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USA - Debate

# Trump fanatics invade Capitol as his presidency disintegrates

- Debate -

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**Chaos and disarray marked an electrified Washington, D.C. political scene in the days immediately following the Wednesday, Jan. 6 President Donald Trump-instigated rampaging mob that stormed the Capitol Building aimed at preventing an in-session joint meeting of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate from certifying Joseph Biden's Nov. 3 Electoral College victory.**

The several hundred rightwing racist rioters – a small portion of the several thousands that Trump mobilized for a rally earlier in the day – carrying Trump and Confederate flags, an array of weapons paraphernalia, military gear and noxious gas explosives, easily breached the Capitol Police's unusually thin line of security. The raging Trumpists, virtually unhindered for two-plus hours, smashed Capitol building windows with iron bars, entered the Capitol Dome and took possession of the Senate chambers. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, among several others, was occupied and vandalized. The handful of overwhelmed security guards inside proved helpless to intervene; some literally took selfies and high fived the rioters, according to a report by Amy Goodman's Democracy Now! Senate security officials organized the hurried evacuation of the assembled members of the House and Senate while others barricaded the doors to the House in an armed standoff against the marauding intruders.

This high drama violent spectacle was captured live and broadcast around the world including videos of frightened elected officials seeking refuge under desks or laying on the ground as the chamber was inundated with tear gas.

## Trump's mass rally

At least 25,000, perhaps 50,000 Trump supporters had rallied earlier in the day at the Ellipse near the White House for a long planned Trump-initiated "Stop the Steal" mobilization to challenge the joint session's expected Biden certification. Said Trump in tweets to build the rally. "Big protest in DC on January 6th. Be there! Will be wild!"

Trump addressed the rally for an hour proclaiming, "You'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong. We have come to demand that Congress do the right thing and only count the electors who have been lawfully slated." Declaring that he would "never concede," and claiming that he won the election, Trump's presidency was nevertheless disintegrating. The joint session reconvened early the next morning to certify Biden's victory, with 139 House members and 10 Senators dissenting. Hours later, a deflated Trump, with his staff and cabinet members resigning in droves, tweeted that he would assist in the transition to the new president but that would not attend Biden's Jan. 20 inaugural.

Earlier in the day Trump promised to join the planned "Stop the Steal" march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol, but instead immediately headed to the White House, where he later frantically phoned hoped for loyal Republicans, who had been evacuated from the Capitol and sequestered to safe and unidentified locations, to press them to reject Biden's certification when the session resumed. Trump's son and featured rally speaker Donald Trump Jr., denounced VP Mike Pence and other Republicans for refusing in advance to use the joint session to reject Biden's certification. The marching crowd chanted, "Hang Mike Pence! Hang Mike Pence!" A Reuters photographer, Jim Bourg, stated that he heard Capitol Hill rioters declaring "they hoped to find Vice President Mike Pence and execute him by hanging him from a Capitol Hill tree as a traitor." Pence was present when the rioters later entered the chambers, mocked, but unharmed.

Said Trump Jr. at the rally, “We’re coming for you and we’re going to have a good time doing it.” Trump’s personal attorney, Rudolf Giuliani, who previously played a key role in filing some 60 failed lawsuits challenging the election results, egged on the crowd of rightwingers, “Let’s have trial by combat... Stand up and fight!”

## Minimal security forces present at Capitol

With regard to calling on security forces to defend the beleaguered and occupied Capitol, not to mention to rescue the sequestered congresspersons and senators, the increasingly disoriented Trump, viewing the moment as his last hope to retain his presidency, played no role. In his absence, VP Pence took charge of calling in various police agencies to protect House and Senate members. In a matter of hours, not minutes, a virtual army of National Guard troops, Capitol Police, FBI and other armed forces appeared and slowly, gently to be sure, cleared the area following the DC Mayor Muriel Bowser” declaration of a 6:00 pm curfew. Most of the occupying racist bigots were initially allowed to freely leave the premises. The great portion of the original marchers that headed toward the Capitol, wanting no part of a confrontation with security officials, gradually dispersed and disappeared. But thousands remained.

Capitol Police shot and killed one of the intruders, 35-year-old Air Force veteran Ashli Babbitt of San Diego, later described by officials as a strong QAnon conspiracy theory believer. Four other Trump supporters outside the Capitol were later reported to have died due to unspecified “medical emergencies.” Some 14 rioters were initially arrested; 83 more were subsequently taken into police custody as of Jan. 9. One member of the Capitol Police died, reportedly from injuries inflicted from a fire extinguisher.

DC Mayor Bowser, in anticipation of planned acts of violence from organized rightwing groups, including the neo-fascist Proud Boys, had earlier in the week requested the Pentagon to deploy the National Guard. Weeks before the event thousands of Facebook and Twitter communications revealed violent far right intentions. Her request was denied according to some reports, on Trump’s orders.

