

Conserve Your Sympathies, Fight Your Own Battles

As has not been lost on many modern-day libertarians, the ancient Greek and Roman Stoics counselled – among many other things – that since the vast majority of occurrences we encounter in life are matters beyond our control, it only makes rational sense to disregard such goings-on, and focus exclusively on those things which are of immediate concern to us, and fall within our own sphere of personal influence.

I'll cite, as merely one recent example, the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse: It took place, as did the events which precipitated it, in Wisconsin – a part of North America I've never been to. I have never met Rittenhouse, nor any of the people involved in what he was accused of, nor anyone in their immediate circles. It is unlikely, in fact, that I ever will. None of the events that took place affected me, or my property, nor anyone I personally know or am acquainted with. Making a point of expressing my views on what occurred, and the subsequent trial – or becoming otherwise emotionally involved in it at any level – would not have affected what took place, or the eventual outcome, in any capacity whatsoever. No physical, or even spiritual action I might've engaged in would've either.

Yet look at the wasted words, attention, and physical and emotional energy literally *millions* of people – in the mostly left-wing agitator media, on social media, in the streets and in living rooms alike – gave to these events.

Do I have an opinion as to what transpired? For what it's worth, I believe Rittenhouse acted in legitimate self-defense, and that the jury in his trial (which never should've even been held to begin with) came to the correct decisions.

But again, I ask: What does any of that have to do with me, here, in my own life, on my own property, in Vermont?

In 1875, Lysander Spooner reminded whoever would read his work in "Vices Are Not Crimes: A Vindication of Moral Liberty," that:

"If those persons, who fancy themselves gifted with both the power and the right to define and punish other men's vices, would but turn their thoughts inwardly, they would probably find that they have a great work to do at home; and that, when that shall have been completed, they will be little disposed to do more towards correcting the vices of others, than simply to give to others the results of their experience and observation."

The quotation might be slightly off-topic, however closely related, but it's that part about "great work to do at home" that sticks. Involving my mind and energies in Kyle Rittenhouse's situation – one way or another — does him, me, and no one else any good whatsoever. Likewise, Kyle Rittenhouse, or anyone in his circle, involving themselves in my own personal travails is neither sensible, nor helpful, nor even welcome. We all of us have "great work to do at home." And that should be the exclusive focus of our respective attentions.

Perhaps working in my yard, cleaning the house, talking to a friend on the telephone, or writing this essay are not things that are going to change the world. Neither is posting angry comments on Fascistbook (if you're even still allowed to do that there), or bitching to people down at the local coffee shop. My activities, however, *will* change *my* world just a tiny bit. Most, if not all, of them will not piss me off, frustrate me, raise my blood pressure, or make me feel lousier about life. So which makes more sense? Which is more productive? Fighting other people's battles, or your own? Do you see them fighting *yours*? No? Is that good or bad? Ask yourself. Are you more concerned with Kyle Rittenhouse and his life, or becoming a better person yourself, filled with greater peace of mind, focused on personal goals, and on the road to attaining happiness? Again, ask yourself.

There are plenty of people, no doubt, in our own immediate lives who deserve our care and attention – including ourselves, as it just so happens. There are also plenty of battles to fight that reside well within our own personal territory – both external and internal. Best focus on those — not senseless, distant abstractions generated by propagandist mass-media.

Life is short – but it's yours. Live it. Not someone else's.