

# Blue Bloods

by [Norman Berdichevsky](#) (February 2021)



*Untitled*, Kerry James Marshall, 2015

***Blue Bloods*** is the most successful American TV police/crime serial drama and has run continuously since December 4, 2010. In May, 2020, CBS renewed the series for an eleventh season

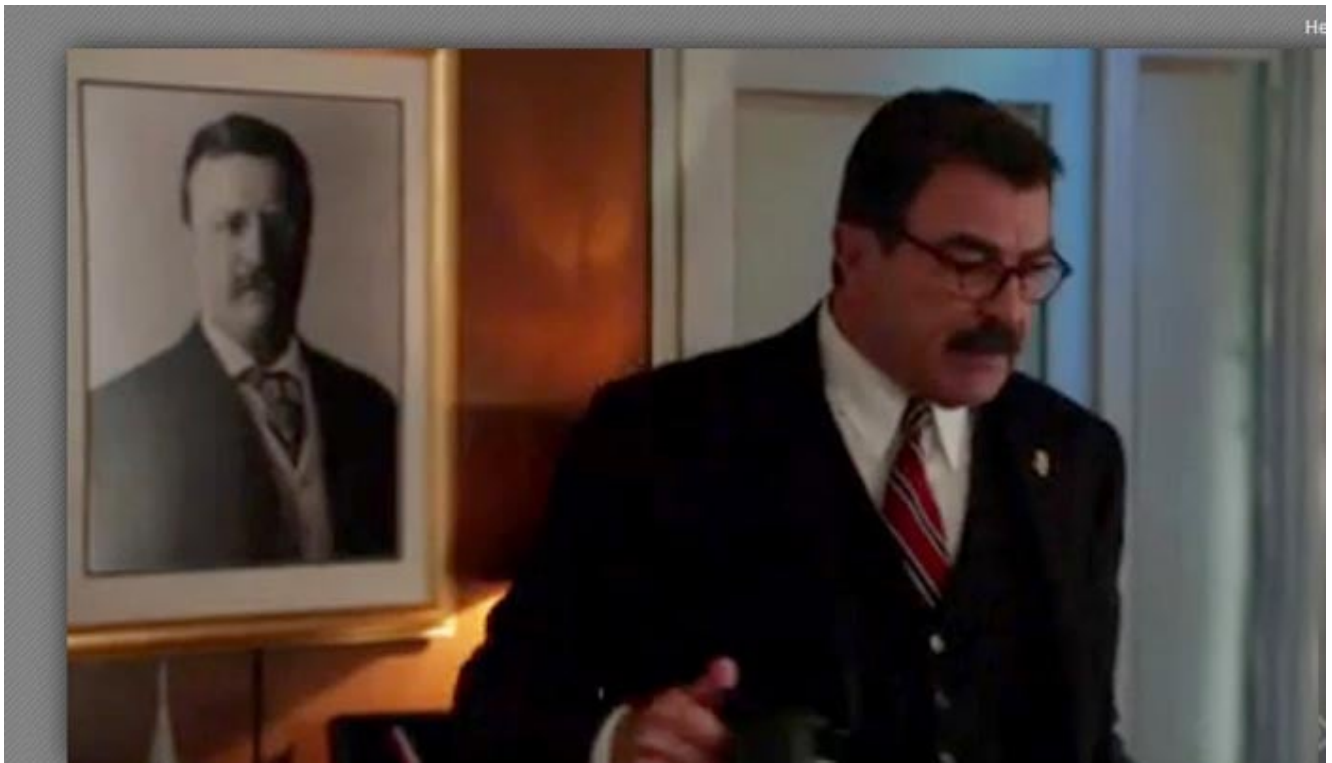
in response to the many fans who deluged the network with demands that the series continue and voiced their opposition to have any of the leading roles changed. Its main characters are members of the fictional Reagan clan, an Irish-American Catholic family in New York City with a history of dedicated work in law enforcement filling roles as Police Commissioner, prosecuting attorneys and police detectives spanning three generations.

The Reagan family gathers for Sunday dinner each week and however much they may differ in age, character and divergent views on law enforcement, they are united by devotion to each other, their faith and American patriotism. The Commissioner's office is adorned by a portrait of former President and former New York Governor, Theodore Roosevelt, whose statue was recently destroyed in the rioting and wave of lawlessness, arson, defacement or destruction of historical monuments and statues by rioters and supporters, sympathizers and members of Antifa and BLM, largely without interference from the police.

