

Focus on Looting Detracts From Racism

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As people of conscience in the United States rage against the institutional racism most recently demonstrated in the savage, brutal murder of George Floyd, President Donald Trump and a government-compliant media are struggling to take control of the narrative.

This writer views a variety of sites to glean not only what is going on in the world, but also the different ways in which it is all being interpreted. With the current civil unrest, he sees some 'news' outlets criticizing Trump, his response and the responses of other government officials (see CNN news), and other programs condemning the protesters (see FOX News). These difference are subtle, not stark. Real analysis is available, but not always easy to find.

What this writer finds troubling is the focus away from the systemic racism that is inherent in U.S. governance, and plainly manifested by the U.S. police force, toward a 'blame the victim' mentality that allows the government to maintain business as usual. As yet another unarmed, defenseless Black man is brutally murdered, on video, for all the world to see, it is the protesters and the destruction resulting from the demonstrations that are being condemned by all 'mainstream' news outlets.



Certainly, the arrest of the savage police officer who killed Mr. Floyd is a positive step. But National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien states that "I don't think there is systemic racism" in the U.S. police force, despite the evidence that clearly contradicts that view. One would like to believe that O'Brien is merely naïve and not racist himself, but that would stretch the imagination beyond any reasonable boundaries. Clearly, he is part of the problem.

Why do protests against racist murders and against racism itself turn violent? Are the

protesters, as Trump has said via 'Tweet', thugs? Trump has praised white supremacists, and now threatens to designate the loosely organized anti-fascist group, Antifa, as a terrorist organization (designating a domestic organization a terrorist group is probably not legal, but that hardly matters to Trump).

The rage at the brutal murder of Mr. Floyd is only the tip of the iceberg, bringing to the fore the centuries old, generational oppression of people of color in the United States. Education and employment opportunities for them are far more limited than for whites. While the public education system in the U.S. is dismal compared to any other industrialized nation, for people of color living in urban areas, schools are plagued with violence due to unregulated guns, abject poverty, and the racist 'war on drugs', not to mention the despair these factors cause. Police officers constantly harass the residents, apparently hoping to scare them into 'staying out of trouble', not caring that such harassment only feeds the hatred that so many people have for law enforcement representatives. And employment opportunities are generally limited to fast food restaurants, or other menial jobs.

Children, youth and adults stuck in areas that the government ignores because, after all, these are brown and Black people, can clearly see what they are missing. They are not ignorant of the fact that their white peers in more prosperous areas grow up with cell phones, computers and name-brand clothing. They know, as they toil over a grill in a fast food establishment, that their peers are studying at colleges and universities and, if working in fast food, are only doing so temporarily to have spending money until they finish school. They see the new cars sold to graduating seniors to whom finance companies are happy to extend credit. As older adults, they see the many things their children are missing in the 'land of opportunity', because for Black and brown people, that opportunity simply doesn't exist.

People of color are stopped and killed for routine traffic violations (Philando Castile, age 32, was executed in Minnesota because a bulb in the taillight of his car had burned out); for being in their own home (Atatiana Jefferson, 28, was executed in her Texas home after a neighbor, concerned that her front door was open late at night, called police for a wellness check); for playing with a toy gun (Tamir Rice, 12, (yes 12!) of Cleveland, was shot immediately when police officers arrived on the scene), and countless other reasons, too numerous to name here.

So when a Michael Brown or an Eric Garner dies simply because a white cop decides to execute him, rage at the injustice erupts, but not only within Black communities, but among people of conscience regardless of race. Pictures from the current unrest show Black, white and brown people joining together to vent their anger against a society that allows these executions to continue. And if some of that rage results in the perennial victims of U.S. oppression looting stores, it must be seen not as the problem, but as one manifestation of the much larger and insidious problem of U.S. racism. Desperation to have what is dangled in front of someone, but which is out of their reach, is not a crime. The institutional, government-supported circumstances that put them in that situation is.

The late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that "A riot is the language of the unheard". It is long past time that the prosperous minority in the United States started listening to the unheard majority. Destruction and looting are the only vocabulary the disenfranchised have, and if not heard, will only get louder.

A complacent public must not fall for the government distraction, supported by much of the press, that the victims are at fault. That public must take responsibility for the injustices done in their name, and work to alleviate them. Failure to do so will be our shame, and future generations will so name it.

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Robert Fantina is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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