

America In Crisis



A look at the United States today shows a country that is very divided.

Key to understanding that divide is a look at two major events in recent history, the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 and the Capitol Protests of January 6, 2021.

Each event provides a unique look at how the differences have manifested themselves in America today.

Understanding the Events That Shook the Nation

In times of crisis, the true character of a nation is revealed. Over the past few years, the United States has faced deep political and social upheaval, but few moments have tested our national identity like the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 and the January 6th Capitol riot.

These events exposed the growing divide in how Americans see justice, democracy, and the role of government. They were not just political moments; they were emotional, visceral, and deeply personal for millions of people across the country.

The protests that erupted in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd were fueled by years of frustration over racial injustice and police violence¹.

Supporters saw these demonstrations as a long-overdue demand for accountability, a fight for the country to live up to its promise of "liberty and justice for all."

Opponents, however, saw the riots, property damage, and violent clashes with police as evidence of lawlessness and chaos.

The left largely viewed the protests as a necessary movement for civil rights, while the right saw them as a breakdown of law and order.

Just a few months later, protests of another sort developed in the country. These particular protests did not happen in streets, across the country, they took place in our nation's capitol.

On January 6, 2021, thousands of Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

¹ <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/?year=2024&location=the+U.S.&race=people>

Many of those who participated believed they were defending democracy against a fraudulent election, acting on what they saw as patriotism.

Others saw the attack as an act of domestic terrorism—an assault on the very foundation of American democracy. The right often framed the rioters as misguided but passionate Americans, while the left viewed them as a dangerous threat to the rule of law.

These two events were very different in nature, but they share something important: they illustrate how Americans live in vastly different realities depending on their political perspective.

The way these moments were covered in the media, discussed in communities, and understood by individuals was shaped not just by facts but by the broader ideological lenses through which we see the world.

In this section, we will first attempt to take an objective look at both events—what happened, how they unfolded, and their impact on the nation.

Then, we will go deeper into how the left and right interpreted them. Why did one side see the BLM protests as a fight for justice, while the other saw them as riots? Why did one side view the Capitol riot as an insurrection while the other saw it as a justified protest?

By examining these questions, we will begin to understand not just the events themselves but the deeper political and cultural divides that shape modern America.

This is not about determining which side was "right" or "wrong." It is about understanding why people saw these events so differently—and what that tells us about the challenges we face as a nation.

If we ever hope to bridge the divides in our country, we must first understand them.

The Local Protest That Took Over The World

The tragic death of George Floyd became a flashpoint for deep-seated anger and frustration over racial injustice, police brutality, and systemic inequality.

The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests highlighted the stark ideological divide between the political left and right in the United States.

For the left, the protests were a powerful call for justice, police reform, and an end to systemic racism.

For the right, the protests represented a breakdown of law and order and were often seen as an expression of radical leftist ideology that posed a threat to societal stability.

The protests not only spotlighted racial inequalities within the United States but also helped bring attention to the ways in which racism operates in different parts of the world.

In this chapter, we explore the global dimensions of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 and examine the factors that fueled the movement's expansion beyond U.S. borders.

George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest.

Derek Chauvin, the officer in question, knelt on Floyd's neck for over eight minutes, even as Floyd repeatedly begged for his life.

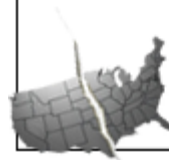
The viral video of the killing sparked outrage across the U.S. and quickly spread to other parts of the world.

Floyd's death, combined with the long history of racial violence against Black Americans, became a symbol of systemic racism and a rallying cry

An
estimated

26
Million
people

were
involved
in BLM
protests
in the US



for activists and ordinary people alike.

While the BLM movement had been active for years prior to Floyd's death, particularly after the killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and others, the scale and intensity of the 2020 protests were unprecedented.

Demonstrations erupted not only in major American cities but also in countries around the globe.

People of all races, backgrounds, and nationalities marched together in solidarity, calling for justice for George Floyd, demanding an end to police brutality, and protesting against racial inequality in their own countries.

The worldwide protests were not just about George Floyd. They were about a collective reckoning with racism, injustice, and inequality. The protests reflected a growing global awareness that racism is not confined to one country but is a universal issue. They also underscored the ways in which the U.S. civil rights struggle has inspired and influenced social movements around the world.