The cast is led by star Tom Selleck as New York City Police, Commissioner Frank Reagan. The show is filmed on location in New York City with occasional references to nearby suburbs. There is no better surrogate measure of support among the overwhelming majority of the American public for the police and a firm belief in their basic decency and devotion to duty. It has been nationally popular which should repudiate the publicized and inflamed rhetoric by self-appointed "community leaders" and many of the leading politicians in the Democrat Party. These individuals have claimed that whites and residents of rural areas strongly support the use of excessive force by the police even when resulting in fatalities. Solutions voiced by the most active voices in the Democrat Party have backed the unprecedented demand to "defund the police."

In the television series, Police Commissioner Frank

Reagan is the son of Henry, who rose through the ranks of the NYPD to become Police Commissioner. Frank's oldest son Danny is a tough "cop's cop", a brash and clever NYPD detective; the youngest son Jamie is an NYPD sergeant, and daughter Erin works as an assistant district attorney. Frank's second son Joe was murdered by a crooked cop in the line of duty in events that pre-date the series.



Lest anyone not familiar with the series assumes that these family ties are an example of "nepotism", misses the nobility of service embodied in the very title of "Blue Blood", a term which was historically employed to express aristocratic descent among Europeans, based on privilege and wealth, but for the NYPD and most other American law enforcement agencies, it refers to their dedication to duty and public service. I know this as a fact from a long-time close association with my best friend in pre-college days in the Bronx. He was my neighbor, Ralph Zakar, awarded a special commendation for gallantry in 1970, by Mayor John Lindsay. Ralph went on from his local beat to become a detective and broke the department's record, previously held by his father qualifying for the rank of Captain at the youngest age.

Yes, this is a show that unashamedly “glorifies” the police, expressing admiration for the risks they take, the abuse they often endure from the victims they seek to aid, and the lucrative and pleasurable enticements in bribes and other favors they must resist to “look the other way,” or violate the strict regulations limiting search and seizure and the need to obtain warrants. The show does not however hide the existence of occasional corrupt “bad apples” (of all ethnic and racial backgrounds). The show remains the most popular of all American police dramas on television.

Each member of the family represents a different aspect of police work or the legal process. While each person’s professional story might occasionally interweave with another’s, the show also follows the personal relationships with their respective partners and colleagues. Frank is in constant consultation with Garrett Moore, the NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Public Information and de facto Chief of Staff (the P.R. man), and later, Lieutenant Sidney Gormley, the Special Assistant to the Commissioner. In many scenes, the Commissioner has to balance the demands of this staff concerned mostly with how things “appear” to the public on the media and the avoidance of any overt pressure on groups that demand attention to community grievances above all else.

My favorite episode that encapsulates all these elements is “Excessive Force” Series 5 Episode 4. (October 2014)

When a recent assault is classified as a hate crime due to the victim being gay, a reporter’s question backs Frank into a corner, causing him to admit that he thinks the Catholic Church (the archdiocese is an important ally in the war against crime) is “behind the times” in its stance on homosexuality and maintaining the loyalty of its parishioners, a view subscribed to by the younger Reagans.

After chasing a robbery suspect into an apartment

building, Danny confronts the suspect who is a junkie (and happens to be Black). The suspect backs away against a third floor window, and then intentionally hurls himself out of the apartment, breaking his leg on the ground and screaming accusations that he had been pushed. A crowd gathers in support of the "victim" and begin cursing Danny. The incident is magnified into a cause by a black demagogue, the Reverend Potter, who has a record of stirring anger against the NYPD. He demands that Danny be fired and builds a case, supported by street demonstrations of several hundred supporters. Danny discovers that a young boy named Ernesto from an illegal Latino immigrant family lives in the building and managed to witness the suspect jumping out of the window. Danny's female partner was not able to keep up with him during the chase and arrived at the scene a moment after the suspect leapt so cannot testify. When Danny attempts to take the boy's testimony, he is silent. The reason is that he is motivated by fear that his family may be deported.

The "reverend" Potter meets with Frank and, sensing political leverage in his favor, demands the Commissioner agree to fire the offending cop, his own son. Frank is torn between the demands of the demonstrators magnified by the provocative media. Frank has a meeting with Cardinal Archbishop Brennan and asks: *How much mercy am I required to show?* Frank knows from their past encounters that the Cardinal has more sympathy and understanding for a drug addict who may have originally resorted to drugs out of desperation or pain.

