Looting Leads to Shooting—Rhetoric Stokes Racism

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For the second straight night, violence continued in the streets of Minneapolis on Thursday—despite the fact that most were protesting peacefully. To be clear: we can understand without condoning the pain, anger and frustration explaining why people rioted.

Once again President Donald Trump’s response endeavored to inflame the situation and stoke the violence by employing a historically racist trope, hoping his tweets would fuel rhetorical appeals for reelection—his overriding concern. Of note is the fact that Twitter flagged the President’s tweet, warning that it glorified violence: “Any difficulty and we will assume control, but when the looting starts, the shooting starts” and “I can’t stand back & watch this happen to a great American City. A total lack of leadership. Either the very weak Radical Left Mayor, Jacob Frey, get his act together and bring the City under control, or I will send in the National Guard & get the job done right.....”

I hope those in the streets, concerned American citizens and the media will not take the President’s rhetorical bait. After all, that would allow Trump’s predictable deflections to succeed. Instead, we must keep our eyes on the racism that caused the riots, as well as the current COVID-19 pandemic threatening our nation. The challenge, as many black leaders note, is to channel outrage and anger in ways leading to justice rather than becoming an excuse to avoid solving the problem.

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