

Capitol Riot

Special Edition



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The Armed Accelerationists are Coming

By Juan Cole

The far right militias, some of whom invaded the Capitol on 1/6, are now plan-

ning armed invasions of all 50 state capitols in advance of January 20, according to the FBI, and are coming back for a second try at taking over the national Capitol. One reason Twitter kicked Trump, QAnon, and other undesirables off its platform was that they saw organizing for a January 17 uprising.

These groups are what social scientists call “accelerationists.” They believe that through direct action and spectacles of violence they can increase the speed of polarization in society, fomenting a race war or at least a war

between those who firmly support the cause of the white race and those who wish to diminish its prerogatives (as they see them). Some of them infiltrated last summer’s Black Lives Matter protests after the murder of George Floyd, engaging in violence and destruction as a false flag, hoping it would be blamed on African-Americans and that whites would then become alarmed and join them.

These elements on last Wednesday were trying to find and kill or kidnap Mike Pence and Nancy Pelosi, and perhaps other legislators, in



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There are about 940 distinct



hate groups in the U.S., according to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

With the efforts of the odious Trump and his white supremacist cronies, members of these groups have infiltrated the US government.

SPLC writes,

- “The Trump administration has installed

members of hate groups into government—particularly those with anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim or anti-LGBTQ animus—and put in place highly punitive policies that seemed unthinkable just a few short years ago. These political moves will far

outlast this administration, as Trump and his allies in the U.S. Senate have pushed through hundreds of new federal judges, many of whom are hostile to civil rights concerns and will serve for decades.”





About a dozen Capitol police are being investigated on charges of having collaborated with the insurrectionists.

Not all hate groups are categorized as “anti-government.” In 2018, SPLC identified 576 extreme anti-government organizations.

Not all anti-government groups are organized on a paramilitary basis. They estimated that there are 181 militias. It was members of the militias who were dressed in military garb as they invaded the Capitol, and who appear to have contemplated violence against our elected representatives.

The SPLC has gathered information on 25,000 militiamen.

The capabilities of the militiamen have been vastly enhanced by the veterans of Bush’s Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, who have joined them in significant numbers and have brought with them tactical and firearms and explosives expertise.

Among the major militias are the Proud Boys: The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project or ACLED writes,

- “The Proud Boys are a fascist youth movement oriented towards street-fighting. Their ideology is to ‘defend western chauvinism.’

The group is right-wing and anti-left in nature and has had several members convicted for violence. They were created by VICE News founder Gavin McInnes who has since backed away from the group (The Guardian, 22 November 2018). The Proud Boys rely heavily on jokes and silliness to downplay the group’s proclivity for violence, both threatened and real. The current de facto leader of the Proud Boys, Enrique Tarrio, is also the Florida director of ‘Latinos for Trump’ (CNN, 1 October 2020). The Proud Boys are evolving into a more militant organization. Groups of young men increasingly show up to Proud Boys events with rifles and plate carriers.”

SPLC describes two others:

- “Three Percenterism is one of three core components within the antigovernment militia movement, along with the Oath Keepers and traditional militia groups. The reference to 3 percent stems from the dubious historical claim that only 3 per-

cent of American colonists fought against the British during the War of Independence.”

- “The Oath Keepers, another core component of the militia movement, was founded in 2009 by Elmer Stewart Rhodes, a veteran army paratrooper, Yale Law School graduate and former Ron Paul congressional staffer. It primarily recruits current and former law enforcement, military and first-responder personnel, though it also accepts civilians. Unlike Three Percenterism, Oath Keepers was conceived as an organization with hierarchical leadership at national, state and local levels, one committed to establishing a network of activists it hopes will lay the groundwork for the creation of state militias.”

Then you have the Boogaloo Bois, who are not so much an organization as a set of shared beliefs expressed online, and who have ruined Hawaiian shirts for me. They believe in an imminent race war, the Boogaloo, and are extremely violent. They use “big luau” for Boogaloo on-

line to avoid NSA detection, and engage in other word play.

