



Not in Our House:

Capitol rioters used domestic violence tactics on a national scale to subvert and endanger the will and safety of the American people

Disorienting shock. Surreal betrayal. Confused pain. Hypervigilance. Tight and shallow breaths. Fits and bursts of outrage or sorrow erupting from a veneer of protective numbness.

These are among the kaleidoscope of feelings that victims of trauma experience.

One week ago today, we collectively shared many of those disturbing feelings as we watched the jarring images and news of a violent attack upon our nation's capital, and upon democracy itself, unfold throughout the day.

Three days after that, a group of armed, self-proclaimed vigilantes gathered at the state capitol building in Frankfort as lawmakers convened for the first legislative session of the year. While no violence erupted, the robust presence of military grade firearms and "just in case" zip ties—not to mention one sign that read "make hanging traitors great again"—created a menacing atmosphere of veiled threats and open intimidation, tactics common among abusers who seek to exert power and control over their partners and families, just as these individuals seek to control the lawmakers and law-making process by a show of threatened force.

And today, just one week away from the transfer of power from one presidential administration to the next, one of the top news headlines reads "Armed protests being planned at all 50 state capitols, FBI bulletin says."

As a nation we are tragically accustomed to acts of public and state violence, acts which alarmingly continue to grow in frequency and scale. In the midst of a raging global pandemic, 2020 ended as one of the most violent years in decades, with mass shootings reaching record levels and acts of police brutality against black and brown people sparking a long overdue reckoning against racism and the white supremacist ideology we find at the root of our country's most shameful deeds, including racist-fueled lynch mobs, state-sanctioned human slavery, and the coordinated annihilation of indigenous people.

The January 6, 2021 armed invasion of our capitol building by a violent fascist mob is uniquely despicable, even for a nation built on a storied legacy of violence. Not only was the core tenet of democracy—the peaceful acceptance of the will of the people and the lawful, orderly transition of power—directly threatened by gangs of radicalized insurrectionists, their seditious, coordinated attacks defiled and violated one of our country's few remaining hallowed, symbolic civic spaces. The U.S. Capitol building is a living monument to the idea of democracy. Like the White House, it is owned by and for the people.

They came into our house. They broke windows, looted federal property, urinated, defecated, and threatened to lynch lawmakers and leaders; five people lost their lives.

Like the 9/11 terrorists, a fringe group of extremists attacked a national symbol while the folks inside were doing their job.

And like the 9/11 terrorists, they succeeded, not in breaking democracy as they intended, but rattling our collective humanity to the core.

As a coalition, we have accumulated three decades of first-hand experience, empirical research, and institutional understanding of the intersecting causes, patterns and practices that domestic abusers employ to control and intimidate. We are also aware that trauma and betrayal from within one's network of trust is damaging to a foundational sense of security.

Now, we are seeing those same patterns of abuse and trauma played out on a macro scale.

We stand with survivors of all forms of violence and oppression, including our lawmakers and our nation itself. We recognize and validate the pain, confusion, and injury caused on multiple levels when a sacred covenant of safety is violated. We acknowledge the difficulty and struggle to maintain a sense of normalcy and security in our everyday lives in the face of looming threats of public violence, not to mention the rising record levels of death due to the pandemic, as well as the resulting disruption of our way of life and the loss of comforting and steadying traditions, including funerals, holiday meals, even hugs.

Everyone deserves to feel safe at home.

This simple belief--neither radical nor partisan--is a cornerstone of our work to end domestic violence.

It is work we pledge to continue and expand during this time of profound peril to our shared sense of security.

We will continue to roll up our sleeves to work with lawmakers from all parties in unified efforts to create a Commonwealth free of violence. We will continue to meet survivors where they are, no matter how dire or difficult the circumstances. We will continue to envision shared communities grounded in the health, safety, and well-being of all. We will champion those who have been abused and we will hold abusers accountable. We will also hold ourselves accountable for what we have failed to do, and what remains to be done.

Finally, we will hold our systems accountable, for the appropriate response, or lack thereof, to all of those individuals who made the choice to use violence and intimidation to willfully damage our democracy—and each other—while framing their acts of terrorism as protest, protected by the right to free speech. When acts of coordinated violence are committed under the false guise of protest or liberation, it delegitimizes the true meaning and purpose of our shared ideals and comes at the expense of someone else's liberty and safety.

We see their rhetoric and actions for what they are—a manifestation of power and control designed to undermine basic civil and human rights.