No, We Should Not Condemn Uprisings Against Police Murders Like George Floyd’s

BY PETER GOWAN

The uprising in response to George Floyd’s murder by a Minneapolis police officer this week has led to predictable calls to condemn looting. But the real looting in our society comes from the military, the police, the pharmaceutical companies, private equity, the landlords, the real estate speculators, and the billionaires — not protesters against police brutality.

In the aftermath of a Minneapolis police officer’s murder of George Floyd, some of our nation’s media have turned to some crucial questions which must be addressed:

Should we condemn looting?

Yes, we should condemn the looting of the Global South by Western militaries and multinational corporations. We should fear the terrifying possibility that the COVID-19 vaccine will be enclosed, privatized, and sold for profit; and the looting of underdeveloped nations and underinsured people that would ensue.

We should fight back against the looting of underdeveloped nations’ coffers by odious debts and structural adjustment programs being drawn up and imposed by international institutions at this very minute.

But should we care about the other kind of looting?

It would take a heartless monster not to care about the looting of homes and buildings by vulture capitalists. We should organize against the impending wave of evictions that will crash into our communities as soon as courts reopen. And we should fight back against the theft of stable homes and schools; the unnecessary destruction of lives due to their prioritizing food over rent.
We care that whole working-class communities will be gentrified, their buildings replaced with housing for wealthier, whiter families, who bring in a bigger haul of loot for the landlord. We should be outraged that police are looting homeless people’s encampments, and we must demand that safe vacant homes and rooms no longer be hoarded away from unhoused people.

**Should we care about actual looting?!?**

Of course! Private equity stands to make a fortune off the bankruptcy of businesses around the country. By firing workers and raiding their pensions, they’ll make off with the bag. We care about the attempt to loot the United States Postal Service, for example, destroying countless good union jobs and an essential public service in order to dismantle a publicly owned institution and turn it into a private business to generate profit.

We are outraged by the ongoing looting of local and state government welfare programs by a federal Republican Party that wishes to see them destroyed and a House Democratic leadership whose solution to this issue is to give the rich in blue states a gigantic tax break. We are disgusted that representatives who claim to stand for workers and oppressed people will gladly allow their standards of living to collapse while passing tax cuts for the rich.

Without organizing a powerful labor fightback, we will see the actual looting of public coffers while the billionaire class has become $434 billion *richer during the pandemic.*

**But should we care about the looting of stores like Target and Autozone?**

This was the destruction of property by people enraged over the murder of an innocent black man by a white police officer. Should we, like Martin Luther King’s “white moderate,” equivocate about an anti-racist uprising?

Should we blame working-class black people for lashing out at a government and economy designed to repress, exploit, and subdue them; during a pandemic in which capitalism has made it near impossible for them to survive? Should we participate in this ritual condemnation even though our media consistently treats *identical acts of property destruction* by sports fans as simply revelry and exuberance, and corporate looting of working-class communities as business as usual?

No. George Floyd mattered. Black lives matter. And until we can build a movement that can defeat racism and capitalism, until working people of all races unite against capitalists and their repressive apparatus, it is a good thing that bosses, government officials, and the police who protect them are sometimes reminded that black lives matter through a little proletarian fury.

If you care about looting, turn your eyes to the militaries, the police, the pharmaceutical companies, the private equity ghouls, the landlords, the real estate speculators, and the billionaires. And demand that a world once looted from the vast majority be now returned to them.
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