Benjamin Goggin and Rachel E. Greenspan write at *The Insider*:

- “The loosely organized group of predominantly white men call themselves the Boogaloo Bois, a name that comes from the cult 1984 film “Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo,” but morphed in online message boards and groups to reference a theoretical second US civil war and uprising against the federal government. Online, where almost all of their organization occurs, members have created numerous groups and pages under the names “big igloo” and “big luau” in an attempt to avoid censorship from tech platforms. The far-right group, born from 4chan’s /k/ board, which is dedicated to gun worship, has no firm central organization, and only has a loose collection of shared values.”

Law enforcement underestimated these groups on 1/6. They must not do that again. Trump has whipped them up with his endless lies about

the election being stolen from him, and clearly he has put Joe Biden’s life in danger.

Z

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Trump Can Be Indicted Under Federal, State and DC Laws for His Role in January 6

By Marjorie Cohn

The legal evidence is damning: Donald Trump should be held criminally liable for “seditious conspiracy” and “inciting insurrection” for his role in stoking the events of January 6, when an angry mob of Trump loyalists, incited by the president himself, stormed the Capitol building to stop the congressional counting of votes for Joe Biden in the Electoral College.

The mob easily breached the Capitol building, ram-

paged through the halls of Congress—some waving Confederate flags—terrorizing senators and congress members. In stark contrast to the overwhelming and violent police force used against the largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters, there was little resistance offered by law enforcement against Trump’s mostly white minions as they entered the building where Congress was meeting and tore it apart. Trump’s violent backers did temporarily halt the count of votes for Biden. Five people died, and the mob of Trump supporters sprayed chemicals, threw lead pipes and injured more than 50 officers.

Hours later, Trump released a videotaped message praising them: “We love you. You’re very special.” He gave them permission to go home.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is right to be pursuing efforts to remove Trump from the presidency through the 25th Amendment. But that effort hit a roadblock as House Republicans refused to give unanimous consent to a resolution urging Vice President Mike Pence to initiate the process. That means the House will vote on the resolution tomorrow, which is expected to pass easily.

Even if, as expected, Pence refuses to invoke the 25th Amendment procedure,

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Democrats can still press ahead with efforts to impeach and convict Trump, so as to bar him from holding future federal office.

In the weeks that follow, Trump may also be charged with the commission of several federal, and even state, crimes.

Trump Should Be Indicted Under Federal, D.C. and State Laws

After January 20, Trump will no longer be shielded by the Department of Justice policy that a sitting president cannot be indicted.

There is overwhelming evidence that Trump committed several crimes.

The Constitution gives the president pardon power but says nothing about self-pardons. Trump has discussed pardoning himself. Since no president has ever done that, it is not clear whether a self-pardon would withstand a legal challenge



if the Biden administration were to mount one. In any event, Trump does not have the power to pardon state crimes. Thus, wherever possible, federal cases should be filed jointly with prosecutions under D.C. law, and laws in states such as Virginia and Maryland, where many Trump loyalists stayed, and in their home states as well.

Trump violated 18 U.S.C. sec. 2383, which prohibits incitement of rebellion or insurrection. It provides for 10 years in prison for anyone who “incites ... any rebellion or insurrection against the authority of the United States or the laws thereof, or gives aid or comfort thereto.” If convicted of this crime, Trump “shall be incapable of holding

any office under the United States.”

The evidence cited in the pending article of impeachment also supports a criminal charge of inciting rebellion or insurrection against Trump.

Trump also committed seditious conspiracy in violation of 18 U.S.C. sec. 2384, by conspiring “to oppose by force the authority [of the

government],” and “by force to prevent, hinder, or delay the execution of any law of the United States.” Seditious conspiracy carries a 20-year prison sentence.

Interrupting the counting of the electoral votes constitutes delaying the execution of U.S. law. During the January 6 siege, Rudy Giuliani left a long voicemail meant for Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), urging him to slow down the vote certification in the Electoral College. It reached Sen. Mike Lee (D-UT) instead. In a 10-minute phone conversation with Tuberville, Trump implored him to make additional objections to the vote count.

Trump apparently resisted calling in the National Guard, which ultimately arrived once the Capitol breach was well underway. Trump loyalists quickly found the offices of specific legislators, including Nancy Pelosi. They went directly to Rep. James Clyburn’s private office, which few people knew about, leading Michael Moore to speculate that congresspersons were in on the conspiracy.

