

**Statement for the Record**

**US House of Representatives, Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol**

**May 15, 2022**

**“The Role of White Rage and Voter Suppression in the Insurrection on January 6, 2021”**

by

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A little over six months after the insurrection, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, testifying before the House Armed Services Committee, said, “I want to understand white rage,...What is it that caused thousands of people to assault this building [the Capitol] and try to overturn the Constitution of the United States of America? ... I want to find that out.”<sup>1</sup>

The answer is sordid. The avalanche of lies about all the voter fraud emanating out of the cities, the expectation that blocking access to the ballot box should have worked as effectively as it did in 2016, and the key role that minorities, especially African Americans played in ousting Trump from the White House, fueled the uprising. In other words, the combination of voter suppression policy and the stoking of white racial fears about the theft of “their” democracy by Black people, illegal immigrants, and Latinos erupted on January 6, 2021. As I documented in my book, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (Bloomsbury, 2016),<sup>2</sup> when Black people achieved a significant milestone – Emancipation, the Great Migration, the *Brown* decision, the Civil Rights Movement, the election of Barack Obama – they were met with a policy backlash designed to undermine that step forward onto the path of full American citizenship. We see it from 19<sup>th</sup> century Black Codes, that tried to reinstall slavery by another name, to 20<sup>th</sup> century Massive Resistance designed to thwart implementation of the *Brown* decision, to 21<sup>st</sup> century voter suppression laws crafted to impede access to the ballot box by the coalition of millions of new voters (African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, the young, and the poor) that Obama

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<sup>1</sup>Jennifer Steinhauer, “General Milley pushes back on G.O.P. accusations of a ‘woke’ military,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/23/us/politics/milley-critical-race-theory-military.html>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016, 2017).

brought to the polls. And we, therefore, certainly see it after the record-breaking voter turnout in 2020,<sup>3</sup> which ousted Trump from the presidency.

Trump's defeat was unfathomable to his followers. The mob that invaded the Capitol on January 6, 2021 was convinced that the presidential election of 2020 had been stolen because that is what they had been told repeatedly.<sup>4</sup> Trump and his coterie even identified the thieves. From their perspective, the miscreants were wholly illegitimate; not good upstanding Americans. During a series of December 2020 special legislative hearings in Georgia on supposed election irregularities, for example, Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal attorney, likened some Black poll workers to drug dealers who were doling out ways to sabotage the election like they were cocaine and heroin.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in this scenario, which dominated right-wing media spheres<sup>6</sup> and Facebook where "10 percent of all U.S. views of political material — a startlingly high figure — were of posts that alleged the vote was fraudulent,"<sup>7</sup> the thieves of American democracy lived in Milwaukee, Atlanta, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Phoenix, (Maricopa County) Arizona.

Each of those locales has sizeable African American, Hispanic, and/or Native American populations.<sup>8</sup> And each had been maligned by Trump and/or his supporters as a place where something nefarious had happened to compromise the results of the 2020 presidential election. In Detroit, where 77 percent of the population is African American, a food truck supposedly snuck

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<sup>3</sup>Jacob Fabina, "Despite Pandemic Challenges, 2020 Election Had Largest Increase in Voting Between Presidential Elections on Record," U.S. Census, April 29, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html>, accessed May 15, 2022.

<sup>4</sup>Steve Inskeep, "Timeline: What Trump Told Supporters For Months Before They Attacked," NPR, February 8, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/08/965342252/timeline-what-trump-told-supporters-for-months-before-they-attacked>, accessed May 9, 2022; Arielle Mitropoulos, "Trump's ballot fraud allegations embellished and not widespread: Experts," ABC News, October 20, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-ballot-fraud-allegations-embellished-widespread-experts/story?id=73701060>, accessed May 9, 2022.

<sup>5</sup>Barnini Chakraborty, "Giuliani doubles down on Georgia fraud theory and says 'smoking gun' video shows election rigging," *Washington Examiner*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/giuliani-doubles-down-on-georgia-fraud-theory-and-says-smoking-gun-video-shows-election-rigging>, accessed May 9, 2022.

