

Episode 110-- Insurrection at the Capitol: What's Broken and...

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SPEAKERS

Stephan Abrams, JJ Janflone, Josh Horwitz, Kelly Sampson, Kris Brown



JJ Janflone 00:07

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JJ Janflone 00:38

Hey everybody. Welcome to a live recording of an episode of "Red, Blue and Brady." Today, Kelly and I are speaking with three great guests, the Executive Director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. Josh Horwitz. Brady President Kris Brown, and Executive Council Member and National Chapter Coordinator for Team Enough, Stephan Abrams. Now if the title of this podcast "Insurrection at the Capitol: What's Broken and How To Fix It" didn't clue you in on the topic -- we're discussing the January 6 attack on the Capitol, when insurrectionists illegally entered the U.S. Capitol Building violently objecting to the certification of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's electoral victory as the incumbent President and Vice President of the United States. Now in doing so, this mob directly attacked not just the Capitol and those inside, but in many ways, the democratic process itself. So together, what we're doing in this special episode is discussing the urgent steps

we have to enact to guard against further violent attacks and how gun safety underlines all of them. So I want to go ahead and just jump right in.



JJ Janflone 01:46

So to kick things off, I want to open it up to all of our panelists, I don't think we have to go into extreme detail. recapping the events of the attack on the Capitol. It was very hard to miss no matter where in the world you were. But I will say, essentially, what we saw was on Wednesday, President Trump holding a rally in Washington, DC. It drew 1000s of his supporters to the Capitol despite a pandemic, ultimately culminating in what we saw, which was a mob marching from his rally, near the White House, to Capitol Hill, where the electoral votes for the next President and Vice President were being certified. It was then that we saw the Capitol breached, moving past the police, and violence ensuing.



JJ Janflone 02:27

And so for all of you, I wonder if you can explain to listeners some of the reasons why this was so shocking, I think especially because all of us have had experiences in DC at the Capitol Building. You know, why was this so shocking, even if it was in many ways, predictable?



Josh Horwitz 02:42

So, you know, it was predictable, because this has happened before, not maybe to the same degree. But it, you know, we've seen this across legislators, across legislatures, across the country. I was in Virginia for last last year, Martin Luther King Day when we had 15,000 armed insurrectionists, mobs come, you know, they want to call themselves "militia" (there's no such thing as a private militia -- that's a mob), come to the state capitol and try to intimidate legislators that were lucky to get, not lucky, you worked really hard to get a bunch of gun laws done after that. But it, so the violent part of this, that, you know, the sort of the marching part of this, the armor part of that, that didn't surprise me. What surprised me, and really left me shaken was the response at the Capitol. So we can go, I'm sure we'll have time to go into that. But you know, this is something that I've been chronicling for well over a decade. It started, you know, you would think after the bombing of the Oklahoma City building, which is an offense against the federal government, that that would be the end to it.



Josh Horwitz 03:41

But I wrote my book, because in the mid 2000s, I started seeing this rhetoric come back. And I warn people that it's not just rhetoric, it will be action. And, you know, I went back to a blog I recently wrote about the health care debate. In the health care debate, you know, we saw people hanging on scaffolding, threatening legislators, didn't quite get to this point, right. But that should have been our wake up call. This, you know, this was predictable. What was not predictable was just the baffling response of law enforcement on that day. And that's what really, I knew we were gonna have a violent mob. That was like, obvious. But the idea that the law enforcement was not going to be prepared, and had an incredible disparate treatment that we saw of the different crowds, you know, from, from what we saw this summer to what we saw at the, at the Capitol with a largely white crowd, was that was just so painful to watch that. But there's a history here, and this has gone on, this has been building for last 15 years. We haven't taken it seriously. And, but the President realizes this is his private army, and he put the pieces together, and that's why we've had this crisis.

K

Kris Brown 04:45

I'll echo all of Josh's comments, obviously. And as someone who worked on Capitol Hill for seven years, I'm very familiar with the building, with the sense of security you have within the Capitol because in order to gain entrance, there are magnetometers, and it is a gun-free zone. It's intended to be. And so I can only imagine, I thought watching as I did, Donald Trump Jr.'s speech, followed by the President's speech to this group. And we'd been following this as, as anyone at team Brady knows, to know how much chatter was going back-and-forth, among those planning to attend the rally, for potentially violent actions. And if you looked at the final count, just what I see so far, as of 4pm, on Wednesday afternoon, there are about 130,000 different folks who had seen or responded to commentary around potential violence leading to the march over to the Capitol. And so I'm just incredulous, as someone who used to work on the Hill and understands how things are supposed to work, and how much effort is typically put into protecting our nation's capitol, our lawmakers, that there was not more of an effort made here, and I do think we see notable examples of officers who really did put their lives on the line. And I want to note that one of them has tragically lost his life and it fills me with despair as an American, that he lost his life at the hands, not of terrorists from somewhere else, of domestic terrorists inspired by the President of the United States. And that's in stark contrast, and sorry, it just makes me so angry as an American, although we shouldn't be surprised, as Josh well knows, and, as you said, has predicted, all of this is culminating from hate-filled rhetoric, and an increasing sense in this country, fueled by the NRA, that the way to solve disputes, is to arm ourselves. And that's identified with a perverted notion of what the Second Amendment stands for. Let's face it-- the way that Trump has been talking about and lying about a stolen election, and that individuals basically have to go

tell Congress to do the right thing here -- the only right thing was to certify the votes of the Electoral College. What they did is an attempted coup, fuelled by the idea that it's exactly the opposite, that it's standing up for some notion of constitutionality. And that perversion is made all-the-worse by knowing that we had huge police presence for peaceful protests related to police violence and racial injustice, led by Black Lives Matter as it, as a huge contrast now not saying that involved the Capitol Police per se, but it was in DC. And so there's so many issues that I think are raised by this, that really the only silver lining that I hope comes out of this is a renewed understanding that these issues are essential to be tackled and addressed. And I look forward to talking about some of the solutions that we think should happen as a result of this.

