



Pummeled by Cross Currents of Politics and Violence

Waves of fury and incredulity pummel my mental shores. Naïve as I am, despite the pundits' prediction that Senate Republicans would vote to acquit Trump, I believed that dedication to democracy, oaths of office, oaths of impartiality, and love of country would win out over party politics in the face of evidence and the terror of personal experience.

But no.

Buffeted by cross currents, America has been twisted and tortured like its flag in an insurrectionist's grip. Abused were the stars and stripes on Jan. 6 as they were wielded as a weapon to bludgeon police. Those who derided Black Lives Matter protesters this summer with calls to "Back the Blue" swarmed the Capitol howling "Stop the Steal" as they brandished the American flag along with their arsenal of bats, fence posts, and pitchforks to bloody those defending the Capitol.

When I was a child, I was told to kiss the flag 100 times if it touched the ground by mistake. Was this my parents' invention or a national rule? I don't know, but the message was clear. Dave's father too, a WW II veteran, taught his grandchildren the solemn lesson "Honor the soldiers and the flag."

Although they sought to appropriate the motives of America's revolutionaries, the Trump supporters who breached the Capitol can lay no claim to heroism. They desecrated American symbols while impeding certification of an adjudicated election, endangered lawmakers, spread feces, and destroyed and stole national treasures. Thugs were these, not patriots. The fever of doing Trump's bidding superseded respect for the flag, democratic process, and human life.

What to make of Mitch McConnell? He refused to call the Senate to session when the House Managers were ready to present the case in mid January. There was time for a trial, and the former president was still in office. Mitch had not the guts to vote "guilty," but had the gall *after* the count to affirm the House Managers' evidence of Trump as inciter-in-chief. Although the Senate had already addressed the Constitutionality by a majority vote, McConnell defended himself with the timing technicality *he* created.

In his closing remarks, lead House manager Jamie Raskin looked around the Senate chamber at those before him and quoted Benjamin Franklin, saying, "If you make yourself a sheep, the wolves will eat you. Don't make yourself a sheep." How else but as sheep are we to see senators who believed Trump guilty, yet in their fawning loyalty, absolved him of accountability at the expense of our democracy?

What now? In betraying their oaths and ignoring the result of the vote on the impeachment's constitutionality, those senators eviscerated the Senate of its credibility and power. They did not "defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic" when Trump and his mob sought to hold power despite the vote of the people. They waived their sworn charge, and clung to a technicality already dismissed by majority vote.

By that acquittal, the Senate has granted future presidents a "January Exception" for whatever purposes he or she might have in that final month in office; Congress and the Republic be damned. After his final summation of the evidence of Trump's efforts to prevent the transfer of power, delight at the attack, and refusal to send help, Raskin said, "If that's not a high crime and misdemeanor, then nothing is."

It is work to contain my fury and contempt, but friends remind me of reasons for optimism. President Biden has remained focused on the people and the planet. Vaccinations have doubled. A Covid relief bill will soon pass. The U.S. has re-entered the global community in positive ways, re-joining the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization. In discrediting their vote and abdicating their responsibility, the Senate has re-affirmed what has always been true: it is up to us, the people, to govern wisely with *our* votes.