that lead to racial inequities in policing.

*Keywords:* racism, folk theory of racism, law and order slogan, racial ideology, coded racial appeals

## 1. THE “LAW AND ORDER” TROPE

During the 1968 US presidential campaign, Richard Nixon infamously ran as the “law and order” candidate, invoking in his Republican nomination acceptance speech the domestic protests against racial injustice and the Vietnam war (Nixon 1968). He talked of “cities enveloped in smoke and flame” and a nation “plagued by unprecedented lawlessness,” juxtaposing those involved in protests with what he called “the forgotten Americans — the non-shouters, the non-demonstrators.” Nixon deflected accusations that his “law and order” slogan was a “code word for

racism.” Those “non-shouters” and “non-demonstrators,” he elaborated, “are not racists or sick; they are not guilty of the crime that plagues the land.”

Nevertheless, his call “to restore order and respect for law” came to be seen by many as restoring order for White America and respect for laws that continued to unjustly favor White Americans at the expense of people of color. As political scientist Julia Azari remarks, “The question becomes whose order, for whom does the law work” (McArdle 2018). A 1968 cover story in *Time* magazine noted how the phrase was seen as “a shorthand message promising repression of the black community” (Waxman 2020). In Nixon’s vision of the United States, the law works — and should work — for those non-shouters and non-demonstrators who do not agitate for change, who need not agitate for change because the racial hierarchy works in their favor. But those who do protest the inequities and injustices of a racist system, according to Nixon’s logic, are to be considered part of “the criminal forces in this country” (Nixon 1968).

In the 2020 presidential campaign, Donald Trump revived Nixon’s “law and order” slogan as part of his response to the Black Lives Matter protests after George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis on May 25th. Floyd represents yet another death in a long line of unarmed African Americans whose lives have been disproportionately ended by police. The policing of Black bodies in public spaces stretches back to the slave patrols of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the terror campaigns and lynchings of the early twentieth century, and continues today even in the more subtle forms of policing of what are implicitly presumed to be White public spaces, giving rise to the colloquial saying, *Doing X While Black*, such as Driving While Black, Walking While Black, or even Birdwatching While Black. Numerous studies have demonstrated the racial inequities that continue to exist in the criminal justice system (Balko 2019), such that Black drivers are more likely than White drivers to be stopped and searched (Pierson et al. 2020), a significant bias exists in “the killing of unarmed black Americans relative to unarmed white Americans” (Ross 2015), and “young black men are 21 times as likely as their white peers to be killed by police” (Gabrielson, Jones, and Sagara 2014).

To ignore the presence of racism in today’s society requires suppressing the historical throughline from the slave patrols to the continued criminalization of Black bodies in public spaces that results in the deaths of those like George Floyd. It requires a willful ignorance of those histories and current realities that shape racism in contemporary US society (Mills 2008). But how

is this discursively achieved and how is the “law and order” trope leveraged to dismiss calls for racial justice, as was done in the summer of 2020?

We argue that the “law and order” trope operates by moving the focus away from critical understandings of racism as embedded in institutionalized practices and policies, and toward the racial ideology encapsulated in what Jane Hill (2008) calls the “folk theory of race and racism.” Whereas the racial justice movement attempts to center public discourse on systemic racism in policing, the “law and order” trope works to decenter that discourse by individualizing racism and thereby minimizing concerns about the system-wide pattern of racism. As it reinforces the dominant understanding of racism that underpins much US public discourse, the “law and order” trope inverts the racial vulnerability so that Black bodies and racial justice protesters are seen as threats rather than victims of state-sanctioned violence. We illustrate these ideas by drawing from examples of public discourse in response to the summer 2020 racial justice protests.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE CODED RACIAL APPEALS OF THE “LAW AND ORDER” TROPE

On the surface, overt appeals for “law and order” are couched as benign calls for social order; but the slippage between the dual senses of *social order* paves the way for a defense of the racial status quo.

