



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on May 12, 2015

Justice for All Minorities?

The *New York Times* reported in a May 3 front-page article that “residents say arsonists singled out Asian-American owned businesses during the rioting” in Baltimore’s Sandtown. That’s the neighborhood where Freddie Gray grew up and apparently died from complications of a spinal injury incurred while in police custody.



This targeting of Asians, yet again, points to the long-running issue of racism among those who protest steadily and irately against racism.

What’s missing in the recent sequence of looting, arson, and destruction that occurred in the majority-black city of Baltimore — and previously in Ferguson, Los Angeles and elsewhere — are protest banners that say “Asian Lives Matter,” and “Jobs Created by Korean Mom & Pops Matter,” and “Minority-owned Asian Businesses Matter.”

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NPR reporter Nurith Aizenman went to the streets in the Sandtown neighborhood close to the spot of Freddie Gray’s arrest. On “this particular stretch — picture three treeless blocks of row houses, a lot of them boarded up — the only shops that were targeted were ones owned by Asian immigrants, mostly Koreans,” reported Aizenman.

Yvonne Gordon, a black woman in the neighborhood, told Aizenman that people kept looters away from black-owned businesses.

“They was like, ‘This is a black-owned store, and we’re not going to tolerate it,’ ” explained Gordon. “So go ahead and move. Go on home somewhere ‘cause we’re not going to tolerate it.”

There wasn’t that same property protection and lack of tolerance for looting when it came to non-black stores, said Gordon.

NPR’s Aizenman interviewed Travis Fonseca, “a tall, muscular 24-year-old hanging out on the corner” who said the looting and destruction of Asian-owned businesses was justified.

“It’s almost like payback,” said Fonseca. “You know what I mean? For all the unspoken things that has happened between those businesses and our people. I don’t feel like it was the most reasonable thing to do, but it’s definitely justified.”

The targets on the backs of Asians weren’t “reasonable” but “justified”? Explained Fonseca, “They profit off of us.”

Fonseca gave his own personal example. “I had to go to work one day,” he said. “I needed just a plain, white shirt for this day because I didn’t have a work shirt. I came into the store. I said, man, look, I get paid Friday. I buy at his store all the time. I just need to borrow a shirt until Friday. I’ll come back.”

Reported Aizenman: “He says they told him no. And it felt like total rejection.”



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The same targeting of Asian storekeepers was evident in Ferguson. “The Ferguson Market, where teenager Michael Brown allegedly grabbed a handful of cigars before his deadly encounter with police, is owned by the Patels, an Asian-American family,” reported The Daily Beast. “On the same block, Northland Chop Suey, a Chinese restaurant, has been looted at least two times. A second market, a beauty shop and a cellphone store within walking distance also have been damaged; all are owned by Asian-Americans.”

It was the same, except more extensive, during the race riots in Los Angeles 23 years ago. Following the acquittal of four LAPD officers in the Rodney King case, whole blocks of Koreatown went up in flames.

Minority lives matter?

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