S

Stephan Abrams 08:22

My generation seeing one of the very few places in America as a safe gun-free zone as the U.S. Capitol, and not only was Trump's actions already before the attack, inciting violence and already an attack on our democracy. But what was shocking for me was that turned into an attack on our country, and someone who was born after, post-9/11, this was the first time or one of the first times where I really saw our country, under attack by its own people. And you look, we're probably going to talk about this later, but if you look at what Trump said, after Charlottesville, and then in comparison to what he said, during the Black Lives Matter protests. And then to say, "We love you" for attacking the United States Capitol and saying, "Go home," but at the same time saying "we love what you're doing." It was just mind blowing. And the fact is that I watched those four speeches, as well and there was some great times where we saw people reaching across the aisle and talking about how what happened that day was horrible. But there's also other people who were saying the exact same thing that they would have said that morning, and people who wanted to attack, continue to attack immigrants who come to this country and also wanted to talk about the Second Amendment, how the Second Amendment is under attack, when what we should be talking about is that our democracy in our country is under attack, and that we need to build back better. And that's kind of really what was the most shocking for me.

J

Josh Horwitz 09:54

JJ, Can I follow up on that?

S

Stephan Abrams 09:57

Always! Yeeah, we're conversational. This is your party - hang out!



Josh Horwitz 10:00

Yeah, all right. So I mean, Stephan, I think one of the things that was really interesting about that is that, you know, you know, many of us have worked at state capitals across the country. And we see, all too often, you know, that we're faced with people, you know, armed on the streets and in the capital, it was up until last year that people were allowed into the Virginia Capitol with arms, right. And still in the Wisconsin Capitol and Michigan Capitol, you're allowed to bring an AR-15 in there, the threat to democracy, just of exercising your right to participate in democracy is threatened every time you see that. But you know, interestingly, on the Capitol grounds in DC, you can't open carry. So there are plenty of people, obviously, with guns concealed carrying. But the more I would say, "advanced weaponry" or more deadly weaponry, it was deadly enough. But you couldn't bring a AR-15 on the grounds, and that's because D.C., D.C. needs its statehood, first of all, so it can do its own gun laws, but it still has a ban on open carry. And that's something that I've worked on that Christian Heyne from the Brady staff has worked on. And you know, we've a couple times had to save D.C.'s gun laws, and the Republicans are trying to get rid of it. And we were able to do that. And as bad as that was, it was so clear to me that if that mob had AR-15s, and AK-47, and other types of weapons - it would have been even worse - much worse. And so because people were obviously using violence and shooting guns, and so, you know, gun laws, guns have no place in the political process. Political violence has no place in the political process. But keeping guns, you know, keeping guns out of legislators, legislatures, is incredibly important for the democratic process and enhances democracy. There's no right to live with a firearm, there's no right to intimidate people. And I and I posit that on Wednesday, the fact that we have that ban on open carry in D.C., and most concealed carry, saved a lot of lives.



Kelly Sampson 11:57

And if I could just chime in, one thing that was shocking to me - not surprising, I just want to be clear on the difference - this was predicted. And I think we'll get into that a bit more. But in the same way that a lot of the videos of police brutality, um, a lot of people have said it, it opened their eyes to the experience of being a Black person or a person of color and what it's like to interact with police like that. It was very shocking to me to see how comfortable people were in this kind of largely white crowd was just wrecking the Capitol, walking around the floor like they own the place, intimidating police officers, getting in their faces. It was just very, viscerally surprising to me to see just how comfortable these people were wreaking havoc, on video, with their full faces showing. And I just found that very, very surprising to see. And to kind of get a little bit more into the roots of this, I want to turn to Josh, because as JJ said, you have predicted this and written about it long before even the Trump era. You were on it. And so I'm just wondering if you could talk about some of the warning signs. And what actually, sort of, helped ring this bell for you.

You already mentioned Oklahoma City, and some of the rhetoric that came from that. But I'm just wondering, what are some other signs that clued you in?

J

Josh Horwitz 13:11

Yeah, so I thought actually after Oklahoma City, and you know, there's a rise of the quote unquote, I don't know I hate to use the sword, but the "militia"/"self-styled militia movement," mobs, whatever. And, you know, of course, the shooter at Oklahoma City made his living at gun shows selling firearms, you know, was very involved with that crowd. And then the Oklahoma, you know, the Federal Building and the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City was, it was exploded, over 100 people were killed. Dozens of young people, children were killed. And at that time and held to that fact. That's it, you know, this whole insurrectionists, let's, you know, let's take up arms against the government is gone. But then, you know, and the NRA will go back to being a hunting organization. Well, I was wrong about that. But what I was right about was in the mid 2000s, this was before Barack Obama became president, I started seeing this insurrectist ideology start creeping back in. And you can draw a line, you can really think about this when Charlton Heston at the NRA Convention, I think 2000, puts the musket above his head and say "Out of my cold dead hands, Mr. Gore," and you know, and "vote freedom first." All these all these, you know, I you know, these these dog-whistles towards, let's use firearms, for let's use firearms for political purposes, right. And they didn't quite say it, but they were getting there.

