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A Fragile Democracy: Terror Reigns Over Capitol

Myrea Mora, Augustyna Brestar, and Jacqueline Maciel

In the events that unfolded within the United States during the electoral year of 2020, the American people believed that they had already seen the worst of what limits could be pushed in regards to American democracy.

Continuing into the new year, Trump supporters have continued to express their denial towards a Biden win, encouraged by President Donald Trump. On Jan. 6, we received notification that Trump supporters had breached the U.S. Capitol building, leaving us shocked and overwhelmed.

With President Trump claiming a fraudulent election, many expected chaos to erupt on Jan. 6—the day in which congress would count the official electoral college votes only to be interrupted by MAGA supporters.

President Trump's divisive rhetoric has proven once again to incite violence. Americans watched as protestors stormed into the Capitol building, mostly unmasked, making their way into the Senate Chamber and Nancy Pelosi's office. Photos emerged of a gun standoff between government workers and a protestor attempting to enter the room in which the house was counting the votes.

We could not help but compare this form of protest to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests we witnessed breakout after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Supporters of the BLM movement marched through the streets nationwide in efforts to bring awareness to the effects of police brutality and honor the Black lives lost. BLM supporters were seen consistently in mass numbers and prepared to risk their lives to bring justice to all Black lives that have been affected by the systemic oppression and injustices that exist within America's democracy.

The chaos which occurred on Jan. 6 has proven the idea of white privilege to be prevalent in the United States today, a reality that many people of color (POC) had already known.

If the people who stormed the Capitol today were POC, this unconstitutional form of protest would have been shot down. The national guard would have been deployed, protestors would have been tear gassed, rubber bullets would have been shot and ultimately many would have been arrested.





Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

...

Anarchists, Agitators or Protestors who vandalize or damage our Federal Courthouse in Portland, or any Federal Buildings in any of our Cities or States, will be prosecuted under our recently re-enacted Statues & Monuments Act. MINIMUM TEN YEARS IN PRISON. Don't do it! @DHSgov

4:28 PM · Jul 27, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

40.6K Retweets 10.7K Quote Tweets 139.1K Likes

On July 27, President Trump made his opinions of BLM “anarchists”, very clear—they were unlawful and would receive a minimum of ten years in prison.

It is ironic to us that these protestors claim sorrow, anger and oppression, when most can be placed into a category where privilege is not sparse. To be able to not only fight their way into the Capitol building, some with firearms in hand, shows the extent of their privilege. At no point did we see one of the protestors show fear of their lives being at threat. What we have witnessed today is blatant inequality of all minorities living in this country.

In his address to the nation, President-elect Joe Biden expressed the fragility of our democracy. To this, we feel shame. Shame in knowing we are living in an era where democracy and equality feel like two different things. There should not be a fear of being penalized in peacefully expressing what you believe in due to the color of your skin. Unfortunately, in the comparison of the events that unfolded today versus the BLM marches, inequality has been and continues to be true.



In the midst of this occurrence, it is not forgotten that the U.S. continues to be one of the most affected countries by COVID-19. While anti-maskers have been known to be linked to Trump supporters, we are still disappointed seeing a mass crowd with little to no masks in sight. It is natural to think of who in that crowd may have the virus, as well as the aftermath of this and those who may soon be affected.

President Trump did not officially address his supporters at the Capitol until 1:22 p.m. PST after President-elect Biden directly addressed him calling for him to “Step Up.”

Prior to his video message, President Trump did not have much to say.



Once he personally addressed the American people, he finally told protestors to go home. However, he did not call these individuals anarchists or domestic terrorists even though they damaged federal property and violently entered the Capitol. There were no threats to arrest them in his remarks, despite all the unlawful action that has taken place.

Today we witnessed acts of clear disregard for a peaceful transition of power which is a pillar of democracy and written into the constitution. Trump supporters taking to social media to claim that today's events are non-violent are clearly sheltered in the media they consume.

Our inquiries to President Trump on his last days in office: Why are you unwilling to have your supporters arrested? Why haven't you condemned this behavior? Why did it take you three hours to tell your followers to stop storming the Capitol building?

You have allowed terrorists to feel justified in their actions from the second you were elected to the end of your presidency. Our expectations of you were low yet somehow you continue to disappoint.

To Trump Supporters—not Republicans—those who blindly follow President Trump: There have been 44 Presidents and he is your hill to die on? Out of all Presidents, why is the rapist, sexist, racist criminal the one being fought for to this extent?

Your actions today were violent and unconstitutional. We are perplexed by your hypocrisy. If only you fought for minorities the way you have fought for President Trump.

To the rest of our nation and those closely watching our country: This is not a representation of who we are and the way we love. There are two America's—the privilege we witnessed today and the reality of POC.