Giuliani, Donald Trump Jr. and Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL), together with Trump, conspired to exhort the large crowd to stop the counting of votes in the Electoral College, which is a U.S. law contained in the Constitution.

Over a period of several weeks, people close to Trump encouraged and advertised the “wild” January 6 event. Moreover, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone told White House officials not to talk to Trump or assist his coup attempt so they would not be prosecuted for treason.

Trump could also be charged with solicitation to commit a crime of violence, that is, murder, under 18 U.S.C. sec. 373. It is a crime to solicit, command, induce or endeavor to persuade another person to commit a felony involving the threat or use of physical force. If prosecutors can prove that whomever killed Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick was incited to violence at the rally where Trump exhorted his followers, he could be convicted of inciting murder.

Trump Should Also Be Charged in Georgia State Court

Legal grounds also exist for charging Trump in Georgia for having solicited Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to commit election fraud.

In a January 2 phone call, Trump bullied the Georgia

secretary of state to “find” 11,780 votes to overturn Biden’s win in that state, and threatened Raffensperger if he didn’t comply.

Trump can be charged with criminal solicitation to commit election fraud in Georgia state court. Even though Trump’s solicitation was unsuccessful because Raffensperger refused to cheat and overturn Georgia’s election result, Trump can still be convicted of the crime, which is complete upon solicitation. He can also be charged with intentional interference with performance of election duties for attempting to interfere with Raffensperger’s legal duty to certify the election result in Georgia.

The evidence of Trump’s illegal conduct is legion.

Trump Mounted a Concerted Campaign to Steal the Election

For months before the presidential election, Trump spewed false claims of voter fraud to preemptively discredit a Biden victory. Both before and after Biden won 306 electoral votes, far more than the 270 required to win, Trump filed frivolous law-



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suits challenging the results. Judge after judge dismissed them and the Supreme Court refused to overturn the election. Trump pressured election officials in several states to refuse to certify duly chosen Biden electors. And he sought to disenfranchise people of color in targeted counties and jurisdictions with primarily Black or Brown populations.

For weeks, White House staff and Trump's close allies planned and promoted the "Stop the Steal" protest on January 6 at the Capitol. "Big protest in D.C. on January 6th," Trump tweeted on December 19. "Be there, will be wild!"

Since Pence would be presiding over the joint session of Congress on January 6, Trump applied tremendous pressure on him to stop the certification of Biden's electoral votes. When Pence told Trump that the Constitution gave him no such power, Trump was furious.

On January 6, Trump and his co-conspirators, Giuliani, Trump Jr. and Brooks, egged on the assembled crowd, urging them to march to the Capitol and stop the constitutionally mandated electoral vote count.

Giuliani told the throng, "Let's have trial by combat." Trump Jr. yelled, "Stand up

and fight!" and threatened congressional Republicans who were not trying to overturn the election, declaring, "We're coming for you." Brooks said, "Today is the day American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass," adding, "Our ancestors sacrificed their blood, their sweat, their tears, their fortunes and sometimes their lives to give us, their descendants, an America that is the greatest nation in world history." He then asked the audience if they were "willing to do the same."

When Trump addressed the crowd, he called the election outcome "this egregious assault on our democracy." He said they would "stop the steal" and keep the Democrats from "fraudulently taking over our country." Trump advised his supporters to "show strength" and "walk down to the Capitol," adding, "you will never take back our country with weakness." He said, "When you catch somebody in a fraud, you are allowed to go by very different rules." They followed Trump's exhortation and carried out the most destructive attack on Congress and the process of democratic elections in U.S. history.

Trump's seditious conduct should result in his removal from office under the 25th

Amendment and barring that, he should be impeached.

Trump Must Be Impeached and Removed From Office

The 25th Amendment provides for the vice president and a majority of the cabinet to declare that the president "is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." Pence would assume the presidency. But if Trump contests it, he can resume his duties unless Pence and the cabinet make another such declaration within four days. Congress would then assemble within 48 hours and vote within 21 days. It requires agreement of two-thirds of both houses of Congress to permanently remove him from office.