These protests, while sparked by an event in the U.S., became a global call for solidarity in the fight against systemic racism and for justice for marginalized communities.

A Brief Timeline of Minneapolis Protests



The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, ignited a series of protests and events that significantly impacted the city and resonated worldwide.

It is virtually impossible to lay out every event occurring in the protests; the Washington Post provides an excellent compilation of cell phone videos gathered throughout the protests².

The story began with a report of a fake \$20 bill.

A report was made on the evening of May 25, 2020, when Mr. Floyd bought a pack of cigarettes from Cup Foods, a grocery store.

Believing the \$20 bill he used to be counterfeit, a store employee reported it to police.

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/live-stream-george-floyd-protests/>

At around 8:08 PM, two police officers arrived and approached Mr. Floyd, who was sitting with two other people in a car parked around the corner³.

After approaching the car, one of the officers, Thomas Lane, pulled out his gun and ordered Mr. Floyd to show his hands. Prosecutors do not explain why Mr. Lane thought it necessary to draw his gun⁴.

Mr. Lane, prosecutors said, "put his hands on Mr. Floyd and pulled him out of the car.". Then Mr. Floyd "actively resisted being handcuffed."

Once handcuffed, Mr. Floyd became compliant while Mr. Lane explained he was being arrested for "passing counterfeit currency."

Court transcripts from police body cameras show Mr Floyd appears cooperative at the beginning of the arrest, repeatedly apologizing to the officers after they approach his parked car.

Mr. Lane asks Mr. Floyd to show his hands at least 10 times before ordering him to get out of the vehicle.

It was when officers tried to put Mr. Floyd in their squad car that a struggle ensued.

Mr. Chauvin arrived at the scene approximately 8:19 PM and, along with other officers, attempted to put Mr. Floyd in the police car.

During this attempt, Mr. Chauvin pulled Mr. Floyd away from the passenger side, causing him to fall to the ground, the report said.

He lay there, face down, still in handcuffs.



³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52861726>

⁴ <https://www.hennepinattorney.org/news/news/2020/May/charges-against-chauvin>

That's when witnesses started to film Mr. Floyd, who appeared to be in a distressed state.

These moments, captured on multiple mobile phones and shared widely on social media, would prove to be Mr. Floyd's last.



Mr. Floyd was restrained by officers, while Mr. Chauvin placed his left knee between his head and neck.

For more than nine minutes, Mr Chauvin kept his knee on Mr Floyd's neck

At 8:27, Mr. Chauvin removed his knee from Mr. Floyd's neck. Mr. Floyd was rolled onto a gurney and taken to the Hennepin County Medical Center in an ambulance.

He was pronounced dead about an hour later.

May 26, 2020: Police issue a statement saying Floyd died after a “medical incident” and that he physically resisted.

Video of Floyd's death circulates widely. Protests begin in Minneapolis. Demonstrations quickly spread to other cities across the United States⁵.

Protesters filled the intersection where Floyd was detained, carrying banners that read, “I can’t breathe” and “Jail killer KKKops.”

They later marched to a police station, where officers in riot gear confronted them and deployed tear gas and fired projectiles⁶.

May 27, 2020: Protests intensify in Minneapolis, with thousands gathering at the site of

5

<https://apnews.com/article/george-floyd-death-timeline-2f9abbe6497c2fa4adaebb92ae179dc6>

6

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/minneapolis-protests-over-george-floyd-s-custody-death-grow-volatile-n1215231>

Floyd's death and the Minneapolis Police Department's Third Precinct.

Throughout the day, Minneapolis police responded to the protests by firing rubber bullets into the crowd below.

Following the actions of a man known as the "umbrella man," who caused the first violent action of the protests.

Umbrella Man can be seen breaking the windows with a hammer as people approach him, trying to get him to stop.

Police claim that the man's actions were a catalyst for the violence⁷.

The demonstrations escalated into riots, resulting in looting, property damage, and fires.

Protesters also gathered at the suburban home of the officer seen kneeling on Floyd's neck⁸. No violence was reported in those protests.

May 28, 2020: Gov. Tim Walz activates the Minnesota National Guard. Police abandon the 3rd Precinct station⁹ as protesters overtake it and set it on fire.