The first sense of the term *social order* refers to orderliness in contrast to unrest (*social order*<sub>1</sub>). In much of the “law and order” discourse, appeals to “law and order” are juxtaposed with images of street protests marked by descriptors such as “chaos” and “unrest.” For example, on May 29, days after George Floyd was killed, Fox News host Tucker Carlson opened his show with a focus on the protests, saying, “Remarkable scenes of violence and destruction and chaos from across the country now and we’re going to spend much of the hour keeping you abreast of what’s happening” (see appendix A for the full excerpt). In the beginning of her interview with Donald Trump at the end of the summer, Fox News host Laura Ingraham prefaced a question to Trump by saying, “So when you see the unrest on the streets — and so much of it is driven by an antipathy toward law enforcement” (see appendix D for the full excerpt). In both examples, the descriptors “chaos” and “unrest” paint the protests for racial justice as the antithesis of social order in the first sense of the term. This allows the protests to be loosely glossed under the rubric of sowing disorder and lawlessness.

The overwhelming emphasis placed on disorder in the streets necessitates a response that would restore orderliness (*social order*<sub>1</sub>). It does this by couching the appeal for “law and order” within a commonly accepted understanding and desire for social order — as opposed to social unrest. The discourse plays up incidents of violence that accompany the protests — positioning even the peaceful protests as inherently disorderly — and downplaying (or simply ignoring) the complaints about systemic racism that underpin the protests.

But while the surface appeal to social order (*social order*<sub>1</sub> in contrast to social unrest) may fall within the general moral order, making it easy to accept for uncritical listeners, the second sense of *social order* refers to a system of social structures, institutions, and practices. The US system is based on a racial order that organizes the differential distribution of justice according to the racial hierarchy. That racial order (*social order*<sub>2</sub>) represents the racial status quo that has become so problematic for many Americans, leading people into the streets to protest the injustices it spawns.

The coded racial appeal of the “law and order” trope arises from this slippage between the first sense of social order (as orderliness in contrast to unrest) and the second sense (as the system that represents the current racial order). Discussants can use the “law and order” trope to ostensibly talk about countering social unrest while also implicitly defending the current racial order. This coded message enables people to take a pro “law and order” stance under the guise of supporting social orderliness while covertly signaling their support for the racial status quo.

Although the racial appeals are mostly covert, the dual senses of *social order* are frequently invoked so that the “law and order” discourse often becomes about more than simply restoring orderliness (*social order*<sub>1</sub>); it is also about protecting the system (*social order*<sub>2</sub>). For example, in the opening monologue to his May 29 show, Tucker Carlson declares, “What you're watching is the ancient battle between those who have a stake in society and would like to preserve it, and those who don't and seek to destroy it” (see appendix A for the full excerpt). In these remarks, Carlson suggests that the threat involves not just disruptions to orderliness in the streets (*social order*<sub>1</sub>), but that society itself (*social order*<sub>2</sub>) is being threatened.

In her show on June 1, a week after George Floyd’s killing, Laura Ingraham likewise reframes the outrage over the injustice inflicted on George Floyd to position the protesters as wanting to, in her words, “murder America.” She says, “All people of good faith agree that what happened to George Floyd was heinous and depraved. It was murder. But that's not what we're seeing on our violent streets. We're not seeing outrage really expressed about that. And that's not what the

criminals and the domestic terrorists are perpetrating as they use Mr. Floyd's killing to try to murder America” (see appendix C for the full excerpt).

As seen in these examples, the discourse associated with the “law and order” trope works to remove the motive of the protesters so that any societal-wide racial justice advocacy is seen as part and parcel of a movement of those who, in Ingraham’s words, “try to murder America,” or in Carlson’s words, “seek to destroy” society (*social order*<sub>2</sub>). By arguing that the motivation behind the demonstrations is disingenuous, they establish grounds to identify racial justice protesters as criminals. The appeal to “law and order” thereby becomes a defense of the racial order through the delegitimization of the racial justice protesters and their concerns, allowing those wielding the “law and order” slogan to dismiss those concerns without overtly negating the protest mantra that “Black lives matter.”

Insofar as protesters and racial justice advocates want to change a racially unjust system, Carlson and Ingraham are right to see that system (*social order*<sub>2</sub>) as being challenged. But their presentation of the situation fails to acknowledge the reason for that challenge (systemic racism) and instead moves to an all-out defense of the system (racism and all). As discussed in the next section, this failure for those operating within the “law and order” discourse to recognize the protesters’ concerns stems from the dominant racial ideology that individualizes racism and ignores it as a systemic problem.

