

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Pandemic - Conflicted

June 1, 2020. and for the first time in over two months the pandemic is not dominating the headlines. Last Saturday was a moment of national pride when SpaceX launched the first privately-funded manned flight into space in nearly a decade. However overshadowing everything has been the widespread reaction to a black man in Minneapolis that died on Memorial Day during a police arrest. The initial demonstrations in Minnesota have now spread to every major city in the United States. There is near-universal condemnation for the actions on the police who caused the death, but there is also dismay at the out-of-control looting that has accompanied the protest marches. So here we are: we are **conflicted**. We are supportive of the protests but abhor the criminal looting activity. We have conflicting opinions: we want the looting to end but we want the discussion to escalate and not be suppressed.

The incident has resurrected the longstanding complaints that police brutality and race are linked. A week earlier a former police officer in South Carolina was charged with killing a black man who was jogging in a white neighborhood. The shooter was engaged in a civilian arrest but there was no evidence that the victim was engaged in a crime, and it was likely a case of racial profiling. The victim in Minneapolis expired during the arrest despite his pleas that he couldn't breathe. His crime was that he allegedly passed a counterfeit \$20 bill at a local store. It is obvious in both cases that the policing actions were unwarranted. The black community was quick to cite the two cases as two more examples of black men being unjustifiably being arrested or questioned by police because of the color of their skin.

While the protests may be applauded as a means for Americans exercising free speech, the conflict now seems to be centered around how to stop the looting and destruction of property. As is the case with everything these days, the whole situation has become politicized. A majority of the mayors and governors of the states directly impacted are Democrats. The President is calling for "domination", meaning calling in the national guard or the military to suppress not only the looting and destruction but also the protests. We wish we knew the right answer.

Up until the past week COVID-19 cases were steadily declining, which could be interpreted that social distancing practices were having a positive impact. Now with thousands of protesters gathering in close quarters are we going to see an uptick in new infections. So we are left with conflicting thoughts. How do you support mass protests while also supporting social distancing practices? We live in a safe area away from the cities where protests are taking place. In our community it is easy to follow the rules for shelter-in-place and wear masks to all public areas or stores. Consequently offering opinions of what should be happening elsewhere seems disingenuous?

When I try to digest the situation, I find myself dealing with conflicting opinions:

- How do we stop the looting and destruction at the same time that we want the discussion to escalate and not be suppressed?

- How do you support mass protests while also supporting social distancing practices?
- How do we take politics out of the resolution when the prime factor appears to be appeasing voters, not the afflicted?
- Isn't it disingenuous for us personally to champion tactics when we live in a safe area away from the conflict?