About three miles west of the Third Precinct, protesters blanketed the area near the Fifth Precinct¹⁰, heavily damaging at least seven buildings—including a U.S. Post Office, a Wells Fargo branch, a staffing agency, and a Subway in a nearby strip mall.

May 29, 2020: Officer Derek Chauvin is arrested and charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz activates the National Guard to assist local law enforcement in managing the escalating unrest.

June 1, 2020: Autopsy reports classify Floyd's death as a homicide, confirming that he died from cardiopulmonary arrest while being restrained by law enforcement officers. Protests continue nationwide, with many remaining peaceful, while some cities

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53579099>

⁸

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/conflict-erupts-minneapolis-l-protests-over-george-floyd-death-n1216096>

⁹

<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-donald-trump-us-news-ap-top-news-ca-state-wire-7013997bc5633f3113d65901ddb7e85e>

¹⁰

<https://www.startribune.com/walz-bolsters-guard-troops-after-4th-destructive-night/570882282/>

experience further clashes between demonstrators and police.

April 20, 2021: After a high-profile trial, Derek Chauvin is found guilty on all charges: second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter. The verdict is met with widespread relief and seen as a significant moment in the pursuit of police accountability¹¹.

Other US Protests

An overarching theme throughout the protests was that the actions of police were greatly underreported in real time. In cities throughout the country, police seemed to respond to largely peaceful protests with violence.

Police in Denver¹² shot at or hit protesters with everything from pepper spray to a Kevlar bag filled with lead shot fired from a shotgun. They paid \$14 million in settlements.

The Minnesota State Patrol purged emails and text messages immediately after the protests¹³.

New York City has agreed to pay more than \$21,000 each to hundreds of protesters who were surrounded, arrested, and subjected to excessive force by police during a George Floyd protest¹⁴.

While the left continues to believe in the original goals of the protest, believing that police in America tend to enact violence upon the black community at a level far higher than they should, the right tends to support the police over the black community.

Since 2015, white supremacists in several states, especially members of the Texas-based white supremacist group Aryan Renaissance Society, have promoted the slogan “White Lives Matter” with flyers and protests, forming a loose campaign to popularize the phrase¹⁵.

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/21/us/gallery/george-floyd-protests-2020-look-back/>

¹² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/denver-ordered-pay-14m-george-floyd-protesters-rcna21665>

¹³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/minnesota-state-patrol-deleted-texts-emails-after-floyd-protests-major-n1278609>

¹⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nyc-agrees-pay-21500-hundreds-george-floyd-protesters-corralled-police-rcna72921>

¹⁵ <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/white-lives-matter>

More than eight in ten Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (85%) express at least some support, including 48% who strongly support the movement. In contrast, most Republicans and those who lean to the GOP (78%) say they oppose the Black Lives Matter movement, with 58% saying they strongly oppose it, according to a poll by Pew Research¹⁶.

Among Republicans, there is more support for the movement among those who are Hispanic (29% express at least some support) than among those who are White (16%), but majorities of White (82%) and Hispanic (68%) Republicans say they oppose it.

16

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/09/27/support-for-black-lives-matter-declined-after-george-floyd-protests-but-has-remained-unchanged-since/>

The Attack On The Capitol

On January 6, 2021, the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C., was stormed by supporters of then President Donald J. Trump. This unprecedented event aimed to disrupt the certification of the 2020 presidential election results, in which Joe Biden was declared the winner.

In this election, Democrat Joe Biden triumphed over the incumbent Republican Donald Trump, becoming the 46th president of the United States. Biden secured the electoral college with a tally of 306 to 232.

The political right tends to view the people who orchestrated the attack, who were later prosecuted for their actions, as political hostages.

The political left views the orchestrators of the attack as insurrectionists who attempted to overthrow the results of a free and fair election.

Despite this clear outcome, Trump refused to concede, alleging without substantiation that the election was fraudulent and stolen from him, and he pursued unsuccessful legal actions in multiple states where he had lost.

These assertions galvanized many of his supporters to gather in Washington, D.C., on the day Congress was set to certify the Electoral College results.



During a rally near the White House, President Trump addressed the crowd, urging them to march to the Capitol to "peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard" but also to "show strength" and "fight like hell."¹⁷¹⁸

The assault interrupted a joint session of Congress that had been called to certify the presidential election results. As the intent was to obstruct a duly elected president from taking office, the

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020%E2%80%9321_United_States_election_protests

¹⁸ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-6-capitol-riot>

incident was broadly viewed as an insurrection or an attempted coup d'état.