### 3. THE RACIAL IDEOLOGY OF THE “LAW AND ORDER” DISCOURSE

Anthropologists widely recognize that race is a cultural construct. As Audrey Smedley (2007) explains, “Race originated as a folk idea and ideology about human differences; it was a social invention, not a product of science” (2). But by the end of the eighteenth century, those folk ideas began to be propped up by scientific and pseudo-scientific techniques that “sought to affirm the differences between blacks and whites” (Smedley 2007: 7). This cultural project helped justify and rationalize the enslavement of those racialized as Black within the US context.

Folk ideas continue to underpin popular understandings of race and racism. Jane Hill (2008) encapsulates these ideas in what she terms the “folk theory of race and racism.” As the dominant racial ideology in US society, the folk theory provides “the racially based frameworks” that explain, justify, and defend “the racial status quo” (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 9). Central to this dominant ideology is an incomplete recognition of racism, locating it merely in “individual beliefs,

intentions, and actions” (Hill 2008: 6) and erasing how it operates as a system of power to structure the social hierarchy and differentially distribute justice according to that hierarchy.

Drawing from this ideology, the “law and order” discourse works to dismiss the racial justice movement’s focus on systemic racism in policing by individualizing incidents like the killing of George Floyd — positioning such incidents as one-off events perpetrated by individual outliers within a system otherwise untainted by racist policies and practices. The individualization of such events is accomplished through the ideological process of erasure. As Judith Irvine and Sue Gal (2000) explain, “*Erasure* is the process in which ideology...renders some persons or activities...invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away” (38).

Erasure can be seen in practice in the interview Fox News host Laura Ingraham conducted with President Trump at the end of the summer of 2020 (see appendix D for the full excerpt). In the interview, Ingraham asks Trump about “the statistics that are cited over and over again” of more African Americans being stopped by police. Trump invokes the “law and order” trope in his response, stating, “What the black community wants in this country is they want police and they want law and order. [...] Look, they want law and order. They want the police.” He goes on to say, “They’ve gotten along with the police, and the police have been very badly mistreated because you got one bad apple, and it becomes a story for weeks.”

The bad apple metaphor invoked by Trump is commonly used to individualize racist acts of police violence, positioning officers involved in the killing of unarmed African Americans as outliers. This perspective accords with the folk theory’s ideology, which identifies “racists” as individual outliers who engage in isolated acts of bigotry. This distances the individual actions from society writ large, rendering invisible the way those individual actions are part of a broader pattern of discriminatory actions and policies that disproportionately impact African Americans.

As the interview continues, Trump reiterates the bad apple metaphor as he compares the bad apple to a golfer who simply makes a mistake and misses a shot. He says, “The police are under siege because of things — they can do 10,000 great acts, which is what they do, and one bad apple, or a choker — you know a choker, they choke — shooting the guy in the back many times.”

Interestingly, Trump’s reference to “one bad apple” remains unspecified in the conversation. He may be referring to the officer who killed George Floyd or, more likely in the last reference about “shooting the guy in the back many times,” he probably has in mind the Atlanta officer who

shot and killed Rayshard Brooks a few weeks after Floyd was killed. The fact that the “one bad apple” could refer to any number of officer shootings of African Americans within the months prior to his interview — for example, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Breona Taylor, Daniel Prude, Jacob Blake — underscores the very pattern that the individualization of those acts works to erase.

Speaking to Fox News host Tucker Carlson a few days after George Floyd’s death, Sen. Ted Cruz starts by acknowledging the injustice (see appendix B for the full excerpt): “Well, listen, it’s horrific and it starts with a horrific act of police brutality.” A few moments later, he underscores that the incident was carried out by a single individual as he objects to those trying to focus on the larger societal pattern; they “want to use this incident of clear abuse by one police officer and they want to use it to paint every police officer as corrupt and racist,” Cruz says. According to the ideology that supports the “law and order” discourse, Cruz can recognize the injustice of a single incident of police brutality (as did Ingraham in an earlier excerpt), but in doing so he needs to disconnect that incident from the larger pattern. The erasure of the system-wide pattern of state-sanctioned violence against African Americans is part of what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2013) refers to as the *minimization of racism*, regarding “discrimination exclusively as all-out racist behavior” while insisting that a societal pattern of “discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances” (29). This allows observers to recognize the injustice inflicted upon George Floyd while still negating that the incident fits a wider pattern.

