

# Walk With Us

What is a protester? Someone who exercises legitimate freedom of expression manifested in marches, speeches or books in the arena of debate over civil rights and other public issues.

One county sheriff removed his helmet and lowered his baton as protestors approached. He spoke to the “shot-caller” or activist who had organized the marchers, asking what they wanted. In doing so, he took a huge risk. He was told that they wanted to express their rage at what happened to George Floyd. The sheriff told them that what they saw on that 8-minute video was NOT what he and his forces believed is right. Immediately the protestors challenged him – “Then walk with us”. That is what happened. They walked together, keeping at least a meter between all the protestors because of Covid-19 guidelines.

What is an infiltrator? Someone who slips into the legitimate process, with ulterior motives.

Seeing Jamie Foxx among the activists giving speeches made it clear that people travelled to Minneapolis in the midst of the pandemic out of solidarity. Foxx admitted publicly that he is from Texas, not from Minneapolis, making some people wonder why he traveled to Minnesota and didn’t just march or make speeches in his home state?

What is an agitator? Someone who takes a serene non-violent legitimate protest march and fires it up.

Andries Tatane was NOT an agitator, he was an activist and in fact a peacemaker. South Africa is no stranger to mass actions – service delivery protests as we call them. Marches always need organizers, that is legit. But they say that the IQ of a mob is equal to the IQ of the dumbest person in the mob. And there are those who know how to rile up protestors.

What is an instigator? Someone who precipitates action. Remember that revolutions are stage-managed, not spontaneous.

Ask Vladimir Lenin. Or Molotov. They understood how to take activism to the next level. This methodology is taught to those whose intent is to overthrow the Rule of Law. Particularly those on the Far Left have learned how to do this. For example, when a political leader who represents his constituency in parliament shoots off a machine gun at a youth rally – from the podium – a line has been crossed.

What is an opportunist? Someone who piggy-backs on pent up frustration from an authentic issue like Black Lives Matter and broadens that into personal or partisan agendas.

One can understand and sympathize with the explosion of solidarity over the death of George Floyd. Not to mention many others, going back even further than Steve Biko. But when people lose their composure and the protest spins out of control, it no longer does honour to the deceased.

What is a looter? Someone who steals and burns under the cover of legitimate peaceful protest.

A peaceful protest is supposed to be non-violent. We are familiar with the road being strewn with rocks and burning tires. However, robbery and arson bring no honour to the fallen heroes. Above all, they distort perceptions in the media, which loves to report flaming vehicles and buildings. The media runs to scenes of burning and looting like boys run after footballs. This is as unfortunate as disclosing the name of perpetrators after mass killings. Their names should not be aired, for that is exactly the kind of fame that they want – infamy.

What is an anarchist? A far-Left political belief that change can only be brought about by sacking Rome, by challenging the Rule of Law.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this was a political force like today's Marxism or Fantonomism. But the attraction of mass anarchy no longer holds popular appeal. Leftists parties prefer to mobilize those who are inclined to this kind of behaviour, as foot-soldiers for their cause. It is actually a philosophy, that says that change cannot happen without first tearing down the status quo. So it is intentional, and these people now come out under cover of some other cause.

What is vigilantism? When ordinary citizens - not designated forces that are empowered to keep Law and Order - take it upon themselves to do so.

This is why Minnesota finally decided to call out the National Guard. Almost instinctively, the President had tweeted “when the looting begins, the shooting begins” but the governor – a Democrat – balked at the excessive use of force. One can understand why, in the light of the fact that what sparked the rage in the first place was excessive use of force – against George Floyd. But peaceful protests have a way of being hijacked by sinister forces.

The closest report of vigilantism came from a community radio journalist who walked around Minneapolis neighbourhoods interviewing people. He reported that a lot of residents were simply sitting out on the verandah of their house – with their guns in full view, not going anywhere. When he asked why, he was told “We are protecting our neighbourhood”.

What happened to George Floyd was totally unacceptable. What was somewhat unusual about it was that it was caught on camera – for all to see the everyday reality of police brutality. Given freedom of expression there is no surprise that there was a back-lash. Justice must be served. But at the same time, protests are only legitimate in a constitutional democracy, if they are peaceful and non-violent.

What people were chanting as they marched together – spaced apart because of the Covid menace – was “I can't breathe”. Metaphorically speaking, that is where the African American community is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

George Floyd is dead. Long live George Floyd.