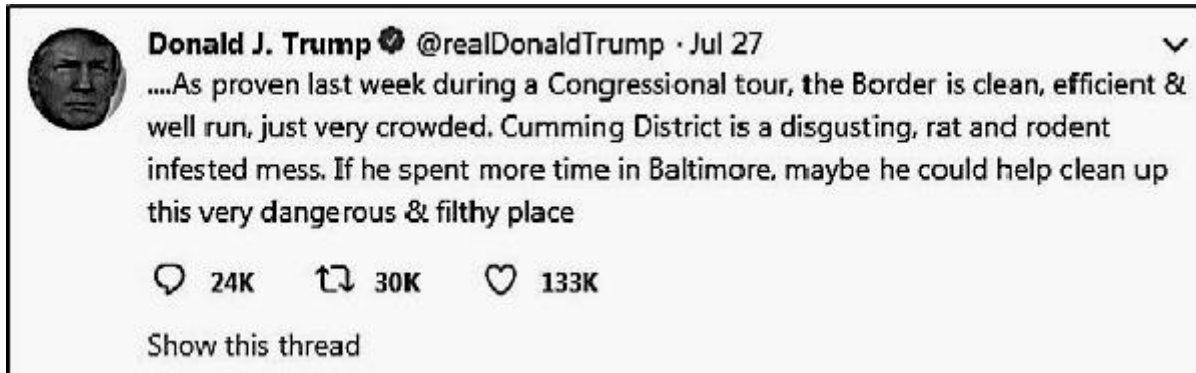


Posted 8/2/19

REPEAT AFTER US: “CITY” IS MEANINGLESS

When it comes to crime, it’s neighborhoods that count



For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. There we were, wondering what to spout off about when our sleep-deprived Prez came to the rescue with yet another [tweetstorm](#).

What set him on the warpath? Ten days earlier, [Rep. Elijah Cummings \(D – Md.\)](#), chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, had [berated DHS Acting Chief Kevin McAleenan](#) about the unconscionable treatment of illegal immigrants. After repeatedly interrupting McAleenan, the good Rep. blasted him with this:

I’m talking about human beings. I’m not talking about people that come from, as the president said, shitholes. These are human beings. Human beings. Just trying to live a better life.

Natch, the President noticed. Displayed above is his second rapid-fire tweet. Here’s the first:

Rep. Elijah Cummings has been a brutal bully, shouting and screaming at the great men & women of Border Patrol about conditions at the Southern Border, when actually his Baltimore district is FAR WORSE and more dangerous. His district is considered the Worst in the USA.

Here’s the third, (temporarily) ending the salvo:

Why is so much money sent to the Elijah Cummings district when it is considered the worst run and most dangerous anywhere in the United States. No human

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being would want to live there. Where is all this money going? How much is stolen? Investigate this corrupt mess immediately!

Rep. Cummings, who's based in Baltimore, promptly swiped back. And as one might expect, the "fake media" took his side. [In a news piece](#) defiantly entitled "Baltimore to Trump: Knocking Our City Is Our Job, Not Yours" the liberally-inclined *New York Times* proclaimed that despite the city's reputation for violence, "it so happens that many human beings do want to live in Baltimore." That lukewarm endorsement was the story's exact title in the paper's July 29th. National edition, which lands somewhere on our driveway each morning.

We'll let the antagonists fight it out. Their squabble proved useful, though, as it illustrates one of our pet peeves: mindlessly comparing crime rates. "[Location, Location, Location](#)" tracked murders for thirteen major cities during 2002-2015. St. Louis, the indisputable champ, closed things out with a mind-boggling 59.6 killings per 100,000 pop. Nipping on its heels, Baltimore posted a deplorable 55.2. At the other, far safer end, our burg. of Los Angeles (7.2) and the Trumpster's New York City (4.2) returned the lowest scores.

We've since used the [latest full UCR release](#) to assess murder rates in 2017. St. Louis (66.1) and Baltimore (55.8) managed to get worse. Los Angeles (7.0) held steady, while New York City (3.4) improved. Baltimore's homicide rate turned out *sixteen times worse* than the Big Apple's. The raw numbers are stunning. New York City had 292 murders; Baltimore, whose population is *one fourteenth* the size, suffered 342. Even the *Times* had to concede that Rep. Cummings' constituents aren't in a happy place, crime-wise:

Few denied that Baltimore is struggling, especially with violent crime — the city has recorded 32 more murders this year than New York, despite being about one-fourteenth the size.

[Mayor Bill de Blasio's boast](#) that New York City is "the safest big city in America" seems right on the money. Meanwhile, Baltimore is still in the doghouse. Trump's no paragon of accuracy, but this time he nailed it.

Right?