Pence is unlikely to pursue the 25th Amendment. Thus, the House of Representatives should impeach and the Senate must convict Trump for his high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

Two hundred and ten members of the House of Representatives have co-sponsored an article of impeachment against Trump for Incitement of Insurrection.

Introduced by Democratic

INDICT

TRUMP



Representatives David Cicilline (Rhode Island), Ted Lieu (California) and Jamie Raskin (Maryland), the article alleges that Trump engaged “in high Crimes and Misdemeanors by willfully inciting violence against the Government of the United States.” Shortly before the Senate and House of Representatives met to count the Electoral College votes, Trump “reiterated false claims” to a nearby crowd of his supporters, telling them “we won this election, and we won it by a landslide.” The article says Trump “also willfully made statements that encouraged—and foreseeably resulted in—imminent lawless action at the Capitol.” The allegations continue,

Incited by President Trump, a mob unlawfully breached the Capitol, injured law enforcement personnel, menaced Members of Congress and the Vice President, interfered with the Joint Session’s solemn constitutional duty to certify the election results, and engaged in violent, deadly, destructive, and seditious acts

In addition, the article cites Trump’s “prior efforts to subvert and obstruct the certification of the results of the 2020 presidential election.” They include his January 2 phone call to Raffensperger, during which Trump urged him to “find” enough votes to overturn Georgia’s presidential election results and “threatened Mr. Raffensperger if he failed to do so.”

The article states that Trump “gravely endangered the security of the United States” and its government institutions, “threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power, and imperiled a coordinate branch of government.” Trump thereby “betrayed his trust as President to the manifest injury of the people of the United States.” Finally, the article says, Trump “will remain a threat to national security, democracy, and the Constitution” if he continues in office.

This week, the House is expected to vote to impeach Trump. To remove him from office, however, the Senate must try and convict him by a two-thirds majority. Seventeen Republicans would have to join Democrats in order to accomplish this. Although it’s a long shot, increasing numbers of GOP senators are considering supporting impeachment. In any event, a Senate trial won’t occur before Joe Biden assumes the presidency on January 20. There is precedent to impeach and try a high government official after he leaves office.

One way or another, Trump should be removed from office and prevented from running for president again in 2024. He must be criminally charged to ensure accountability and prevent impunity for his egregious crimes to deter future presidential lawbreaking. **Z**

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Twitter's Ban on Trump will Deepen the U.S. Tribal Divide

By Jonathan Cook



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SEEKING INFORMATION

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Anyone who believes locking President Donald Trump out of his social media accounts will serve as the first step on the path to healing the political divide in the United States is likely to be in for a bitter disappointment.

The flaws in this reasoning need to be peeled away, like the layers of an onion.

Twitter's decision to permanently ban Trump for, among other things, "incitement of violence" effectively cuts him off from 88 million followers. Facebook has said it will deny Trump access to his account till at least the end of his presidential term.

The act of barring an elected president, even an outgoing one, from the digital equivalent of the public square is bound to be every bit as polarizing as allowing him to continue tweeting.

These moves threaten to widen the tribal divide between the Democratic and Republican parties into a chasm, and open up a damaging rift among liberals and the left on the limits of political speech.

Claims of "stolen" election

The proximate cause of Facebook and Twitter's decision is his encouragement of a protest march on Washington DC last week by his supporters that rapidly turned violent as hundreds stormed the Capitol building, the seat of the U.S. government.

Five people are reported to have died, including a police officer struck on the head with a fire extinguisher and a woman who was shot dead inside the building, apparently by a security guard.

The protesters—and much of the Republican party—believe that Trump's Democratic opponent, Joe Biden, "stole" November's presidential election. The storming of the Capitol occurred on the day electoral college votes were being counted, marking the moment when Biden's win became irreversible.

Since the November election, Trump has cultivated his supporters' political grievances by implying in regular tweets that the election was "rigged," that he supposedly won by a "landslide," and that Biden is an illegitimate president.

The social networks' immediate fear appears to be that, should he be allowed to continue, there could be a repetition of the turmoil at the Capitol when the inauguration—the formal transfer of power from Trump to Biden—takes place.

