

The Problems We Must Solve Are Too Important to Reduce to Left vs. Right Politics

When considering a way forward, the discussion initially seems to be complicated because there are a lot of things that have gone wrong in the aftermath of George Floyd's tragic death.

Looting is wrong. Blaming the wrong people for looting is wrong. Using the wrongness of looting to drown out discussions about what preceded the looting is wrong. All of the aforementioned things are wrong, but the key to finding a solution lies in identifying a more subtle form of wrong that blinds us to the answers we need.

And that is the tendency to reduce discussions about race and riots to the same old "Left vs. Right" talking points.

Not only is this also wrong, but it's a form of being wrong that condemns us to a cycle of repeating our past mistakes.

If our underlying framework for discussing solutions is wrong, then everything that follows will be wrong as well.

We don't need to pretend that the battle between Left vs. Right is unreal or unimportant, but we do need to remember that this battle is a manifestation of a broader and more fundamental battle between Freedom versus Force, Creativity versus Coercion, and Central Planning versus Voluntary Markets that allow all individuals to opt-in and opt-out of services based on their basic human right to decide for themselves what their preferences and priorities should be.

As everyone searches frantically for a specific group or political figure to blame, lovers of liberty are being presented with an opportunity to take the conversation beyond the familiar mudslinging at personalities and parties.

Nobel Prize-Winning Economist Milton Friedman wrote:

I do not believe that the solution to our problem is simply to elect the right people. The important thing is to establish a political climate of opinion which will make it politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing. Unless it is politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing, the right people will not do the right thing either...

The message here is apropos for our times:

Trust incentives more than individuals.

This applies to corporations and governments. This applies to leftist organizations and right-wing organizations. This applies to the religious and the secular. This applies to academia and entrepreneurship. The basic economic principle that “people respond to incentives” applies to us all.

If the incentives of a system are bad, even the work of those who mean well is compromised.

If the incentives of a system are good, we don't have to place so much faith in our ability to always see things the same way.

The way we're going to move forward in this world is not by finding a person who's good enough to make bad systems work, but by investing in systems that incentivize even the bad people to make themselves accountable to creating value for others. And we know of no other system like that than the free market.

The world is more ready than ever to hear from voices who are willing to show them something that offers meaning, healing, and hope in times of conflict and crisis.

There is no better time for us to show those who are hurting how much the free market creates and delivers even when their enemies condemn and disagree.