#### 4. THE OUTCOMES OF THE “LAW AND ORDER” DISCOURSE

As the calls for racial justice during the summer of 2020 shined a spotlight on systemic patterns of state-sanctioned violence against African Americans, much of the public discourse centered on trying to reckon with the societal problem of racial disparities within policing and the criminal justice system. That reckoning, however, posed a substantial challenge to those committed to the racial status quo. The response, animated by Trump and many of his allies, was to recycle Nixon’s “law and order” slogan. Calls for “law and order” ostensibly sound as if they fall within the general moral order, somewhat similar to the idea that “Black lives matter.” But beneath the vagueness of this simple slogan resides the pernicious logic of the dominant racial ideology.

Drawing from the folk ideology, the “law and order” discourse isolates incidents like the killing of George Floyd as outliers having nothing to do with policing in general. This minimizes the

system-wide problem of policies and practices that contribute to a pattern of incidents of which George Floyd is but one example. Discounting the problem of systemic racism in policing also works to remove the motive of the racial justice protesters. If, according to the “law and order” logic, there is no systemic racism; then the actions of the racial justice movement to focus attention on systemic issues have little or nothing to do with justice for George Floyd. As Tucker Carlson says a few days after Floyd’s death while pointing to incidents of burning and looting, “Underneath it all, this violence doesn’t have that much to do with the behavior of the Minneapolis Police Department” (appendix A). The frequent representation of racial justice protesters through such images paints all street protests in a similar light of criminality.

The criminalization of the protesters inverts the racial vulnerability felt by African Americans at the hands of the police by positioning the police as the victims of racial justice protesters and the movement to affirm that Black lives matter. This is illustrated in the Ingraham-Trump interview in which the two speakers co-construct a narrative where, in Trump’s words, “police are under siege” (appendix D). The police are the ones said to be under threat, rather than recognizing the threat to Black lives and bodies within a system that continues to operate as if Black lives do not matter. The “law and order” slogan effectively counters the critical focus placed on racism in policing by inverting the threat and absolving the institution of policing and the wider social order as having nothing to do with each new incident of police brutality. The discourse spawned by the “law and order” trope thereby reinscribes key assumptions about racism, dismisses calls for racial justice, and perpetuates the racial status quo. The discourse, especially as it subtly works to defend the racial hierarchy, represents a substantial barrier to the types of systemic change needed to overcome the racist policies and practices entrenched in the system.

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ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Discourse excerpts come from cable news transcripts provided by LexisNexis. We used the search term “law and order” to search the LexisNexis database for transcripts from Fox News and CNN between the dates April 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020. Additional context for excerpts quoted in the paper can be found in the appendices where full transcript excerpts are provided.

APPENDIX A

“Tucker Carlson Tonight” (Fox News)

May 29, 2020

CARLSON: Mike Tobin for us in Minneapolis. Thank you.

Remarkable scenes of violence and destruction and chaos from across the country now and we're going to spend much of the hour keeping you abreast of what's happening.

But before we dive into that, we want to focus on one single thing that happened last night. A police station in a major American city was occupied and looted and burned.

Most of us assumed we would never live to see something like that happen here, but it did happen. So, the question is, has anyone been arrested for doing that? Will anyone ever be arrested?

No one in authority seems especially interested in apprehending the people who did it. All of it happened on camera, but the perpetrators just walked away, and it's possible maybe likely that most of them will never be punished for it. That's striking.

It's a very different experience from the ones most Americans have living here.

As Minneapolis burns and crowds grow in the streets of Atlanta and many other cities, the rest of us are continuing on as we always do. Dutifully following the rules. There are many of those.

Every year, there seems to be countless new rules to follow. They multiply like insects. We do our best to keep up. We get our permits, apply for our licenses, put on our reading glasses and check the latest regulations on the internet.