J

Josh Horwitz 14:27

But then it got, it got, it escalated. So then you saw people like Mike Huckabee, former Governor of Arkansas, Fox News host the whole thing. He started talking about, you know, the Second Amendment is not about duck hunting. Well if it's not about duck hunting, what exactly is it for, right? And then you saw the Heller case in 2008, where there was this open discussion, even Scalia mentioned it about this, sort of, private individualized militia and I was like, Oh my gosh, the Second Amendment is going bad, is becoming insurrectionary. And then Sharron Angle and you know, when she ran from Nevada, for the Senate, and she talked about "Second Amendment remedies." And I said, "My gosh, this is really coming back." And I think one of the big things, you have to you have to marry right, rhetoric with action. The rhetoric developed before the action, right? The rhetoric empowered the action. And so we saw a lot of people just, sort of, even Democratic politicians just sort of be "Oh, yeah. Second amendments about fighting individual, you know, tyranny." There's no such thing is an individual right to revolution. Let's just, that's not a thing, right. There's no, but you know, the justification for getting rid of the Assault Weapons Ban is we you know, citizens should have the right to fight the government, and fight tyranny if the government became tyrannical. And then, you know,

Gabby Giffords was shot, right? That's right, you know, tragic anniversaries of these. Right? We see, during the health care debate, we started to see a level of violence, it was, you know, that started escalating. And then we saw more, you know, legislators being breached. And, and personally, as someone who lobbies in the states, you know, we felt it, not just, we felt it physically, when people who were armed, would come to our rallies, and try to intimidate us, you know. And you know, and people have said, "I won't be intimidated." But you know what, when a bunch of guys show up with a AR-15, who may or may not know how to use them, you're stupid not to be careful about that. I mean, that's dangerous. And so it is really, it affects your rights. I saw this trajectory. I wrote the book before we got to the level of the Health Care Act, but I saw it in the far corners of the internet. And you know, now with QAnon and all this stuff, it's just, you know. And what Trump realized was there was a force out there - and I wrote up an article about this in New York Daily News recently, and a blog - but you know, he developed us into his private army. And what's interesting is that it was there to fight government tyranny. But as soon as Trump came in, it just turned in a dime, which is what militias do, right. I mean, they're not, there's no ideological, they're full of hate, they're full of rage. They want, they want to make sure that people who don't look like them don't have power. That's what it's about. And so when they, you know, Trump grabbed that, and he put it in his personal service, whether that was for his government aims, or against the government aims, you know. And so that's the rise I saw. I thought it was, I thought it was gone after Oklahoma City. But then I started seeing it, seeing it. And then I saw mainstream politicians, Newt Gingrich was used to say this all the time, "Second Amendment's not for duck hunting," and, you know, and you know, once you see that, you've got to take it seriously. And then of course, Trumpism married that to action, and that's, that's the rise. And it's unfortunate, but I've been screaming about it for 10 years and you know, I wish people listened.



JJ Janflone 15:06

Well, and everyone should go read your book, right now.



Josh Horwitz 17:36

"Democracy and the Insurrectionist Idea," University of Michigan press - available on Kindle, Amazon.



JJ Janflone 17:42

And I mean right now, but watch the rest of this first, and then go purchase it, give it a read and check it out. Because I think that it lays it out, unfortunately beautifully.



Kris Brown 17:52

Maybe we can just make sure it's in the chat or a link to it, so that folks can do it. It is an excellent book. And I just want to say, in response to something Josh said that I think is really something that was driven home to me in a way that, unless you've experienced it, it's hard to put into words. I too, like Josh, am a Virginian and I was participating in various of the public fora, along with a lot of other people, on both sides around Virginia's potential action following the horrific shooting in Virginia Beach. I was standing, sort of, on the field flanking the Capitol, talking to some other people. And one of the team actually Christian Heyne, who worked at CSGV, and is at Brady, has been involved in the movement for a long time, came over to me and said, "I want you to move, you need to move away from where you are." And I looked over and there were two men standing next to me with AR-15's. And the minute I saw it, I felt like I was going to vomit. And they looked very hostile. And it was terrifying to me. And let's face it for a lot of us who are involved in the gun violence prevention movement, I personally have not experienced gun violence in my life. It is sad to me that we have so many people in our country who either have been victims of gun violence or have lost people who they're very close to, family members to gun violence, who are having to advocate in this environment. And I think Wednesday, members of Capitol Hill, regardless of the party affiliation, the terror that you see on their faces isn't because they were afraid that they would get beaten up. They were afraid that people had concealed guns and breached the Capitol and not gone through the magnetometers and they were afraid for their lives. This is America and it doesn't have to be this way. And I think everyone needs to put themselves in that situation and understand what's really at stake, for people to come out and exercise their First Amendment rights, to say things and fully participate in our society, and it should not be that someone's Second Amendment rights in any way trump those rights. And that's the balance that truly has been lost, that we need to reinvigorate, and now, back into our public discourse, and use this opportunity to actually meaningfully reform our gun violence laws across this nation.



JJ Janflone 20:36

Well, and to speak on trumping of rights - Kris, to steal words from you - I, you know, I think we have to be really clear here about about one of the things that at least in this particular instance, I think, sort of knocked the dominoes over, right. In that the President was actively fomenting dissent. The, the claims that the election had been stolen, which were repeated up until the point that people were literally marching from his rally where he had said that, entreating followers to fight, Rudy Giuliani, you know, advocating for a "trial by combat," which is not something I thought I would hear someone say, at the beginning of 2021. You know, and then even folks condemning Vice President Pence for

doing his constitutional duty. We heard reports of people, when they stormed the Capitol, screaming that they wanted, you know, to bring Pence to them. And, and so I think we have to talk about why this is so significant, that this is where the claims originated and where, you know, sort of I think the gasoline was poured on this fire. How, how do we handle a situation like this? I think that's a bit of an unfair question on my part, but you know, where, how do you solve a problem of a mob that thinks it's a militia, because the President has told them they are one?