The Cardinal responds: *"Well there isn't any metric that I know of. You show as much mercy as you can. It's as simple and as complicated as that"*

Frank: *"How can I defend my men against the charges of a "reverend" without insulting his flock"* to which the Catholic clergyman answers The Book of John teaches *"Even if a brother has done us wrong, we do not want to injure that brother's credibility."* Sensing that the skeptical Frank is

not convinced, the Cardinal chooses a more contemporary 'scripture' from *"The Book of the Godfather, Part II"* when Michael confronts Fredo, whispering only into his brother's ears that he is the one guilty of treachery. This is humiliating enough rather than expose his brother to the wrath of the entire community. Frank realizes that this is indeed sound advice, to keep it within the family, if possible, and a lesson in humility for himself as well.

Further investigation leads Frank and Danny to learn that Potter, at his own expense, is housing Ernesto's family. Frank is able to find Ernesto however and convince the boy that his family will not be deported if he tells the truth. Faced with the threat of divulging this embarrassing information, Potter is forced to abandon his threats, knowing that his own reputation will take a nosedive if publicly revealed and he will lose all credibility with the media.

Every time I have sat down now since the summer riots and tried to re-watch some of my favorite episodes, I cringe at what today's reality has become after the last four years of major attempts to cripple law enforcement and force the police to stand down huddled inside precinct headquarters in the face of mob violence. The policeman's job and the courts have become impossible when they now face the solid reluctance of most eye-witnesses who are intimidated and afraid to give testimony. They know that forgiving lenient "liberal" judges will often fail to weigh the evidence in the face of accusations that the police have violated a suspect's civil rights.

During the presidential campaign, Joe Biden had no answer to President Trump's charge that not a single law enforcement agency in the country had endorsed the Democrat candidate. The behavior of judges and prosecutors during the summer months of rioting and destruction of property resulting in dozens of fatalities was directed more against citizens who drew firearms in self-defense to ward off threatening mobs

than the trespassers. In the cities most affected such as Seattle and Portland, there were hardly any arrests, even when a police precinct had to be abandoned and was then stormed and occupied. In Seattle, protesters occupied an area of the city for weeks before police dismantled the zone following numerous instances of looting and the shooting deaths of two people. In Portland, protests continued for more than 100 nights straight, with violent assaults on police officers. What is this, if not "insurrection?" In Minneapolis, a police station was set on fire. In New York, protesters threw Molotov cocktails at police cars and there were many episodes of looting.

In practically every scene in which the Commissioner strides into his office to sit down at his desk, we glimpse the huge portrait of America's 26th president, and former governor of New York state, the youngest man to be elected president until JFK, Theodore Roosevelt, an outstanding, naturalist, conservationist, explorer, and founder of the National Park system whose statue once proudly stood at the entrance to the New York Museum of Natural History and was destroyed by the rioters who want to "Cancel history." "Teddy" first achieved enormous popularity and success for the reforms he introduced as Police Commissioner insisting on the highest level of honesty and integrity.

Teddy Roosevelt remained the acknowledged leader of the Republican Party's most forward thinking (I dare not use the word "progressive" anymore which the Democrats have appropriated for their far-left policies). His image has been indelibly stamped on Mt. Rushmore along with the iconic founders of the United States.



Contemporary cartoon during Theodore Roosevelt's tenure as Police Commissioner. A new reform mayor of the city, William L. Strong, offered him the job of sanitation commissioner in early 1895. Roosevelt turned it down, thinking the job of literally cleaning up the city was beneath his dignity. A few months later, after a series of public hearings exposed widespread graft in the New York Police Department, the mayor came to Roosevelt with a much more attractive offer: a post on the board of police commissioners. Enthusied by the chance to bring much-needed reforms to his hometown, and in a very public post, Roosevelt took the job.

On October 6, 1901, shortly after moving into the White House, President Theodore Roosevelt invited the principal African American spokesman Booker T. Washington (born in slavery), to dine with him and his family; it was the first such instance in American history and provoked an outpouring of condemnation from southern Democratic Party politicians and much of the press. Although Republican presidents had met privately with black leaders, this was the first highly publicized social occasion when an African American was invited there on equal terms by the president. Nevertheless, in the current madness of "cancelling history", Roosevelt's statue was removed with the approval of the natural history museum with the excuse that the statue (commissioned in 1925) of such a "controversial figure" could not be protected by the police.