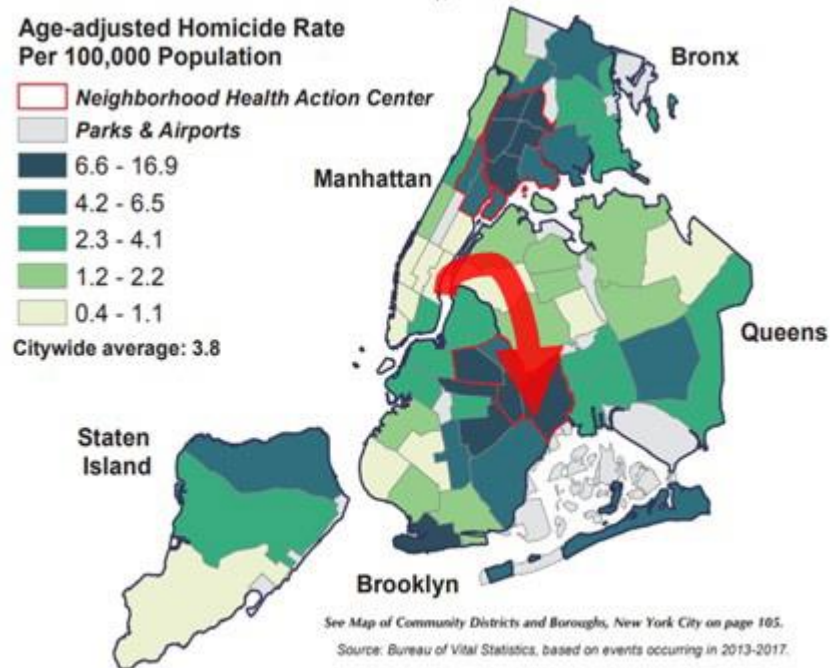
Well, not exactly. Our President's most recent domicile in the Big Apple was an ultra-lux apartment in Manhattan's fashionable [Upper East Side](#) (pop. 226,000, poverty ratio 7%, lowest in the city.) But there's a lot more to New York than Fifth Avenue. It's a really, *really* big place, with [more than one-hundred distinct communities](#). Mayor de

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Blasio aside, the city's own data reveals that these neighborhoods are by no means uniformly prosperous.

Some are phenomenally (absurdly?) wealthy' others are [chronically poor](#).

Just follow the arrow. Jump across the East river. Venture deep into Brooklyn and you'll find the [Brownsville](#) area (pop. 86,000, poverty ratio 28%, one of the worst in the city.) That's where a few days ago, on July 27th, [a gang member opened fire](#) as folks gathered for an annual celebration. Twelve were shot, one fatally.



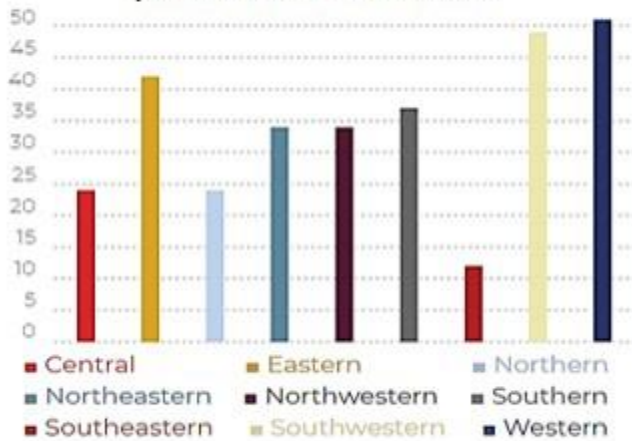
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While such extreme events are rare, Brownsville is indeed a very tough place:

- Its police precinct, the 73rd., [recorded thirteen murders](#) during 2018. (Far larger [Manhattan](#) had but one.)
- Brownsville's [2013-2017 homicide rate](#), 16.9, was worst in the city. To compare, the Upper East Side was tied for best at 0.4. Yes, that's *zero point four*. (For a detailed view of major crimes by precinct, click [here](#).)

What's our point? Neighborhoods in [Los Angeles](#) and New York (above and in "[Be Careful What You Brag About](#)") vary considerably as to violence. Where economic indicators are favorable, violent crime is low. Where they're not: fasten seat belts! Both cities, though, are blessed with a lot of affluence, keeping their overall homicide numbers at bay. If we wish to *meaningfully* compare murder across geographic space, we must go beyond abstract political boundaries. To that end, there really is no "Los Angeles" or "New York." What there is, is *neighborhoods*. Crime is about the conditions

Baltimore homicides per police district in 2018



<https://homicides.news.baltimoresun.com/>

under which people live. Control for factors such as poverty, unemployment rates and educational attainment and you're all set!

In our measly opinion, that caveat applies everywhere. Still, as [data compiled by the Baltimore Sun](#) demonstrates (see table), nearly every area in the struggling city is bedeviled by violence, some more than others. Rep. Cummings clearly has his work cut out.

But if our Prez wants to rattle cages, we suggest he pick on New

York City's de Blasio. Here's a recommended broadside: "How does it make you feel, your honor, that your city's Brownsville neighborhood is saddled with a murder rate more than *forty times* worse than the Upper East Side? And how do you intend to improve things?"

Um, we're waiting!