K

Kris Brown 21:53

Well, I'm interested in what Josh and Stephen both think about this. I think, to me it's, it's two separate things, right. The first is fomenting the lie, and knowingly or dangerously, recklessly, right, creating a cause of action for people to take matters into their own hands. And Trump is responsible for that, and so are a number of members of Congress and other elected officials. And I think they have to be held to account for it. Brady, obviously, has come out along with CSGV and a lot of other organizations saying we need to exercise the 25th Amendment. I know there aren't that many days left before January 20. But to me, even one day is too many with someone who, whose own staff is calling him manic, which isn't news to us. But given the relatively short time left, and the fact that he has the nuclear codes, and he's not going to change his approach to how he governs - it's a risk - and he should be removed. And I'm glad to see people like Senator Murkowski finally some some folks, who are in the same party as this man, come out and say he needs to go, he needs to go immediately. But Ted Cruz, and Josh Hawley, and Gohmert, and others who actually contested on the floor, this election and know better, and know that Joe Biden won, equally were fomenting this, and I think must be held to account. I think, frankly, they should resign, and if that's not going to happen, I think the House and Senate need to appropriately review and censure these individuals because if we don't do that, we are encouraging it. And that's exactly what's happened, and that needs to stop. And the second thing is, we need to enact laws that protect our citizens, and actually really respond to this, obviously I want expanded Brady background checks. But I think the big thing that's also been laid bare here is, we need serious review of our policing in this country. We need some kind of comprehensive police reform as well, a host of other things too. But those are the things that really come to mind.

S

Stephan Abrams 24:17

And also, going back to what Kris said about accountability, obviously, we're going to remember all those floor speeches and who's contesting this election, and we're gonna hold them accountable. But also, the importance that we need to get this guy out now is so critical, because the theme of this transition that has been the hashtag "build back

better," and we need to start doing that today. And I, I have two younger sisters and watching this event with them, it was just so shocking, because they felt, because they watched this whole election. They were so excited about this. This is one of their first elections that they actually are going to be able to remember and they saw how amazing organizers went out there and fought to protect our democracy, and now there's people who are saying that this election was rigged, and all these things. So, I think for us, we need to breathe new life into our faith and restore our democracy, and restore this trust. And I think that starts now, rather than, it does not start on Inauguration Day, it starts now. And it starts with all the people who are going to be helping invoke the 25th Amendment. And hopefully, people continuously from the Republican Party are going to get the memo and can join in the effort to do so.

K

Kelly Sampson 25:36

And I mean, if I can just add on to, you know, what is the importance of having a president foment an insurrection like this, I think one thing that's going to be really important in the weeks and months and years going forward is the role that misinformation has had and the role of like media literacy. And I think there's a parallel there to gun violence and the Second Amendment, and the ways in which the gun lobby's ability to skew reality and disseminate myths to the population has allowed it to then be able to get the sort of gun policies and decisions that it has been able to do before, especially the past few years or so. I think it's related to what we saw here, and I think that's going to be really important going forward because whatever Donald Trump has contributed to it, he didn't start the fire. And I think that's gonna be really important that we figure out a way to help re-educate - and I realize that word is loaded - but to provide a solid understanding of the country, of the laws, of the rights and privileges that people have. And one of the things I want to turn to is that we saw an immediate difference, it jumped off the camera from the way that the crowds at the Capitol on Wednesday were treated versus the way that protesters this summer and in other hearings have been treated, especially the Black Lives Matter protests. And so, Stephan, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit, a little bit about those distinctions and what may be behind them? And what are some things that we can do to make sure that we don't see such discrepancies in the future?

S

Stephan Abrams 27:00

Yeah, for me, even in my own neighborhood in San Diego, when I went and protested in La Mesa, we saw a very quick mobilization of the police. As soon as we got there, and there was tanks and heavily armored people. And they even were able to cut off a lot of our routes of peaceful protest, just to push us around and hit us with their shields, and batons. And it was it was very frustrating for myself, and a lot of the people who actually did, who

have protested in DC, to watch the different treatment of peaceful protesters compared to these insurrectionists. And there's a very clear difference there. There's people who are fighting, just to be heard and who are doing so peacefully, compared to a group that was going to be violent, and we knew they were going to be violent. And to see just such little resistance was shocking. When when Black Lives Matter was protesting, they boarded every single city up for nothing to happen. And for this, there was no response. And there was, there continued to be no response throughout the day. And we were and everyone was just watching, like, when are they going to bring in more people? And it was just something that we had to take a step back and realize that there's definitely some people who were complicit in this attack who were a part of the Capitol Police. And it's important that we realize that the same systems that we're fighting to find alternatives to policing, and systems that have continuously oppressed black and brown people, for centuries, we need to examine them and take a look at them and have real, serious conversations about those alternatives and how we can make sure that we are, first of all, allowing people to have their First Amendment Rights, and do so peacefully, have them represented and have them heard, and they don't, and they don't have to go through being hit, shot, sprayed, compared to these people who attacked our democracy, and were able to do so and just go home. That was crazy, that they will just walk out the building with the things that were in the Capitol. It was, it was just shocking and it was it was very painful to see that these people are going to have the platform to be heard, when a lot of the people who are protesting peacefully for Black Lives Matter but haven't been heard.