The FBI and various law enforcement agencies classified the incident as an act of domestic terrorism. The 2020 presidential election was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began to intensify during the initial primary elections in February and March. Governors and election officials in several states decided to postpone primary elections or adjust election procedures to ensure public safety.

These adjustments included extending early voting periods and relaxing or eliminating requirements for obtaining or submitting absentee ballots, which millions of voters were expected to use as a safer alternative to in-person voting.

Recognizing that Democratic voters were more likely than their Republican counterparts to opt for absentee ballots—partly due to Trump's repeated minimization of the pandemic's severity—the Trump campaign, the Republican National Committee (RNC), and Republican leaders in various states initiated numerous lawsuits.

They claimed that these changes undermined the constitutional authority of state legislatures to establish election laws or that they facilitated individual voter fraud. Almost all of these lawsuits were dismissed or withdrawn.

Despite facing unsuccessful legal challenges, Trump continued to make unsubstantiated claims that Democrats were rigging the election through voter fraud and manipulating absentee ballots. In a press conference on November 4, Trump perpetuated his false narrative of Democratic misconduct.

In the following weeks, Trump persistently accused Biden and the Democrats of stealing the presidential election, reiterating conspiracy theories about ballot stuffing, deceased voters, and voting

Trump brought
more than

60
court
cases

following the
2020 election.

He lost
them all.



machine software altering votes intended for him. His unfounded claims received tacit support from several Republican members of Congress, who either expressed doubts about the election results or refrained from acknowledging Biden's victory publicly.

This strategic silence contributed to the spread of unfounded concerns about the election's integrity among grassroots Republicans. Manufactured skepticism was later referenced by Republican governors and election officials to justify new "election integrity" laws, making it more challenging for some Democrats to vote and allowing partisan state legislatures to exert undue influence over statewide elections.

As vote counting progressed, radicalized Trump supporters coalesced around the belief that aggressive protests and violent actions were necessary to halt the counting of allegedly fraudulent ballots and prevent Biden from taking office. A temporary Facebook group called "Stop the Steal" was created on November 4, gaining around 320,000 members within a day before Facebook dismantled it due to posts spreading misinformation and inciting violence.

Following the electoral votes cast by electors from each state on December 14, Trump and his supporters, along with leaders from the Stop the Steal movement and other pro-Trump organizations nationwide, shifted their focus to the final formal procedure in the U.S. presidential election.

This involved the ceremonial opening and counting of the electoral votes from each state during a joint session of Congress, overseen by the vice president, scheduled for January 6 as mandated by federal law.

Some of Trump's allies mistakenly advised him that the vice president's role in the electoral vote counting would grant Mike Pence the constitutional power to substitute Democratic electors with Republican ones, potentially obstructing Congress's confirmation of Biden's victory.

Starting in mid-December, Trump utilized several tweets to rally his supporters to participate in a protest rally and march on January 6, coinciding with the vote-counting event. One tweet notably declared,

“Be there, will be wild!”

Trump's press conferences, public addresses, and social media posts have often been described as “stochastic terrorism,” a term that refers to the repeated use of inflammatory language by a public figure that incites violent actions against specific individuals, groups,

or communities.

The Rally Begins

At a rally organized by Trump at a public park adjacent to the White House, thousands gathered, including individuals affiliated with paramilitary groups and various right-wing extremists. They listened to speeches from Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and his sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, among others.

In his address, which commenced around noon, Trump reiterated familiar false claims and conspiracy theories regarding the alleged stolen election. He urged Vice President Pence to obstruct Congress's certification of the electoral college vote, asserting that if Pence did not intervene, the rally attendees would not permit the confirmation to proceed, stating, "We're just not going to let that happen." He encouraged the crowd to march down Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Capitol and implored them to "fight like hell" or risk losing their country.

While Trump did not explicitly instruct attendees to engage in unlawful actions, his incendiary rhetoric clearly implied to many that they would be justified in resorting to violence against the Capitol and its members to thwart Biden's presidency¹⁹.

