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My office was vandalized during the George Floyd protests, and I'm not mad about it



Dimitri Antoniou May 31, 2020 · 3 min read

The weekend of May 30, my office in Downtown Dallas was vandalized by rocks thrown through our first floor windows. And to be real, I'm not mad about it.

I've heard a lot of people criticizing the destruction of property and looting that has occurred over the last week. First, I think it's important to point out that the series of events have been misrepresented by the media to show a higher representation of violent and destructive protests than occurred within all the peaceful ones. Second, when I've challenged this opinion, I hear a lot of people ask: "How can you justify the destruction or theft of property affecting innocent lives?"

Here's my answer: in asking that question, you are missing the point. In a vacuum, I share the values I am hearing, that it is wrong to destroy or steal others' property. But this context is much more complicated. This is a conflict rooted in a governmental acts of violence against a group of people because of their skin color without consequence or improvement. Hundreds of unarmed black people have been killed by police since 2014, and little has changed.

So when a 'riot' occurs (which I also think is a misused term used to smear protesters), I imagine myself in someone else's shoes. I am a white, college-educated, gainfully employed man. How would I feel seeing a person that looks like me killed in the street,

again, because of our shared skin color? I imagine rage, pain, helplessness, sadness, fatigue.

I imagine the fatigue from the knowledge that years of peaceful protests have made no difference. People called for peaceful protest today as a replacement for the weekend's protests, but also demanded punishment when Colin Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem in protest of this very issue. He used his platform to protest peacefully, and was vilified and blacklisted for it.

I imagine desperation that years of peaceful protest can't protect me from the violence that can occur while sitting in my own apartment. (Note: several unarmed black people have been killed in their own homes. Atlatiana Jefferson was shot through a window while babysitting her nephew.) If peaceful protest does nothing, what am I supposed to do?

Whether or not I personally agree with the actions is irrelevant, because I haven't grown up or lived in that reality. So instead of condemning the actions of violent protest, I choose to prioritize a higher value: the equality, safety, and opportunity of all people.

I say "higher value" because I believe our responses to events like the protests in Minneapolis occur within a hierarchy. We all have a voice, and people like me (at least in regards to race and gender), have a louder voice than many. We also all have an audience, but the attention of that audience is fleeting. How many times do I get to post on facebook and start a debate with people I know before they unfriend me or don't read the post?

So when I consider how I react to destruction of property during a protest, I ask: what is the greatest injustice here? And to me, it is the continued murder of people of color by our state. So I focus my energies and actions in addressing that injustice. Much further down in the hierarchy, far below a human's life and a people's history of violence, is the destruction of someone's property. I think this is an injustice, and I feel sorry for anyone affected.

My office was vandalized — the damage was limited to the windows and vinyls, but the mess took a few hours to clean up. I spent a few hours today cleaning, filing a police

report for our insurance claim, and hiding our valuables in case of further conflict. But I view this injustice to be a small scratch on a shattered piece of glass.

What does my discomfort, expense, and loss of property compare to the loss of a human life, and many human's lives? So am I sad to see a space I love, have worked hard on, and spend time in damaged? Yes. Absolutely. But am I mad about it? Nope.

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