No simple solutions

Whatever we—or the tech giants who now dominate our lives—might hope, there are no simple solutions to the problems caused by extreme political speech.

To many, banning Trump from Twitter—his main megaphone—sounds like a proportionate response to his incitement and his narcissistic behaviour. It appears to accord with a much-cited restriction on free speech: no one should be allowed to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theatre.

But that comparison serves only to blur important distinctions between ordinary speech and political speech.

The prohibition on shouting "Fire!" reflects a broad social consensus that giving voice to a falsehood of this kind—a lie that can be easily verified as such and one that has indisputably harmful outcomes—is a bad thing.

There is a clear way to calculate the benefits

and losses of allowing this type of speech. It is certain to cause a stampede that risks injury and death—and at no gain, apart from possibly to the instigator’s ego.

It is also easy to determine how we should respond to someone who shouts “Fire!” in a crowded theater. They should be prosecuted according to the law.

Who gets to decide

Banning political speech, by contrast, is a more complicated affair because there is rarely consensus on the legitimacy of such censorship, and—as we shall see—any gains are likely to be outweighed by the losses.

Trump’s ban is just the latest instance in a growing wave of exclusions by Twitter and Facebook of users who espouse political views outside the mainstream, whether on the right or the left. In addition, the tech giants have been tinkering with their algorithms to make it harder to find such content—in what amounts to a kind of pre-censorship.

But the critical issue in a democracy is: Who gets to decide if political speech is unreasonable when it falls short of breaching hate and incitement laws?

Few of us want state institutions—the permanent bureaucracy, or the intelligence and security services—wielding that kind of power over our ability to comment and converse. These institutions, which lie at the heart of government and need to be scrutinised as fully as possible, have a vested interest in silencing critics.

There are equally good grounds to object to giving ruling parties the power to censor, precisely because government officials from one side of the political aisle have a strong incentive to gag their opponents. Incitement and protection of public order are perfect pretexts

for authoritarianism.

And leaving the democratic majority with the power to arbitrate over political speech has major drawbacks too. In a liberal democracy, the right to criticize the majority and their representatives is an essential freedom, one designed to curb the majority’s tyrannical impulses and ensure minorities are protected.

“Terms of service”

In this case, however, the ones deciding which users get to speak and which are banned are the globe-spanning tech corporations, the wealthiest companies in human history.

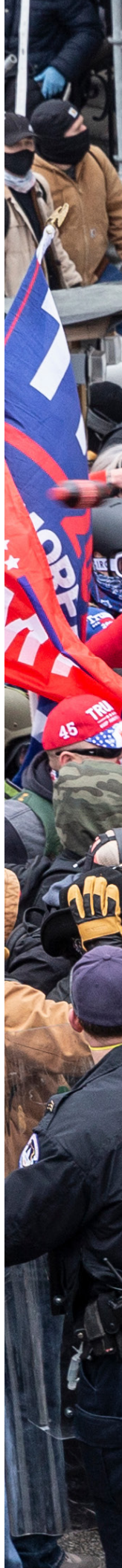
Facebook and Twitter have justified banning Trump, and anyone else, on the grounds that he violated vague business “terms of service”—the small print on agreement forms we all sign before being allowed access to their platforms.

But barring users from the chief means of communication in a modern, digitized world cannot be defended simply on commercial or business grounds, especially when those firms have been allowed to develop their respective monopolies by our governments.

Social media is now at the heart of many people’s political lives. It is how we share and clarify political views, organise political actions, and more generally shape the information universe.

The fact that western societies have agreed to let private hands control what should be essential public utilities—turning them into vastly profitable industries—is a political decision in itself.

Political Pressures





Unlike governments, which have to submit to intermittent elections, tech giants are accountable chiefly to their billionaire owners and shareholders—a tiny wealthy elite whose interests are tied to greater wealth accumulation, not the public good.

But in addition to these economic imperatives, the tech companies are also increasingly subjected to direct and indirect political pressures.

Sometimes that occurs out in the open, when Facebook executives get hauled before congressional committees to explain their actions. And doubtless pressure is being exerted too out of sight, behind closed doors.