The stunning absence of Capitol security, especially when some 535 members of the House and Senate were present – the formal elected national leadership of the U.S. – appeared to be no accident. A day after the security fiasco, with lawmakers demanding accountability from responsible officials and an investigation demanded Republican leader Mitch McConnell, among others, Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund submitted his resignation. By the end of Thursday, the top security officials in the Capitol also resigned including Senate Sergeant at Arms Michael Stenger and his House equivalent.

## Ongoing resignations from Trump’s team

VP Pence’s recent break with Trump in refusing to use the proceedings to challenge the election results put him among a rapidly growing group of top Republican officials who have deserted Trump’s two-month campaign to retain the presidency. Resigning Trump cabinet members immediately following the Jan. 6 Capitol takeover included Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. Said DeVos in her resignation letter to Trump, “There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation.” No doubt, DeVos, Trump’s reactionary champion of the privatization of public education and the sister of Trump pal Erik Prince, founder of the private mercenary army corporation, Blackwater USA, (now called Academi) considered resigning rather than take the political risk of voting against Trump’s removal should Pence invoke procedures to do so under the 25th amendment to the Constitution.

Mick Mulvaney, a former White House chief of staff now U.S. special envoy for Northern Ireland, also quit Trump's administration as did a number of White House officials, including deputy national security adviser, Matthew Pottinger and Stephanie Grisham, chief of staff and press secretary to first lady Melania Trump.

Trump fired a State Department official, Gabriel Noronha, who wrote that the president was "entirely unfit to remain in office." Noronha tweeted, "President Trump fomented an insurrectionist mob that attacked the Capitol today. He continues to take every opportunity to obstruct the peaceful transfer of power. These actions threaten our democracy and our Republic. Trump is entirely unfit to remain in office, and needs to go." Noronha added, "All government officials swear to uphold and defend the Constitution. That is where our loyalties must lie, not to any man or political party."

After Chad Wolf, acting Department of Homeland Security secretary, urged Trump to "strongly condemn the violence" at the U.S. Capitol. Trump removed him as the president's nominee to head the agency.

Former Attorney General William Barr, who resigned just before Christmas, said that Mr. Trump's conduct on Jan. 6 was a "betrayal of his office and supporters."

The kid glove treatment of the racist Trump mob that aimed at physically preventing the certification of Biden's presidency stood in marked contrast to last summer's brutal clubbing, gassing and blinding rubber bullet firing violence and mass arrests unleashed against the peaceful DC mass mobilizations to protest the Minneapolis police murder of George Floyd. Trump took the lead in orchestrating that horror, pretending to invoke the authority of the 1807 Insurrection Act. Whether or not the relative absence of security forces on Jan. 6 will be attributed to Trump himself or to complicit racist security forces remains to be determined.

Biden, himself, with a decades long record of complicity with, if not facilitation of southern racist segregation norms, not to mention his more recent role crafting racist mass incarceration oriented legislation, felt to the need to comment on the near absence of security forces. Said Biden, "No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday, they wouldn't have been treated very, very differently from the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol. We all know that's true. And it's unacceptable. Totally unacceptable."

## Debate over Trump impeachment vs, invoking 25th amendment to remove Trump

Whether to impeach Trump with a second House resolution or to press his now estranged VP Pence to invoke the 25th amendment to immediately remove Trump from office are among the issues now under discussion at a time when Trump's very stability, if not sanity, is being questioned as never before. House Speaker Pelosi was reported to have called General Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to discuss barring Trump from access to the secret doomsday security codes required to launch nuclear war!

The 25th amendment allows Vice President Pence and a majority of Trump's sitting cabinet to affirm that the president is unable to fulfill the duties of his office. If they should so affirm, Pence, who to date has declined invoke the 25th amendment, would immediately becomes the acting president and then president, following a required two-thirds vote of the House and Senate. In the waning days of Trump's presidency neither of the above scenarios is likely. Should one or another come to pass nothing of great import for the American people will result, other than the further humiliation and possible prosecution of an already ruling class-discredited Trump and a legal ban on his running for president in 2024.

On the real issues of the day – the great issues of our times – an unprecedented economic crisis where the real rates of unemployment and underemployment have approached 40 percent, where millions face immediate eviction or foreclosures, where daily COVID-19 deaths have reached 4,000, where a raging climate crisis threatens cataclysmic disaster and the U.S. imperial war machine inflicts daily horrors on poor and oppressed people around the world – neither party of the ruling rich has any solutions.

## Historical truths revealed

The unfolding events surrounding the storming of the Capitol inadvertently revealed some historical truths long hidden from public scrutiny. Illinois Democratic Senator Dick Durbin, for example, in countering Ted Cruz's joint session move to establish a commission to review the elections results rather than certify them as the law requires, invoked the memory of an 1877 Electoral College commission whose "compromise" effectively changed the outcome of the 1876 election.