Josh Horwitz 29:43

And I think your systemic critique is right on, and it's something that goes you know, that's we've seen in, you know, we saw it across the country and so the, I think Kelly you said the the just the comfort level that people had, and the selfies that law enforcement were taking in there was just unbelievable. But, and so, so we need to take on. And we have a big systematic issue and we need widespread police reform and we need, we just need to grapple with racism in this country like, period, right. But there's also something that we need to do that's maybe more narrow, but very important. And that is, and this is, I'm echoing the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives who call for this, who said, "We need a full after-action review of what happened at the Capitol." And so we can't, you know, there is, certainly there are societal and system problems. But who are the actors here that enabled this? What was told to who? What type of planning was done? Because those, we need to root this out and understand this and identify the bad actors here. I mean, you know, potentially, it's just gross negligence. I don't think so. But I mean, it's, if we need to know, because it seemed intentional, right. And we need to know that and we need to root that out, we need to understand it, and name names, and

understand who is communicating with who, because this can never happen again. And it can also give us a window on that larger system. So I mean, I think, you know, that after-action review that, you know, if it's, we need something akin to a 9/11 Commission to examine this - in detail. The same way we examined the shooting at Virginia Tech, there was a commission. We need to understand exactly where everybody was at all these points, who was communicating with who? Why wasn't there, you know, why wasn't there a much better perimeter? And, you know, that's, that's what helps become, things become non-violent, right? When you have the appropriate setup, you know. And so, this, this was, you know, that what it what noble says, is that you know, is that this was a gross incident of disparate policing, and that can't happen. We need to treat populations the same. And that allows us to be fair, and allows not law enforcement a chance to actually not use violence, if they're set up properly in the right ways, with the right barriers, maybe it won't get to violence, right. And we've started to see that in places around the country. So I am, I just think the narrow issue, right, one of the things we need is, in addition to addressing our system, it's just, we need to know what happened in detail, so that we can make sure it never happens again. And to go back to Kris's point, that state legislatures really never had this problem either. What are the lessons we learned? Because there's a lot of learning that needs to be done.

K

Kelly Sampson 32:31

If I could just add to that, I think one of the things that, in addition to helping to treat people fair, I think what they really showed is that when you do not have an actual risk-based method of policing or law enforcement, but instead one that kind of will treat certain people as criminals, and in this country, a lot of times Black and Brown people or immigrants, and then sort of downplay the threat posed by white people, it is no good for the country as a whole. And I just found it very striking from Wednesday, which is, you know, we oftentimes will assume the worst out of people who look like me. And that doesn't really do anything to advance public safety. I mean, George Floyd, in no way would pose anywhere near what we saw on Wednesday, but then underplay the threat posed by white nationalism, and neo-nazis and the like, and now we have a Capitol that is shattered, and a legislature that was had to convene. And so I - sorry, not convene anymore - so I think part of what is important also in the disparate treatment is that it is not only problematic on the levels of race, but it's also just problematic on the level of national security. By not taking seriously the threat posed by this revolution, we have a huge national security issue, and it's leaving us vulnerable to all sorts of other attacks. And to kind of just drill down...sorry.

K

Kelly Sampson 33:57

—
sorry,

K

Kelly Sampson 33:58

Oh no, sorry I interrupted. But I think what you're saying is really important, I guess part of it that I think about too, is the chilling effect that that can have, in addition to the disparate treatment based on the color of your skin, based on the issue that you're advocating for, and this view that some people may have that if you're siding with the leader, the President and what he says you're somehow safer than if you are castigating that person. And that is deeply unAmerican, it's deeply concerning. But we know just from our gun violence prevention movement, as Joan Peterson - Hi, Joan - who is listening has pointed out that when there was peaceful activity of those who were protesting gun violence, and who were in the rotunda, lawfully. Many of them were there to protest gun violence and they found themselves arrested. And I will say as a mother, my daughter was arrested for peacefully sitting in front of Mitch McConnell's office, and taken away and charged, and she had nothing except her body and her words to raise these issues. So the double standard that we see here is deeply troubling and alarming. And I agree this really needs to be investigated very carefully, because people have to believe that these factors, and the level of policing, is based on purely objective threat assessment and nothing else.



JJ Janflone 35:31

Yeah, because that immediately makes me think that we've definitely seen, for example, when we look at sort of the response that happened in terms of the amount of police Capitol Police, National Guard that were deployed for the Black Lives Matter protests the summer, that there was a position that a Black body itself is dangerous, and that is deeply concerning. But we're not saying that we want violent policing across the board, I want to be really clear to everyone, no one's calling for that. We're calling for accurate and adequate police. And that's a different thing. But I want to go ahead, oh, sorry, and just let other people speak.

J

Josh Horwitz 36:10

I'm just going to say, you know, equity goes to policing to, and it goes to tactics. And there are, there are appropriate tactics that can be used, you know, equitably, and that, we didn't see that. And we and that's really, you know, I don't think anybody's to suggest that the capital be ransacked, right. But the the bottom line here is that we need police uniform writ large. And we need to what we do have left after that has to be equitably, equitably used, in whatever methods it's going to be. And so we need the bigger levels,

that we talked to like, the system reforms and the police reform. And we need to know what happened on Wednesday.

K

Kelly Sampson 36:58

And I just want to continue down this route that we've been talking about in terms of discrepancies in policing, and talk a little bit about the role that white supremacy played in the attack. And I think one vivid example is that that was the first time that the Confederate flag has ever been unfurled in the Capitol. It didn't even happen during the Civil War. And so I'd love to get everyone's thoughts about how we got here. But before we do, I just wanted to kind of define something for anyone who may be watching. And that is, when we talk about white supremacy, we're not necessarily saying that every single, that people of color cannot participate with it, because it is a system, and it's a system that kind of underlies our entire country. And the reason why I bring that up is because you will see in some of the footage, that there were, sprinkled in the crowd (the crowd was largely white) but there were some people of color. And I've also seen people pointing out that some members of the Proud Boys have black wives or whatever to kind of say, "well, they can't be white supremacists." But that assumes that white supremacy is not a system that you can participate in. And to the same extent, when JJ was talking about people being arrested this summer as part of the protest, or Kris talking about her daughter's experience, white people who ally themselves with people of color will often get the same treatment, or, or be placed in the category because we have a system that, sort of, will punish people based on how they act or allow people of color to participate with white supremacy. So I just kind of wanted to define that and then turn to the panelists to just talk a little bit about how white supremacy got tied up in a movement like what we saw on Wednesday.