Facebook, Twitter, Google and Apple all want their respective, highly profitable tech monopolies to continue, and currying favour with the party in power—or the one coming into power—is the best strategy for avoiding greater regulation.

Either way, it means that, in their role as gatekeepers to the global, digital public square, the tech giants exercise overtly political powers. They regulate an outsourced public utility, but are not subject to normal democratic oversight or accountability because their relationship with the state is veiled.

Censorship Backfires

Banning Trump from social media, whatever the intention, will inevitably look like an act of political suppression to his supporters, to potential supporters and even to some critics who worry about the precedent being set.

In fact, to many it will smack of vengeful retaliation by the “elites.”

Consider these two issues. They may not seem relevant to some opponents but we can be sure they will fuel his supporters’ mounting

sense of righteous indignation and grievance.

First, both the department of justice and the federal trade commission under Trump have opened anti-trust investigations of the major tech corporations to break up their monopolies. Last month the Trump administration initiated two anti-trust lawsuits—the first of their kind—specifically against Facebook.

Second, these tech giants have chosen to act against Trump now, just as Biden prepares to replace him in the White House. Silicon Valley was a generous funder of Biden’s election campaign and quickly won for itself positions in the incoming administration. The new president will decide whether to continue the anti-trust actions or drop them.

Whether these matters are connected or not, whether they are “fake news” or not, is beside the point. The decision by Facebook and Twitter to bar Trump from its platforms can easily be spun in his supporters’ minds as an opportunistic reprisal against Trump for his efforts to limit the excesses of these overweening tech empires.

This is a perfect illustration of why curbs on political speech—even of the most irresponsible kind—invariably backfire. Censorship of major politicians will always be contested and are likely to generate opposition and stoke resentment.

Banning Trump won’t end conspiracy theories on the American right. It will intensify them, reinforce them, embolden them.

Obnoxious symptom

So in the cost-benefit calculus, censoring Trump is almost certain to further polarize an already deeply divided American society, amplify genuine grievances and conspiracy theories alike, sow greater distrust towards political elites, further fracture an already broken political system and ultimately rationalize





political violence.

The solution is not to crack down on political speech, even extreme and irresponsible speech, if it does not break the law. Trump is not the cause of U.S. political woes, he is one obnoxious symptom.

The solution is to address the real causes, and tackle the only too justified resentments that fueled Trump's rise and will sustain him and the U.S. right in defeat. Banning Trump—just like labelling his supporters “a basket of deplorables”—will prove entirely counter-productive.

Fixing a broken system

Meaningful reform will be no simple task. The U.S. political system looks fundamentally broken—and has been for a long time.

It will require a much more transparent electoral system. Big donor money will have to be removed from Congressional and presidential races. Powerful lobbies will need to be ousted from Washington, where they now act as the primary authors of Congressional legislation promoting their own narrow interests.

The old and new media monopolies—the latter our new public square—will have to be broken up. New, publicly funded and publicly accountable media models must be developed that reflect a greater pluralism of views.

In these ways, the public can be encouraged to become more democratically engaged, active participants in their national and local politics rather than alienated onlookers or simple-minded cheerleaders. Politicians can be held truly accountable for their decisions, with an expectation that they serve the public interest, not the interests of the most powerful corporations.

The outcome of such reforms, as surveys of the American public's preferences regularly

show, would be much greater social and economic equality. Joblessness, home evictions and loss of medical cover would not stalk so many millions of Americans as they do now, during a pandemic. In this environment, the wider appeal of a demagogue like Trump would evaporate.

If this all sounds like pie-in-the-sky idealism, that in itself should serve as a wake-up call, highlighting just how far the U.S. political system is from the liberal democracy it claims to be. **Z**

This essay first appeared on Jonathan Cook's blog: <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>

Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

**Meaningful reform
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long time**

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WAKE
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Lynching Political Co



Correctness, By Robert C. Koehler



I still see the noose in front of the capitol building, dangling oh so metaphorically. “No matter how all this plays out, it’s only the beginning,” wrote a user on TheDonald message board, according to the Associated Press.