The Breach of the Capitol

Before Trump concluded his speech shortly after 1:00 PM, as Congress was convening, a mob of his supporters—including members of extremist groups like the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters, as well as self-identified followers of the QAnon

**\$787.5
Million**

**Settlement
paid by Fox
News in a
defamation
lawsuit over
lies reported
about the
2020 election**



¹⁹

<https://theconversation.com/how-donald-trumps-populist-narrative-led-directly-to-the-assault-on-the-us-capitol-153277>

conspiracy—breached the barriers at the Capitol's western perimeter, forcing Capitol Police to retreat to more secure positions.

The crowd swelled as more individuals arrived from the rally, overwhelming the Capitol Police, who were bolstered by reinforcements from the Metropolitan Police Department. Many officers faced brutal assaults with lethal weapons such as bats, pipes, and flagpoles, were subjected to chemical irritants, or were crushed and trampled by the advancing mob.

By around 2:00 pm, the protesters had effectively overstepped the last defense on the western side of the Capitol, making their way up the stairs and scaling the walls of the West Terrace.

At the same time, another faction had also breached the defenses on the eastern side of the Capitol. Shortly after 2:00 pm, the rioters shattered windows to access the western part of the building.

Over the ensuing hours, they vandalized and pilfered the interior, ransacking offices in search of those they considered enemies within Congress.

They particularly focused on Pence, whom they branded a traitor for his refusal to interfere in the congressional tallying of electoral votes.

Around 2:20 pm, Trump openly criticized Pence in a tweet directed at his supporters, claiming that “Mike Pence didn’t have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our country and our Constitution.”

Just moments after the incursion, members of both the House and Senate were evacuated or sought shelter behind desks, barricaded offices, and even in closets. Pence was relocated to a secure area within the complex.

In response, the governors of Virginia and Maryland dispatched National Guard units and state troopers to help secure the building; however, due to bureaucratic delays, the District of Columbia National Guard was not activated until approximately three hours after the attack commenced.

The Capitol was finally cleared of rioters around 6 pm, roughly four hours after they first breached the building. Most of the assailants were not apprehended on-site and simply left the area.

Congress continued its counting of electoral votes, officially certifying Biden as the victor

of the 2020 presidential election in the early hours of January 7. The assault on the Capitol was aired live on prominent news channels, with Trump reportedly observing parts of the incident and expressing satisfaction with the events unfolding.

After facing significant pressure from White House staff and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to denounce the violence, Trump eventually tweeted around 2:40 PM, urging his supporters to back the Capitol Police and to "remain peaceful."

A similar tweet was issued about half an hour later. At about 4:20 pm, Trump tweeted a brief video in which he once again asserted that the election had been stolen. Expressing his "love" for the rioters, he urged them to "go home," stating that "we have to have peace."

Later that day, he tweeted:

"These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long. Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!"

Ongoing Investigations and Prosecutions

On January 8, Trump was suspended from Twitter for posting tweets that violated the platform's policy against glorifying violence, both before, during, and after the Capitol assault.

A Justice Department report released in July 2021 indicated that around 140 officers from



the Capitol and Metropolitan police were assaulted by rioters during the January 6 incident. Among the injured, one officer died from a series of strokes following hospitalization for injuries sustained during the attack, while two others took their own lives.

Additionally, one rioter was shot and killed by police, another suffered a fatal heart attack, and a third was reportedly crushed by the crowd. The rioters

inflicted an estimated \$1.5 million in damage to the Capitol building.

The incident has led to increased scrutiny of domestic extremism and discussions about the security of democratic institutions²⁰.

In May 2021, Senate Republicans blocked a House-passed bill aimed at establishing a national commission to investigate the January 6 attack, arguing that it would unnecessarily overlap with ongoing inquiries by two Senate committees and the Justice Department, which were primarily focused on intelligence and communication failures prior to the event.

In response, the House voted largely along party lines to form its own investigative body, the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.

Following Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's decision to reject two Republican representatives nominated by minority leader Kevin McCarthy for the committee (Jim Jordan and Jim Banks),

McCarthy withdrew his remaining nominees and attempted to prevent Republican participation in what he termed a "sham process."

When Representatives Adam Kinzinger and Liz Cheney were appointed to the committee, it further intensified the partisan divide.

