

# Made in Japan

☒ In the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, we've seen dozens and dozens of videos and photographs of destruction, despair and loss. Orphaned children, homes destroyed, buildings toppled, photographs scattered in the streets, cars floating in the ocean, bodies washed ashore, and the horrors continue. Any time there's a disaster somewhere in the world, we're exposed to these types of images 24/7. But something's been missing from all the pictures and news reports about Japan. Think about it. There were no signs of looting anywhere!

I even googled "looting in Japan" and came up with nothing, nada, zippo. All I got were articles saying "no looting in Japan," "why is there no looting in Japan?" and "discipline in the face of disaster."

It seems every time there's a catastrophe, there's a group of people who seize the opportunity to inflict further pain and devastation on their neighbors. Hell, it doesn't even take a catastrophe.

For example, why is there so much destruction after an NBA championship? I can still see the images of the morons outside the Staples Center in LA destroying vehicles after the Lakers championship win.

On a much smaller scale, one of my husband's clients, who suffers from seizures, had one on the street in Seattle this week. After waking up, he realized all his personal belongings were stolen. And this occurred on a street in a major city during the day and no one stopped the SOB(s) who did this or even helped the victim.

There was looting in Chile after its earthquake last year, and, even now, reports of rapes and other sexual assaults occur regularly in camps where survivors of the Haitian

earthquake are housed.

And, lastly, can any of us forget the images after Hurricane Katrina? Instead of allowing 1,500 police officers to continue their search and rescue missions, then Mayor Nagin had to recall them back to the streets so they could try and stop the rampant looting that was occurring throughout the city of New Orleans.

I'd call these people animals but animals don't behave in such a way. Even jackals, opportunistic predators, seek out their prey for food and survival – not for pleasure. But not these folks. Instead, we see a bunch of criminals targeting their own neighborhoods and friends. What makes me angry and disgusted is that these lawbreakers aren't even looting for survival. They're not stealing food and water. They're stealing big screen tvs. In what alternate universe is it okay to break your neighbor's store window – a place where you've probably shopped every day – and steal everything you can carry away?

Granted, this is a small percentage of our citizenry, but even one act of vandalism amidst the carnage should be unacceptable.

In civilized societies, government or private aid will always come eventually, and, if it doesn't get to you within the next 15 minutes, then you should be patient and wait your turn or kick yourself for not having your own supplies on hand in case of emergency.

If I were Empress of the world (when things **would** be different), I'd arrest every one of these thugs, prosecute them and sentence them to community service to help rebuild their city, brick by brick.

One article this week poses the question, "Why do some cultures react to disaster by reverting to everyone for himself, but others – especially the Japanese – display

altruism even in adversity?"

I'm sure a sociologist could explain it. I don't care why hoodlums in America act like they do in the face of a disaster. Because of the chaos, these tragedies are just a cover for them to get away with something they would normally do but now they can do it without any fear of being caught. I don't care what the reasons are. Reasons, whatever they may be, are no excuse.

According to James Picht at The Washington Times, Japanese people are taught that conformity and consensus are virtues. To Americans, who prize individualism, those virtues sound almost offensive. In normal times, concerns about appearance and obligation may be stifling, but in adversity they may be what trump the urge to smash and grab. Japanese culture isn't superior; it's just well suited to maintaining public order immediately after a major disaster.

Decades ago, a product "made in Japan" meant that the item was probably cheap and not well made. Today, seeing the dignity of the Japanese in the face of tragedy and their civility towards one another, I wish more of that was made in America.

My prayers and thoughts are with the people of Japan.