

These Riots Are Nothing Like the Boston Tea Party

Amid the aftermath of George Floyd's tragic death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, a lot of [misinformation](#) has been spread concerning the riots and their place in history.

One particular item I've noted is a comparison of the present protesters and looters with the men who engaged in what later became known as the Boston Tea Party of 1773. But such a comparison shows a profound lack of knowledge of American history.

The Boston Tea Party was not some random act of politically inspired violence. It was a premeditated action that directly targeted offending parties who were carrying out a specific injustice against the American colonists.

In 1767, the British Parliament [passed the Townshend Acts](#), a series of laws which effectively outlawed the New York government from conducting business until they complied with the Quartering Act of 1765. These acts also taxed glass, lead, painter's colors, and paper, while reducing taxes and duties on the British East India Company so as to undercut the price of smuggled tea from Holland.

In 1773, [Parliament passed the Tea Act](#), an instance of crony capitalism benefitting the East India Company by, in effect, giving them a de facto monopoly. This was in part an attempt by Prime Minister Lord Frederick North's administration to legitimize Britain's attempts to tax the colonists. It also threatened the businesses of legitimate, law abiding colonial tea importers who did not receive the East India Company's favored status.

This was the impetus for the Boston Tea Party. In total, three ships were boarded and over the course of three hours, [45 tons](#)

[of tea](#) were dumped into Boston harbor. Aside from the tea, the only other property damaged was [a padlock](#).

Unlike the riots in Minneapolis and elsewhere, the Sons of Liberty's tea dumpers engaged in a limited action, only destroying property belonging to an offending party in the East India Company, and depriving their offending government of unjustly imposed taxes. The Americans also lacked any political representation in Parliament by which they might otherwise redress their grievances and engage peacefully within an existing political framework to right the wrongs committed against them.

If you feel bad for the East India Company, you once again portray your lack of historical knowledge. The East India Company was not some private business like the ones being torched across America today. Instead, it was formed by a royal charter issued by [Queen Elizabeth I in 1600](#) and, for a large part of its later history, this massive company fielded three armies and a navy all of its own, [functioning as the colonial arm](#) of the British government throughout Asia.

To compare the Sons of Liberty's destruction of the tea owned by this state-sponsored front for conquest with the actions of rioters in Minnesota is an immense disservice both to history and to those hurt by today's riots. Samuel Adams and the rest did not go on to torch neighborhood businesses after they dumped tea in the harbor. In fact, it is reported that the Tea Party's participants even [swept the ships' decks clean](#) before they departed.

But in Minnesota, [a Native American Youth Center](#) was set aflame, the lifelong dream of an Ecuadorian immigrant went up in a puff of smoke as his restaurant was consumed, and a Latina owned building burned down, putting an end to the Spanish-language La Raza radio station housed within. [African Paradise restaurant](#) was not only a minority-owned business, it also fed people for free once a week, but now it may not

reopen after damage sustained from the riots.

In order for a George Floyd-related protest or action to be even remotely comparable to the Boston Tea Party, it would have to be a premeditated, targeted attack on the institutions or persons engaged in the oppression being resisted. The riots we currently see are spontaneous, indiscriminate acts of destruction which directly harm the very people that the protesters are trying to help.

Separate the protesters from the rioters. There is cause to be angry, but there is not cause to destroy your neighbor's life's work and livelihood when he did nothing to harm you. Be mad, but be mad at the right people.

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