The interpretation of January 6 remains deeply polarized. While many view it as a violent insurrection and a direct attack on democracy, others, including former President Trump and his supporters, have sought to downplay the events, framing them as a legitimate protest.

This divergence in perspectives continues to influence

**Black Lives
Matter
Protests
occured in all**

**50
states**

and over

**2000
cities and
towns**



²⁰

<https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/examining-the-january-6-attack-on-the-us-capitol-wray-061521>

American political discourse and has implications for the nation's collective memory of the event²¹.

How the Left and the Right view the Capitol Attack

Confronting uncomfortable truths, rebuilding institutional trust, and addressing political extremism's root causes will determine whether America can find common ground amid the January 6 aftermath.

Without these efforts, the ideological chasm dividing Americans will only deepen.

These contrasting viewpoints highlight the deep polarization in the United States, with each side interpreting the events and their significance in fundamentally different ways.

The Left Sees:

The left's perspective frames the event as not only a violent uprising but also an existential threat to American democracy, driven by the refusal to accept the legitimacy of the 2020 election results.

The left believes the attack exposed the rise of far-right extremism, including white nationalism and conspiracy theories. They unanimously condemn the violence that occurred on January 6.

According to their view, Trump's false claims of widespread voter fraud, which numerous courts and election officials debunked, set the stage for the violent actions that followed. Left-wing leaders and commentators often describe the attack as an attempted coup or insurrection, which could have escalated into something even more violent had law enforcement not intervened.

The Right Sees:

The right's perspective on the January 6 Capitol attack emphasizes political polarization, a belief in widespread election fraud, and skepticism about the government's response.

21

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-trump-redefined-january-6-insurrection-to-his-advantage-pkmf5csd8>

Many on the right continue to believe that the 2020 election was stolen due to widespread voter fraud, despite evidence to support such claims. Some right-leaning individuals, including Members of Congress, argue that the riot was "mostly peaceful." A key theme among the right is the belief that the left weaponizes the Capitol attack to undermine the political right and discredit Trump's movement. Many Trump supporters maintain that the 2020 election was "stolen" from Trump due to widespread voter fraud, despite the lack of evidence supporting such claims.

Comparing BLM Protests To The Attack On The Capitol

The narrative of the events surrounding the death of George Floyd seems to depend greatly on who is telling the story.

Many right-wingers will swear that a group they call Antifa joined with the black community to riot and burn down the city of Minneapolis. They define Antifa as a group that is radically anti-Trump, insistent on doing whatever is necessary to defy him.

Ironically, the name Antifa is short for anti-fascist. They are saying that the group that is against Trump is against fascism. Funny how they don't seem to see the irony in the name itself.

In reality, the protests happening at this time could be interpreted as a group of protesters reacting to the police declaring war on them. The Washington Post created an incredible reconstruction of the week's events by stitching together cell phone video lining up times and locations for the week following the death of George Floyd²².

Regardless of what you may have heard about the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, even a brief look at this recreation will likely cause you to look at these protests in a different way.

It's a common refrain from some of those charged in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and their Republican allies that the Justice Department is treating them harshly because of their political views while those arrested during BLM protests were given leniency.

Court records tell a different story.

An Associated Press review of court documents in more than 300 federal cases

²²“Reconstructing seven days of protests in Minneapolis after George Floyd’s death”
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/live-stream-george-floyd-protests/>

stemming from the protests sparked by George Floyd's death shows that dozens of people charged have been convicted of serious crimes and sent to prison.

The AP found that **more than 120 defendants** across the United States **have pleaded guilty or were convicted at trial of federal crimes**, including rioting, arson, and conspiracy. More than 70 defendants who've been sentenced have received an average of about 27 months behind bars. At least 10 received prison terms of five years or more.

A study by the **Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)** found that **over 93%** of the Black Lives Matter protests were **peaceful**²³.

The dissonance between the rhetoric of Capitol rioters and their supporters and the record established by courts highlights both the racial tension inherent in their arguments—the pro-Donald Trump rioters were largely white and BLM's protesters were more diverse—and the flawed assessment at the heart of their claims.

Conservatives have sought to equate the attack on the Capitol with the Black Lives Matter protests, accusing Democrats of being hypocrites for not denouncing the violence after Floyd's death as loudly as the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Some Republicans have seized on the handling of the protest cases in Portland to suggest that the Jan. 6 defendants are being politically persecuted.

