TO FOLKS SAYING HOW DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS AND LOOTING/EXPROPRIATION LEADS TO FEAR. ESPECIALLY TO MY WHITE (AND JEWISH) COMMUNITY.

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In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests and uprisings against police brutality, I have heard a lot of people in my communities talk about how looting/destruction of property will fuel fear of the other. As a Jew (people of the book), a theologian, and a recent graduate of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, I have learned to take seriously the symbols and words we use, as they affect how we see the world, shape the world, and act in it. When we say "protestors should not rise up or be destructive because they will only incite fear," we are giving agency (and responsibility) to one group and not to another. We attribute destructive behavior to protestors (not to the systems and institutions killing our community members), but we fail to attribute responsibility or even and identity to the one who fears. For when we say, "it will only cause fear, who is fearing? When we say "X causes fear," in the passive voice, not "I am afraid," we are portraying fear and its negative effects on a justice movement as a natural and given fact.

Recently, I often am and have been worried about businesses I love being hit. I am worried about my friends' homes coming in the lines of fire (even though, where I am, none of the demonstrators have gone after residencies). Yes, my mind even goes to, what if my apartment gets hit? False reports in my community watch groups of white supremacists marching triggers my fear for people of color, and as Jewish person, these "sightings" also trigger fear for myself and the trauma of my own people's history of oppression. So I harbor fear, but letting my fear eclipse my anger at killer police or my hope for a just world is not inevitable.

After a week of being afraid so close to the center of this uprising, I have had time to reflect and lean into my anxiety, asking myself, "am I more viscerally afraid of my property being damaged than I am concerned about human lives lost?" That is, do I say "black lives matter" intellectually but harbor more of an emotional connection to businesses, to buildings, to things I have worked hard to own or been gifted with love? Why is this the case, I ask myself? Indeed, in South Minneapolis, around where the 3rd Precinct was burned, is it now a food desert? --except for the thousands of donations to a food drive each day and the conversion of a looted Target into an organized food shelf after just a few days. Is it unprotected? -- except of course that many felt not only unprotected by police but actively terrorized by them, and now communities are getting

together to protect themselves, clean their own neighborhoods, and offer support and love amidst the pain.

So, I repeat, even if I fear, fear is not inevitable. Or at least, we can quell our fears. We can breathe, and recenter the violation of community and destruction of life by violent systems of oppression channeled through the actions police against black people and people of color more broadly. We can monitor our heartbeats, and remember that it is white supremacy with its institutions of an unjust law, economic exploitation, and lethal enforcement that devastates communities. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony Mcdade cannot breathe, no longer have a pulse, can have no chance—no next step after fear. But we do. "It" doesn't just lead to fear. I do not have to let my real, emotional, personal connection to physical place and property overshadow my hope for justice; yet, I can help rebuild the places/objects lost without blaming the protests or using fear to excuse myself from my communal obligation. We fear, I fear, but what we do with that fear, how we channel it, is not a given. As Jewish we are agents with the responsibility to save lives.

#JusticeForGeorgeFloyd #BlackLivesMatter