S

Stephan Abrams 38:33

Well, starting off, it was fueled by the hate and racism of our Executive Branch, and it was enforced by police. Since the inception of America, this white supremacy has been tied into our country's identity, and this is a country that touts itself as a democracy while suppressing the voices of millions of people. And it cannot really be fully discussed, the situation can't be fully addressed, until we dismantle the very structures that enabled this moment, until we get rid of the institutions, and ourselves, of the racism in this country, that racism helped build and build the democracy that truly serves the people and makes people feel like they are being heard, as well.

K

Kris Brown 39:18

I think the other piece of it - just to sort of state the obvious - but the President has held us for a long time, from the time that he's been, he ran for office, through many of the policies he put forward, through commentary that he made following the horrific rally in Charlottesville led by white supremacists in which an individual died, saying there are both, "there are good people on both sides," right? This idea of equivalency between those protesting racial injustice and white supremacists, and that's very dangerous. And a lot of people who, frankly, were hurt, his enablers would behind the scenes say, "Well, I really wish he didn't do that." The big problem was not enough of them came out and said, If you continue to do this, and behave this way, you are inspiring hatred-filled people to take action. And so for a lot of us who have been involved in this movement, and have seen it, while Wednesday was absolutely atrocious, and seeing that confederate flag in the halls of our Capitol was disgusting, it's not a surprise. That's a lot of the folks that he has ginned up, are exactly those individuals who were inspired by him to do exactly what they did. And that is a failure, not only for our country, but of elected leaders who should know better, who did not decry that action and who did not follow through on their oath of office to protect and defend the Constitution. And and it's deeply troubling.

J

Josh Horwitz 41:17

I think, I second all that. But I want to say that that, you know, that that structure, that racism existed well, before Trump. Trump rode that into power, right. But, you know, when I researched my book, and was working on that, you can see that the gun lobby, and, you know, and the KKK and other groups are just playing footsie with each other, right. And the gun lobby's, you know, some of the NRA board members and some of the other allied groups, you know, have this real history of racism. And, you know, they that's part of, that's part of what's going on here, right. Part of that movement is bringing these elements together around this, you know, this sort of insurrectionist flag. At the end of the, you know, Wayne Lapierre saying "the guys with the guns make the rules," right. And, and using that type of rhetoric, saying that this will help us protect who we are. And, and that's something that's really important to hear, that this preceded Trump and if we're not careful, it will go on beyond Trump. And so thinking about this, this insurrectionary idea about we have the right to fight tyranny, tyranny fighting tyranny means I want to keep my power, and I'll do that with firearms. And so the NRA and the gun lobby has a deep responsibility here. And their board members have been involved in racist behaviors and homophobic behaviors. And they've been very aligned with President Trump. And so let's not forget that this started before President Trump, the gun lobby endorses him extremely early in the presidential cycle, and these things come together, right, like some awful tsunami. But don't forget that these things existed well before him. And he learned, he was, you know, he rode them to victory, which is horrible in its own sense. But let's let's remember that these things were there, that I wrote my book, because I was starting to

pick these pieces up, and our move after this has that has got to be to permanently crush that, to understand that the language about fighting tyranny is racist, right, and to understand the power structures that it's protecting, and to understand that we cannot, we cannot have, we can give no countenance to any type of individual right for revolution, or owning guns for an individual right for revolution, because that's a power structure in itself that existed before Trump, and we need to make sure that it's finished after Trump.

K

Kelly Sampson 43:43

One more way that white supremacy related to the insurrection that we saw Wednesday, among a lot of other reasons, is also just the role of voting and democracy itself, and just wanted to point out and flag that the whole, there has been a lot of talk about the Electoral College, and how that system, because of the population centers and where people of color tend to live versus where white people tend to live, build into it, white supremacy. And so this election that's not even close at all, shouldn't even have been contested. Because of that system, it was and these people who were storming the Capitol were trying to undo a democratically elected Vice President, sorry, Vice President-Elect and President-Elect, who was in part ushered into office on the votes of Black and Brown people and Native Americans and other people of color. And so I think the electoral system and democracy also play a role in this where when you start to see white supremacy waning in some ways in the ballot, people will try to take it through other means. And on Wednesday, they tried to use force to undo the votes of millions of Americans, but especially under the votes of Americans of color, so I just wanted to flag that as well.

S

Stephan Abrams 44:58

I think that's such an important flag, Kelly, especially considering, you know, we saw so many GVP groups being involved in getting out the vote this year, because of the scare that there would be armed intimidation at the polls. And really, a lot of small, local groups pushed hard to get out the vote, we saw historic voter turnout. And so yeah, it's an attack on democratic processes flat out. But, and I'm seeing a lot of this reflected in a lot of the questions that were getting in, which is, you know, this wasn't just one event, you know. This particular attack on the Capitol, it happened on the sixth. We can put sort of binders around it. But it's something that happened the day before, and the day before that in different ways, and it's something that could happen tomorrow. So my question then, for all of our fantastic panelists here is, you know, where do we go from here, in terms of legislative action we can take, in terms of pushing something like the 25th Amendment, in terms of pushing for, say, stricter gun laws, you know, where, where do we go, when I wake

up on the ninth, what should I be doing, to try to hope to make things better? Again, small questions.



Josh Horwitz 47:46

I'm gonna give you I'm gonna give your a lobbying collective a shout out, they call me like, our staff, like once a week, can you do a webinar for us? Can you help us understand this? Can you, you know. Of course, we do. So you guys are on it, you're out there doing great stuff, and for young people get involved in a lobby collective? It's, it's amazing.



JJ Janflone 48:04

And old people follow them, like I do.