The museum's president, Ellen V. Futter had this to say, *"Over the last few weeks, our museum community has been profoundly moved by the ever-widening movement for racial justice that has emerged after the killing of George Floyd. We*

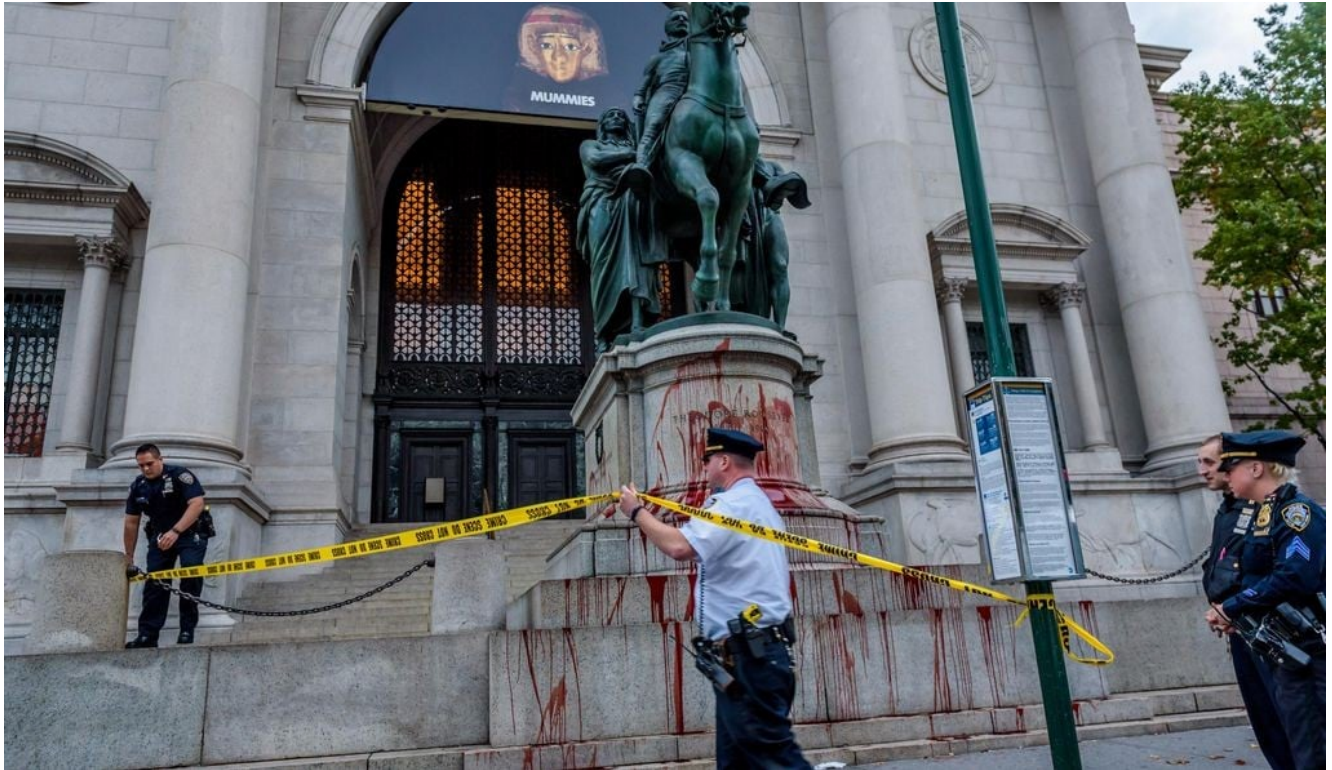


*have watched as the attention of the world and the country has increasingly turned to statues as powerful and hurtful symbols of systemic racism."*

No doubt, she would recommend replacing T.R.'s image on Mt. Rushmore with that of George Floyd. I can no longer watch the current episodes of Blue Blood with a good conscience. It has become a travesty pretending that it reflects reality. I doubt that in the future under a Biden administration, the police will be able to honestly act to fulfill their once honored oath, as my friend Ralph and the Zakar family once did so proudly.



Could any sane American four years ago have imagined how the police and history would both be eliminated?



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**Norman Berdichevsky** is a Contributing Editor to *New English Review* and is the author of [The Left is Seldom Right](#) and [Modern Hebrew: The Past and Future of a Revitalized Language](#).

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