We wear our little masks. We keep our dogs on leashes. We drive sober. We don't eat on the subway. We never litter.

We make orderly lines and patiently wait our turn. In airports and government buildings, we remove our shoes and submit to body searches from strangers. We lose our dignity every time we do this, but they tell us we must, so we accept it without complaint.

In public, we hide what we really think. We bury our natural instincts. We keep our deepest beliefs to ourselves.

We know the boundaries. We understand we will be punished for telling the truth.

This is the America the rest of us live in.

For the privilege of citizenship in a country like this, we work as hard as we can. We never stopped sharing what we earn with others.

We send money we would rather give to our own children to politicians in faraway cities. With that money, they make new rules. We follow those rules to the letter. That's what we were told to do as children. That's the deal we've struck, at least, we thought it was.

Now, we know that other people have somehow negotiated a far better deal than the one we have. They get to ignore the rules.

They don't believe in order or fairness. They reject society itself. Reason and process and precedent mean nothing to them.

They use violence to get what they want, immediately. People like this don't bother to work. They don't volunteer or pay taxes to help other people. They live for themselves.

They do exactly what they feel like doing. They say exactly what they feel like saying. They spray paint their opinions on buildings.

On television, hour by hour, watch these people, criminal mobs destroy what the rest of us have built. They have no right to do that.

They don't contribute to the Common Good, they never have. Yet, suddenly they seem to have all the power.

This is hardly the first time something like this has happened in America. Spasms of destructive violence, a recurring feature of our history, in fact of every country's history.

The ideologues will tell you that the problem is race relations or capitalism or police brutality or global warming, but only on the surface. The real cause is deeper than that, and it's far darker.

What you're watching is the ancient battle between those who have a stake in society and would like to preserve it, and those who don't and seek to destroy it.

Underneath it all, this violence doesn't have that much to do with the behavior of the Minneapolis Police Department.

For evidence, watch this tape. It's from the 1992 riots in Los Angeles. It was shot almost 30 years ago. It could have been shot this afternoon.

APPENDIX B

“Tucker Carlson Tonight” (Fox News)

May 29, 2020

CARLSON: So I'm going to ask you the question that I asked Deroy, you're watching these pictures. You followed this for the past three days. What do you make of this? Where do you think it is going?

CRUZ: Well, listen, it's horrific and it starts with a horrific act of police brutality. You know, anytime you have a police officer involved shooting, the media often goes into a frenzy and there is an immediate demonization and attack of the police officers, and I think that's wrong. I think it's premature. That being said, in this instance, we have a video of the incident and we can see with Mr. Floyd, the officer with his knee on his neck for eight minutes. Mr. Floyd has his handcuffs. He is clearly incapacitated. He is begging for his life -- and what we saw was wrong. There's no legitimate law enforcement purpose for what we saw right there.

CARLSON: Well, I'm sorry, Senator, let me just -- let me just stop right there and just ask a question, and I agree with you, I found the video very upsetting. I mean, there's a lot of abuse of power by a lot of different people in charge, including the police sometimes. Do you believe, since let's just deal with facts here -- do you believe that the man in custody died of suffocation because the police officer was sitting on him?

CRUZ: I don't know. We'll have to see what the medical evidence shows. But what I do --

CARLSON: Wait. Wait. Hold on. Isn't that the question? I mean, either the cop killed him or he didn't? I mean -- no?

CRUZ: The question is, was that abuse of authority and police brutality?

CARLSON: It was definitely an abuse of authority. But the guy has been charged with murder. So, isn't the question whether he killed him or not?

CRUZ: Well, there are two separate questions. Number one, the Department of Justice opened a Civil Rights investigation. That was the right thing to do. I applauded the Department of Justice for doing that. Number two, the prosecutor chose today to bring homicide charges. Now, to prove that, they will have to prove that the evidence supports it. I don't know what the Medical Examiner is going to determine on that. So, whether or not it was homicide will depend on the evidence, but it was clearly police brutality, and it was not conduct we expect of any officer. The officers are entitled to defend themselves --

CARLSON: I totally agree with that. I think it was awful. I've seen that kind of -- I covered cops. I've seen the kind of thing before and I hate it. However, the country is convulsing on the basis of the idea that a cop killed this man who was restrained. He was in handcuffs. And I just -- I think it's a meaningful question. It's not something we could alight over them and like, oh, it doesn't matter. Of course it matters. Why wouldn't it matter?

