

# BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS NOT COMPARABLE TO TRUMP-INCITED MOB: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROTESTING IN SUPPORT OF A FACTUAL CAUSE VS. CONSPIRACY-BASED LIES

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After an election that managed to bring the most voters in American history to the polls amidst a pandemic, it is evident that we are living through some of our country's most divisive times. Numerous social challenges, unprecedented healthcare emergencies and economic stressors have revealed the many imperfections in our nation that have long been ignored and overlooked. The discomfort of the past year has left almost all Americans lost, confused, emotional, and- most importantly- seeking answers from our nation's leaders. Clinging to either the left or the right, it is common for Americans under stress to rely on political affiliation, becoming passionate about their chosen preference which they hope will relieve their problems. This pure emotion that has become involved in American politics is nothing new, however, along with severe ideologies and strong sentiments, it has elevated the stark contrast we see today between the left and the right, dramatically polarizing our nation. The current tension between conservatives and liberals has created an extremely toxic problem-solving environment in our nation where each 'side' despises admitting their own faults and instead turns to pointing out flaws from the other party's past. If you have not shifted your focus to the overall improvement and reform our country desperately needs then you are either not paying attention or lack the courage to face these deep-rooted issues.

The Trump supporters who invaded the Capitol in an attempt to delay Congress from following their Constitutional duties of certifying the election results were domestic terrorists, and President Trump, along with other conservative politicians and conservative media, incited this attempted insurrection by consistently reinforcing lies regarding the security of our elections. These people are not patriots, they are not admirable, and they most certainly do not care about preserving our republic or upholding the golden standard of democracy many Americans associate our country with. What is even more appalling than this mob of violent, propaganda-fed Americans is seeing many educated, right-wing media personas such as Tomi Lahren, Ben Shapiro and Candance Owens dishing out false comparisons to their millions of followers equating the Black Lives Matter protests over the summer to the Capitol raid in an attempt to seemingly lessen the severity of this attack on one of our country's most significant landmarks and our electoral processes set in place by our nation's founders. There are countless differences between these events and it simply makes me sick that conservatives with large followings have the audacity to present this comparison to the public and try to turn this situation into a partisan, suggesting liberals do not care about violence unless it is the right instigating it. These politicians should be focused on confronting the blatantly dangerous problems that exist within far-right groups and simply denounce claims of fraud that President Trump has infiltrated into his supporters' minds.

At the core of our nation supposedly sits strong values of democracy and these mobs came to di-

rectly challenge that notion. Looting a Target and attacking our Capitol in an attempt to overthrow the United States government are incomparable to me, personally. I am not excusing looting or violence and do not ever think that is the best option, but it is obvious one of these two scenarios is more suggestive in its message. In addition, looting was not prevalent in most Black Lives Matter protests around the nation. However, when it did occur in the midst of the protests many painted a false narrative which completely associated with and blamed the Black Lives Matter movements for the looting, which is false. The organizers of the protests over the summer were not leading the looting, destroying property, or being openly dangerous. Many who did participate in the looting did not even resonate with the Black Lives Matter movement themselves. On the other hand, those who invaded the Capitol came with the intention to cause destruction and disruption and the president directed them to do so. Pipe bombs, guns, and other weapons were found at the Capitol, along with many rioters displaying their bigotry proudly with anti-semitic and other discriminatory t-shirts. These (mainly) white people showcased their privilege as they walked through the United States Capitol waving Confederate flags, whereas months before protestors at the Washington, DC Black Lives Matter movements were met with tear-gas.

Although I condemn violence, any force and destruction at Black Lives Matter movements over the summer is more justified than what took place during the Capitol riot. There have been and will continue to be protests that unfortunately escalate in our country, and in a few instances at protests over the summer that did happen. However, the Black Lives Matter movement erupted as a response to the unjust, inhumane death of George Floyd which Americans watched unfold on their screens, along with other black Americans such as Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor being wrongfully killed by police. It happened because people in our country are mad. People are fed up with innocent black men and women dying. Many people of color in America experience fear, distress and anxiety for simply being in our nation. In our country, in 'the land of the free,' we have citizens scared just to live. Systemic racism is embedded into our society and that is something that must be brought up to the surface to confront. That is a legitimate reason to protest. That is a legitimate reason to be furious with your nation. What is not a legitimate reason is believing lies fed to you by Trump. Not only is that not a legitimate reason to protest, but these people breached our Capitol. It was more than an unjustified protest, it was a direct attack on our nation and democracy. It was domestic terrorism, and we have people in our country believing it was necessary and imperative due to Trump's inability to accept failure.

There have been over 60 cases, tried by conservative and liberal judges alike, all proving the fact that there was absolutely no widespread fraud in our elections, yet the conspiracy theories still circulate and are being led by real, influential politicians. Prior to the attempted insurrection, Trump directed these individuals to the Capitol at his rally that took place near the White House. He

even encouraged the riot weeks before, "Big protest in DC on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!" Trump tweeted. Although many see that statement and do not take it to heart, it is now obvious many Americans have been radicalized by Trump and are willing to fight for his lies. Citizens traveled across the country to partake in this event that is based on false information and has no real substance, proving thousands of Americans have devoted their loyalty to a man rather than to our country. Trump lacks civility, nobility and integrity. His lack of responsibility has led his own supporters to believe violence is the answer, and, in their defense, Trump loyalists did what the president of the United States encouraged them to do, however, following the President's advice typically does not result in a ransacking of the Capitol. Instead of instantly de-escalating the event, calling for peace and admitting he has lost the presidential election fairly, Trump hid inside of the White House. The Black Lives Matter protests exemplified traits opposing those of Trump's and his followers and were brought to life by people standing for justice, seeking out a better America, calling for reform in our systems and bringing awareness to a worthy cause. Another striking difference between the Black Lives Matter protests and the Capitol riot was the response, or immediate lack thereof, from law enforcement and Trump's hesitant call for the National Guard. The National Guard was not activated until rioters were already inside the Capitol on Jan. 6, whereas at the protests over the summer National Guard troops were deployed before the peaceful protests even began. Rubber bullets and tear gas were used against protestors in DC Black Lives Matter movements in effort to disperse nonviolent crowds, and many more arrests were made on-site at the protests compared to the arrests made on Capitol grounds during the attempted insurrection. The hypocrisy in our nation's law enforcement's response to protests when it is Black Americans versus a largely white pro-Trump mob is not up for debate. The double standard is clearly visible even with only scarce research on the events. We all know what would have happened if it were Black Americans attempting to invade the Capitol.

If this is not a wake up call to the 74 million Americans who voted for Trump to be reelected in the 2020 election then I am unsure what is. But, I guess this is expected when you elect a narcissistic reality TV star blinded by their own privilege to be President of the United States.

Words matter, especially those of the people who hold power in our nation, and we must ensure Trump and other politicians are held accountable for perpetuating the lies that almost cost our nation's Capitol defeat to nameless domestic terrorists. No president of our nation has ever been or ever will be perfect, but surely we can all agree to hold our future leaders to a higher standard than 'not inciting an attempted coup' on the United States government. Despite the tension in our current political climate we must resort to the basic qualities that decent leaders inhibit and seek those out in our elected officials in order to achieve real progress in America. Our past, present, and future is not defined by those in power but the people in our nation who let them get there.