Referring to this "devastating Compromise of 1877" Durbin stated, "The senator from Texas [Ted Cruz] says we just want to create a little commission. Ten days, we're going to audit all the states...and find out what actually occurred. It's parallel to 1876, Hayes and Tilden. Don't forget what that commission achieved: It was a commission that killed Reconstruction, that established Jim Crow, that even after a Civil War which tore this nation apart, it re-enslaved African Americans, and it invited the voter suppression we are still fighting today."

Perhaps well intentioned, Durbin, a Democrat, got some of his facts wrong. The 1876 election between Republican Rutherford Hayes and Democrat Samuel Tilden saw Tilden win the popular vote. But Republican Hayes negotiated an Electoral College win based on his agreement to withdraw the occupying Northern federal troops from the Southern States. The North's troops were permanently stationed there at the end of the Civil War to prevent the defeated slavocracy plantation owners, founders of the Democratic Party, White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan, from regaining power and effectively nullifying the newly-enacted constitutional amendments that guaranteed equal rights to former slaves. In short, in return for the presidency the Republicans placed the former slavocracy Democrats back in power, where their heirs, including those who joined the Republicans in the Nixon era, remain today. In any case, today's Republicans had no such booty to offer or inclination to entice Democrats to part with Biden. Indeed, the ruling class as a whole understands quite well that a Biden presidency, minus Trump's moronic bluster, will not differ in its fundamentals from the decisive bipartisan policies adopted over the past four years.

## Jan. 6 was no insurrection or coup attempt

"What happened at the U.S. Capitol yesterday was an insurrection against the United States, incited by the president," said Democratic Party's now Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer of New York. Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell from Kentucky called the attack a "failed insurrection." [Editor's note: With the recent election of Georgia Senators Jon Ossoff and Reverend Raphael Warnock the Democrats captured the Senate majority.] Contrary to the multiple assertions of insurrection or an attempted coup, what took place on Jan. 6 was the product of the delusions of an egomaniac narcissist accidental president, Donald Trump, who believed that he could game the capitalist system and bypass its fundamental ruling class power brokers, not to mention its beholden national security state apparatus and military establishment. All of the above largely deserted Trump either during the pre-election period or immediately after.

## Today's class polarization

The Jan. 6 DC Trump mobilization was matched by much smaller mobilizations in other cities, including in Los Angeles, where a Black woman observing the event was brutally attacked. The fact that some 74 million voted for Trump in 2020 informs us that in increasingly desperate times, wherein millions of workers and small business owners have seen their lives fundamentally undermined by massive plant closures, pension and health care losses and a generalized bipartisan attack on their standard of living and quality of life, significant numbers have turned to reactionary "anti-establishment" demagogues like Trump. We have seen similar phenomenon around the world from, England to Eastern Europe to Brazil in Latin America. In the U.S. many supporters of these reactionary currents, but far from all, have been imbued with virulent scapegoating racist and anti-immigrant prejudice. In these increasingly difficult times they are susceptible to Trump's hatemongering and even more so to high-powered tirades against the corporate "Washington, D.C. swamp dwellers." But these currents have far from coalesced into fascist-type formations that in times of great stress and when powerful working class mobilizations threaten capitalist prerogatives are called on to use force and violence to defend capitalist rule. No such fascist force exists today. Indeed, of the tens of thousands of Trumpists in Washington on Jan. 6 only a relative handful of posturing bigots and individuals associated with Proud Boy neo-Nazis stormed the Capitol, believing with zero foundation that they could alter the Nov. 3 election result, not to mention the nature of "democratic" capitalist rule.

## Humanity's future

In glaring contrast, an estimated 20 million youth and working people in 2,000 U.S. cities joined the summer Black Lives Matter mobilizations that exceeded in sheer numbers any other working class mobilizations in U.S. history. Today, neither the reactionary Trumpists or the fighters for Black freedom, liberation and social equality have established definitive forms of organization, the former tied to an increasingly discredited ranting demagogue incapable of dealing with an out-of-control deadly pandemic and a debilitating economic crisis and the latter momentarily detoured into the graveyard of social movements, the Democratic Party.

Today, humanity's future rests more than ever in the capacity of working people to build new and independent fighting formations to defend their interests and meet the challenge posed by capitalist barbarism. This will in time focus on the building of a qualitatively expanded, militant and democratically organized trade union movement in alliance with all the oppressed and exploited. Such a movement will champion workers' interests in communities across the country, at the point of production and in the political arena via the formation of a mass fighting labor party.

Humanity's future also rests on the emergence and consolidation of a new and independent Black, Latinx and Native American leadership to champion the struggles of the most oppressed and exploited and establish democratic control of their communities while opening the way to the formation of independent Black and Brown parties in the political arena.

To help organize and unify the diverse social struggles ahead requires the construction of a deeply rooted mass revolutionary socialist party.

PS:

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