Actually, it’s anything but the beginning—though I get what the writer means, that there’s more to come. All 50 state capitals are now in the crosshairs of the armed protest movement, apparently, not to mention, once again, the national capitol, where Joe Biden is scheduled to be inaugurated on Jan. 20.

Indeed, *Huffington Post* reports that Capitol Police briefed congressional Democrats on three “potentially gruesome demonstrations planned in the coming days,” which could include assassination attempts, and among other things suggested that on inauguration day all representatives and senators be put through metal detectors before they’re allowed to enter the halls of Congress, just to make sure they aren’t armed. Some of them are . . . uh . . . “in league with the insurrectionists.”

As one lawmaker explained to *Huffington Post*: “You can’t just let them bypass security and walk right up to Biden and Harris at inauguration.”

Thanks to Donald Trump, a national return to some sort of centrist “normal” is now impossible. Lots of people believe a civil war is already underway and they’re excited as hell about it. Political Correctness meets Jim Crow—finally.

The “rigged election” craziness Trump and his minions have pushed to justify their armed insurrection is reality-based to the true believers, at least in one sense. You wanna know how the election was rigged? People of color—lots of them—voted. They swayed the damn elec-

tion. If Jim Crow (code name: MAGA) were still the law, the orange-haired guy would have his second term and then some.

The noose, the Confederate flag, the poisoned American flag, the guy in the Camp Auschwitz sweatshirt, T-shirts proclaiming 6MWNE (6 million were not enough) . . . stir these obscenities in with the Second Amendment and what you have is Hell, also known as the good old days. American racism is anything but superficial.

Its language and manifestation may change, but make no mistake: It never goes away. “Whites only” restrooms morph into the prison-industrial complex. And we always have our wars to wage, our enemies to dehumanize. White supremacy will never be defeated, but I’m certain it can be transcended, both personally and collectively, and the time to do so is now. But this can only happen if we stare unblinkingly at our national history.

As a starting place I recommend browsing through *Without Sanctuary*, aka, the coffee table book from hell, a collection of lynch mob photographs and postcards from the first 4 decades of the 20th century, compiled by James Allen, which came out in 2000. It’s truly unbelievable and well beyond horrifying, but indispensable in helping one understand the depth of collective rage in the human soul, making the United States of America the equivalent of an active volcano. One of these days it will erupt—again.

I wrote about the book at the time: “July 19, 1935. Rubin Stacy, lynched in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Stacy, a homeless black tenant farmer, had asked a white woman for food, frightening her. Mob justice converted this to the capital offense of rape.”

In the photo, the dead man’s pain is palpable. He hangs from a scrub pine in ghastly, almost prayerful repose. The noose around his neck cuts a deep gouge, pulling the flesh taut to the jaw line. The onlookers are mostly

women and little girls. The other central figure in the picture is one of the latter, maybe 9, sweet-faced, in a sleeveless, wide-collared dress you could imagine her wearing to Sunday School. She stares almost beatifically at the dangling corpse.

Raw, racist violence, for much of the country's history—and well beyond the Civil War (that earlier one, which started in 1861)—existed front and center, without shame. It was as American as apple pie.

And sometimes, when necessary, elected governments were overthrown. Consider the Wilmington, North Carolina, massacre of 1898, when a white mob torched much of the city and overthrew a racially integrated government that had been made possible in the brief era of Reconstruction, when black people could vote. By some accounts, as many as 300 of them were killed in the insurrection, led by former congressman Alfred Waddell, who had produced a “White Declaration of Independence” that declared: “We will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled by men of African origin.”

Waddell led a mob of 2,000 armed white men, who burned the building housing the black-owned newspaper, the Daily Record, to the ground, stormed into black neighborhoods with rifles and a Gatling gun, and eventually took over the city government.

“As bullets were still flying,” according to the Zinn Education Project, “Waddell threw out the democratically-elected aldermen and installed his own,” who quickly named him mayor. “This was nothing less than a coup d’état.”

A century-plus later, is another coup in the making? How many secret, and not-so-secret, adherents does a possible coup have within the nation's political and defense infrastructure? Are we in a state of national emergency?

And how do we become a different country?

This question hasn't had such urgency in a

long time.

Z

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