Stephan Abrams 48:08

And our Brady, our Brady staff and our Brady chapters do a great job as well, in in combination with our collective, it takes all of us. The intergenerational combination of people of all ages coming together for one issue, because groups like Brady give the youth credibility as well. So thank you, again, Josh, for all the work you do the collective.



Josh Horwitz 48:31

Oh we love it, thank you. I would just, I would just say, you know, sort of immediate action steps, like so it's clear that we can't give up education about insurrectionism. We need to do that. And maybe I'll write, you know, the next chapter of my book, or, you know, whatever, but we want to get out there. But I'm gonna, in like, you know, you're talking about the next 30 days, like, what do, you know, what are the things that we want to do? Number one, people have to be held accountable, Trump has to be out of office. We cannot have an insurrectionist-in-chief. Cannot have it, he has to go. If it's one day before the end of the term, I don't care, he has to go. So I think that's number one. Number two, we're going to be in state capitals over the next three or four months, and we need to be safe. And we need to have equitable policing, right. We need to be able to exercise our rights, and so the thing that we have to be able to do there is we don't want to be, I'm sick of being in, you know, people armed, people trying to intimidate us, we have to ban guns at state legislatures, and at polling places. Like we should never, no one should ever have to walk through a gauntlet of guns to vote. Done. So that's something that we're going to work hard, and we should do that across the country. State legislatures are opening right now. So we need to make sure that happens. And then you got to marry that with, with,

we need to learn what happened at the Capitol, and we need to make sure that when we're talking about people exercising their First Amendment rights, that they're protected, that they've equitable policing, but people that would do that process harm, can't have that. So learning from the episode at the Capitol, focusing on equitable policing, focusing on police reform. All those things have to come together all at once. So like in the next 30 days, you ask, what am I doing? That's what we're going to be doing. And working hard on that. And of course, there's lots of other pieces that we'll be working on. But coming from that, you know, especially the guns at the state's capital, we've got to take care of that, no one should have to be, no one should have to be intimidated by someone sitting there with an AR-15, while you're lobbying or testifying. And, you know, people from my staff last year, got pulled to a safe room in in, in Virginia, when they were testifying in court, house courts, and they got pulled to the to a safe room because it was, the crowds getting volatile. So you just can't have that arms, cannot do it.

K

Kris Brown 50:46

I agree with everything Josh and Stephan have said, and I do think that we can, kind of, divide the approach that needs to be taken into two different things. What do we do between now and January 20, to deal with the situation that we have, and that I agree with all of what Josh has raised, not just for the risks associated with how do we assess what happened and ensure it doesn't happen again, but we do have an inauguration coming up, and we have various activities that potentially will continue in other state capitals. And that needs to be addressed by ensuring that other states don't allow guns in the state capitals. This is very basic, and we know from having Gretchen Whitmer as a guest on our podcast, how terrifying it is for her to know that there are people who can come into the state capitol with AR-15. And it happens. And that's where the plot to kidnap, try and execute her was born. So we need to focus on all of these remedies. We also need to galvanize and make sure that we seize the opportunities that we have. And as I said, Wednesday was horrific. But it's also an inflection point, and let's use it for that. We now have members of Congress and their staffs, some of whom have already experienced gun violence, but others of whom haven't, who were traumatized by this event. We have 100 people, Americans every single day who are losing their life, to gun violence, and hundreds more who are injured, who, every day, who have to live with those injuries for the rest of their lives. So we need to make sure that we push forward and tell Congress, you need to act. And you need to pass laws that are long overdue. Look, the Brady law was enacted more than a quarter century ago, there are gaps in the system that allow individuals we all agree shouldn't have guns to have easy access, one in five gains them today. And it's not appropriate for us to say, well, these things are going to be fixed just through executive action. All of us in the movement has been very focused on the things that this administration, the incoming administration, can do through executive

action. And there, this administration is prepared to take a number of steps by executive action. But we need these laws passed. And Congress should do it because there's not debate in the American public about these solutions. So it's enactment of the Brady law. It's ensuring that we have more funding in a variety of areas for gun violence research, for meaningful trauma-based care, for violence intervention at the community level, for a whole host of things that need to happen, that recognized through funding, that what we have here is a public health epidemic. And it needs to be tackled and treated that way. We also need to focus on enforcement of the laws. The irony from the law, quote unquote, "law and order president" right, which he is not, neither about laws nor order, obviously, is that no focus or attention has been focused on actually enforcing the law, for the folks who are primarily responsible for fueling gun violence in many communities across the country, and that's gun dealers. Instead, we focus on trigger pullers. The ATF is the agency that's responsible for enforcing those laws. We need real enforcement of those laws. I feel really good about who the AG pick is, as a result of that, but that needs to be a focus. And the third thing I'll say is, we need to end the NRA. And it's not legislatively that I'm saying we can do that. Although Bravo Tish James. It doesn't deserve, it deserves nonprofit status, like a supersons fight deserves to sell organic. I mean, that's just the bottom line. They have created a dangerous myth in this country around gun ownership that somehow they stand for the Second Amendment. They are the most dangerous organization to preserve responsible gun rights in this country that exists, bottom line. And we need to ensure that if we're going to hold up responsible gun owners, and we have many that work on Brady's staff, we focus on enactment of laws that everyone agrees on that actually protect public safety, and continue to allow appropriate gun ownership in this country. Those need to be these priorities that we have. And we as an organization, along with GCSV, and a whole host of others in the movement, need to make sure we don't take no for an answer in this Congress, to the actual enactment of this agenda. And executive action isn't good enough. We want to ensure that Congress takes action and bravo, that we have Reverend Warnock and Jon Ossoff, as two senators joining the US Senate. That gives us not a perfect opportunity, because we still have the filibuster, and that needs to go too, but we have an opportunity to make real change that we wouldn't have before, with Leader Schumer, who needs to make sure that these bills actually come to the floor for a vote.