That has not been borne out when comparing the sentences that federal judges have given to Jan. 6 defendants and those who are accused of crimes during the protests against police brutality across the

United States

1364

United Kingdom

3

People killed by police in 2024



²³

<https://acleddata.com/2020/09/03/demonstrations-political-violence-in-america-new-data-for-summer-2020>

country.

President Donald Trump, on his first full day in office of his second term, decided to grant clemency and pardons to people convicted of assaulting police officers during the 2021 attack on the Capitol and suggested there could be a place in American politics for the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, extremist groups whose leaders were convicted of seditious conspiracy against the U.S.

The demonstrations after Floyd's death were largely peaceful calls to address racial inequality and police brutality that occasionally turned violent. In some cities, protests descended into chaos after dark²⁴, with people smashing windows, looting stores, setting fires, and assaulting officers.

Shamar Betts, who was 19 at the time, posted a flyer on Facebook on May 31, 2020, that said "RIOT @ MarketPlace Mall" at 3 p.m. and instructed people to bring "friends & family, posters, bricks, book bags, etc." He participated in the looting, went live on Facebook during the riot, and bragged about starting it, authorities said. More than 70 stores were looted, and the riot caused \$1.8 million in damage, prosecutors said.

Betts' lawyer, Elisabeth Pollock, said Betts was frustrated about police brutality across the U.S., had lost his job because of the coronavirus outbreak, and never intended to hurt anyone. The prosecutors pushed for the maximum punishment of five years in prison and the maximum restitution amount for Betts, who had no criminal history, she said.

"They took into account not a single mitigating factor: nothing about how he grew up, nothing about how the George Floyd protests had affected the community, nothing about how the pandemic had affected Shamar personally and the community. There was absolutely no quarter given to him at all," his attorney said in an interview.

In another case, an Illinois man was sentenced to nearly nine years behind bars for lighting a Minneapolis cell phone store on fire in June 2020. A Charleston, South Carolina, man who live streamed himself looting a store downtown was sentenced to two years in prison.

An Indiana woman who admitted illegally entering the Capitol but didn't participate in any violence or destruction avoided jail time, and two other misdemeanor defendants got one and two months of home confinement. Two other people who were locked up pretrial

24

<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-ap-top-news-race-and-ethnicity-music-or-state-wire-1dd1bb39093a3691f4e78093787ab877>

were released after pleading guilty to misdemeanors and serving the maximum six-month jail sentence.

In Utah, a federal judge sentenced 25-year-old Lateesha Richards to nearly two years in prison for tossing a pair of basketball shorts onto an overturned, burning patrol car and hurling a baseball bat toward police officers during a May 2020 BLM protest in Salt Lake City. There's no evidence that the bat struck anybody.

Among the roughly 1,500 people pardoned by Trump for their participation in the Capitol Assault were more than 200 who pleaded guilty to assaulting police. At least 140 officers were injured during the riot—many beaten, bloodied, and crushed by the crowd—as Trump's supporters tried to overturn Biden's election victory.

How The Media Continues To Shape Public Opinion

Liberal media outlets like The New York Times, CNN, and MSNBC largely focus on the attack as a dangerous attempt to subvert democracy, emphasizing the role of Trump's rhetoric in inciting violence. They frame the attack as an existential threat to American democratic institutions and the rule of law.

For the right, the event was seen as the culmination of widespread dissatisfaction with the 2020 election and an expression of frustration at what they perceive as a stolen election. Even after winning the 2024 election, Trump continues to champion the false narrative that he was the true winner of the election in 2020.

Conservative outlets like Fox News and Newsmax tended to emphasize the role of election fraud claims in fueling the protests, framing the Capitol attack as an expression of frustration with a rigged political system.

Their false narrative of the 2020 election continues to this day. Even after losing a lawsuit that forced Fox News to pay \$787.5 million because of their lies in their coverage of the 2020 election, they continue to create a false narrative of daily events, leading to massive disinformation that informs the right's vision of the political landscape.

For the left, the attack was a clear and dangerous assault on democracy, largely fueled by the lies of former President Trump and extremist elements within his base.

Despite these stark differences, there are some areas where the left and right may find common ground. Both sides agree that political violence should not be condoned, even if they disagree on the scale of the violence or the motivations behind it.