CRUZ: Tucker, saying that the Criminal Justice System will operate and it will depend upon what the evidence is and whether the case be proven to the jury is not alighting over it. It's saying --

CARLSON: No, it's not and I agree with you a hundred percent there.

CRUZ: And, and one of the reasons, sadly, that we are seeing this violence and this rioting is that you have a lot of demagogues that want to use this incident of clear abuse by one police officer and they want to use it to paint every police officer as corrupt and racist. And most police officers heroically risked their lives to protect the communities they're in, often minority communities and for everyone that is stirring up racial division and engaging in violence and looting, that is completely unacceptable. Violence and criminal conduct is unacceptable whether it is committed by a mob in rage or whether it's committed by a police officer who is breaking the law. The law should apply fairly and uniformly to everyone.

CARLSON: So, why is that so difficult for so many Republicans in Washington to say, I saw the tape, I was horrified by it. The guy should be punished for doing this, and you're not allowed to burn our cities down.



APPENDIX C

“The Ingraham Angle” (Fox News)

June 1, 2020

INGRAHAM: We're going to check back with you as 11 PM draws closer. Now, as I said we're going to get to the action on some streets across the nation in moments. But first, this is my statement about what happened today and what's been happening. Restoring order. That's the focus of tonight's ANGLE. All people of good faith agree that what happened to George Floyd was heinous and depraved. It was murder. But that's not what we're seeing on our violent streets. We're not seeing outrage really expressed about that. And that's not what the criminals and the domestic terrorists are perpetrating as they use Mr. Floyd's killing to try to murder America.

APPENDIX D

“The Ingraham Angle” (Fox News)

August 31, 2020

INGRAHAM: So when you see the unrest on the streets — and so much of it is driven by an antipathy toward law enforcement.

TRUMP: Yes.

INGRAHAM: And more African-Americans are stopped by the police, the statistics that are cited over and over again. What can you say to those families who live on those streets and who are worried? They're worried because they think their sons or even--

TRUMP: Yes.

INGRAHAM: --their daughters could be targeted. Because I know - because I've known you for a long time, you don't want that. You want people to all be treated equally. But they have a caricature of Republican voters, and you're the leader of the party. What do you say to them about that mischaracterization?

TRUMP: What the black community wants in this country is they want police and they want law and order. They don't want what's happening to their communities. They're being affected in a much harsher, meaner manner than anybody else. That includes Hispanics, where I'm doing very well also. Look, they want law and order. They want the police. They do polls, and the polls are at 82, 83 percent, they want the police. They've gotten along with the police, and the police have been very badly mistreated because you got one bad apple, and it becomes a story for weeks.

INGRAHAM: St. Louis African-American police officer shot in the head and killed --

TRUMP: Yes, Dorn.

INGRAHAM: -- last night. No another African-American just killed yesterday.

TRUMP: That's true. Yes, that's true. Killed.

INGRAHAM: It's more dangerous to be a police officer today, do you not think, than it has been a long time?

TRUMP: The police are under siege because of things -- they can do 10,000 great acts, which is what they do, and one bad apple, or a choker -- you know a choker, they choke -- shooting the guy in the back many times. Couldn't you have done something different? Couldn't you have wrestled him? In the meantime, he might've been going for a weapon. And there's a whole big thing there. But they choke. Just like in a golf tournament, they miss a three-foot --

INGRAHAM: You're not comparing it to golf, because of course that's what the media --

TRUMP: I'm saying people choke.

INGRAHAM: People make -- people panic.

TRUMP: People choke. And people are bad people. You have both. You have some bad people, and they choke. You could be a police officer for 15 years, and all of a sudden you're confronted. You've got a quarter of a second to make a decision. If you don't make the decision and you're wrong, you're dead. People choke under those circumstances, and they make a bad decision. I've seen bad decisions of people that it looked bad but probably it was a choke. But you also have bad police, but you also, the vast -- not only the vast majority -- thousands and thousands of great acts, and one bad one, and you make the evening news for weeks.