Josh Horwitz 56:13

JJ, I'm sure you need to get us going at some point. But I'll just add on that public health approach, Kris, I know, you know this, believe this as well. But we need to bring suicide prevention to the forefront as well, right. That's part of the public health model. We've talked a lot about different things. But I want to make sure that we bring that to the forefront. And just, you know, the this public health model that Kris mentioned, is

something that we've embraced, Brady's embraced, and it's something that will will get great results, because we're looking at gun violence and all of its forms.



Stephan Abrams 56:42

And to go back to what a lot of the people are saying in the chat is like, how can I get involved? Like, what can I do to help? And one thing you can do is you can donate to groups like Brady and Team Enough. You can donate to our lobbying collective, and we've had lobbyists, especially in Virginia, who've had to stay overnight and hide, just in order to express their opinion to legislators the next day. We have the most resilient and courageous lobbyists who don't like when people say no to us, and we've had great successes over the past few years of us being able to push the ball forward on a lot of these things. But donations and being able to fund trips to the Capitol, fund people who might not typically have access to our legislators, and giving them an opportunity to tell their stories of surviving gun violence, and gun violence in their neighborhood is a huge thing in tackling that issue. So yeah, I think we're wrapping up now. So I'll pass it over to JJ.



JJ Janflone 57:48

See, this is this is the danger of it being a week after an attempted, like a of an attempted coup, and after a year of a pandemic is that part of me, it's just like, time isn't a construct, we can just sit here and talk all night. But I understand people have lives. So unfortunately, a much longer conversation I think needs to happen down the road. But I like all of you. So maybe we can meet up again and have a second one. I think what would be wonderful to end on. A lot of folks have asked me fantastic questions about I think, sort of specific actions. So for example, you know, how can you keep guns out of your local legislature? And so I think the best way to answer those specific questions or for folks to continue sending in questions that I think this podcast raised, is I think that you know, you should seek out Team Enough the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and of course, Brady and see all the resources that we've been posting.



JJ Janflone 58:37

So on the Brady end, I feel like I'm allowed to do the plug, you can of course, go to [Bradyunited.org](https://bradyunited.org), and you can also of course, listen to the podcast, "Red, Blue, and Brady," for all of your fun and informational needs. How about for Team Enough and CSGV?



Stephan Abrams 58:51

First of all, you can go to our website, www.teamenough.org. Sign up for our email list, sign up, check, check your, where you're from, see if there's a local chapter you can join. Or you can create your own and that's that's my job as the Team Enough National Chapter Coordinator is that I want to help you mobilize in your local community. And I'm really excited to be able to announce that in the next few months, I'm going to be releasing programs where no matter where you are, no matter what organization you're a part of, you should be able to have the platform to be able to lobby for gun violence prevention. If it's just a local city council thing or a state bill, we want to help as Brady staff and Team Enough staff to help train you, and to send you merch, give you the credibility of our platforms, to help you lobby in every community across America. So please, go check that out as well as if you are a youth or you know any youth I am hosting an event this Sunday at 7pm EST, to talk about this week. And I want to give people the floor and members of Team Enough the floor to talk about what they're feeling and what our call-to-action should really be. There's a lot of work that we're going to continue to do. But there's a lot of things, the recent events have called for more action and more things that we need to be able to focus on, I want to hear directly from you and what you're seeing. And I think it would be a great opportunity for us to be able to mobilize this youth, to continue the fight to stop gun violence, our motto has always been, we're the generation that will end gun violence. And I'm so committed to that.



Josh Horwitz 1:00:24

And I'm sure it's true. So that's, that's good. If you look above, I think my left shoulder here, wherever Yeah, you'll see CSGV, just put a ".org" after that. We have lots of resources. But also we've got some great resources on fighting insurrection, and what that means, and how to get smart about that looking in, and just get knowledgeable on how to, talking points. What does it mean, what's the meaning, real meaning, of the Second Amendment, things like that. And while you're there, if you want to know something about our public health approach, you can look at, go look at our Ed fund the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, there's a link from the CSGV website, or you can go just go efsgv.org. And there's, there's just a whole ton of public health information there on almost any issue you can imagine. So, you know, get educated and, and I mean, for us, it's always about our state partners. There are some great state groups out there. And I hope you find them and I hope you partner with them. And that's a great way because we love partnering with the state groups. And, and I got to thank Brady for inviting us on, a great partnership as well. So thanks for having us.



Kris Brown 1:01:26

Thank you. Thanks for being such a good partner, to us too, Josh. That's what we need to

do in the movement and it's it's really terrific.



Josh Horwitz 1:01:34

Absolutely.



Stephan Abrams 1:01:35

Let's hope the next time we have a live, Kris and Josh, that we're talking about some of the positive side of our, fingers crossed for that, because I want to have a lot more happy episodes this year than unfortunate events happening.



Kris Brown 1:01:47

Absolutely.



JJ Janflone 1:01:49

One day, hopefully, I will host our final live for our final podcast that is we've solved this problem and I'm going to go work with kittens. So Bye, everybody. Like hopefully one day we will get there. Maybe this is the year that that happens. So fingers crossed. I'll be I'll be hopeful. But in the meantime, I want to thank all of you so, so much for coming. I want to thank all of our listeners for giving their time for this. You know, let's let's hope for the next time we get together, it'll be for happy news. Thank you all so much and have a great evening.



JJ Janflone 1:02:46

Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's lifesaving work in congress, the courts, and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady, or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast, get in touch with us at bradyunited.org, or on social @bradybuzz. Be brave, and remember - take action, not sides.



1:03:11

Thank you.



JJ Janflone 1:03:11

Hey, want to share with the podcast? Listeners can get in touch with us here at Red, Blue and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, pictures of cats, whatever.