<sup>6</sup>Tom Porter, "Pro-Trump OAN network admits there was no widespread fraud in Georgia in the 2020 election after extensively pushing the claim," *Business Insider*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/pro-trump-oan-admits-no-election-fraud-georgia-2020-2022-5>, accessed May 10, 2022; Jemima McEvoy, "Fox News, Newsmax Walk Back Election Fraud Claims After Voting Machine Manufacturer Threatens Legal Action," *Forbes*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2020/12/21/fox-news-newsmax-walk-back-election-fraud-claims-after-voting-machine-manufacturer-threatens-legal-action/?sh=5f507d4bcfd2>, accessed May 10, 2022.

<sup>7</sup>Ryan Mac and Sheera Frenkel, "Internal Alarm, Public Shrugs: Facebook's Employees Dissect Its Election Role," *New York Times*, October 22, 2021, updated October 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/technology/facebook-election-misinformation.html>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Census, "Quick Facts: Philadelphia, city, Pennsylvania," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/philadelphiacitypennsylvania>, accessed May 12, 2022; U.S. Census, "Quick Facts: Atlanta city, Georgia," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/atlantacitygeorgia>, accessed May 12, 2022; U.S. Census, "Quick Facts: Milwaukee city Wisconsin," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/milwaukeecitywisconsin>, accessed May 12, 2022; U.S. Census, "Quick Facts: Detroit city, Michigan," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/detroitcitymichigan>, accessed May 12, 2022; and U.S. Census, "Quick Facts: Phoenix city, Arizona," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/phoenixcityarizona>, accessed May 12 2022.

thousands of ballots for Democratic presidential candidate Joseph Biden into the official tally.<sup>9</sup> In Milwaukee, where 70 percent of the state’s Black population lives, there were allegedly “illegally altered absentee ballots” and “more than 60,000” absentee ballots issued without being requested.<sup>10</sup> In Atlanta, where the majority of the population is African American, “suitcases of ballots” miraculously appeared from beneath skirted tables, when no-one was supposedly watching, and were added to Biden’s tally.<sup>11</sup> Philadelphia had already been slammed by Trump as a place where, during an election, “bad things happen,” and Giuliani amplified that with claims that there were “600,000 plus unlawful votes” from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, where only 39 percent of the population are white residents.<sup>12</sup> Phoenix, where more than half of its inhabitants are Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and African American, drew the fire of Trump and Giuliani for allegedly allowing dead people and illegal immigrants to vote.<sup>13</sup>

The mob that Trump summoned to Washington, D.C. with promises that it “will be wild,”<sup>14</sup> knew, just knew that something precious had been stolen from them and they knew, exactly, who had taken it. University of Chicago political scientist, Robert A. Pape, has uncovered that those who stormed the Capitol lived in counties “with the most significant declines in the non-Hispanic white population” and were, therefore, “awash in fears that the rights of minorities and immigrants were crowding out the rights of white people in American politics and culture.”<sup>15</sup>

One insurrectionist admitted, as she stood with her throng at the Capitol, “It just looked so neat,” she said. “We weren’t there to steal things. We weren’t there to do damage. We were just there to overthrow the government.”<sup>16</sup> Trump fed this sense of righteous impunity. He had created an aura, because of pardons for those who had previously served him, such as Michael Flynn and Steve Bannon, that he would again use his pardon powers for the insurrectionists who did his

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<sup>9</sup>Hyeyoon Alyssa Choi and Tara Subramaniam, “Fact-checking Giuliani’s claims that food trucks hauled fraudulent Biden ballots in Detroit,” CNN, November 20, 2020, [https://www.cnn.com/business/live-news/election-2020-misinformation/h\\_a6f9f4db41324634af5cda8e5f252fab](https://www.cnn.com/business/live-news/election-2020-misinformation/h_a6f9f4db41324634af5cda8e5f252fab), accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>10</sup>Laurel White, “Trump Campaign Requests Recount in Dane, Milwaukee Counties,” Wisconsin Public Radio, November 18, 2020, <https://www.wpr.org/trump-campaign-requests-recount-dane-milwaukee-counties>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>11</sup>Angelo Fichera, “Video Doesn’t Show ‘Suitcases’ of Illegal Ballots in Georgia,” FactCheck.org, December 4, 2020, updated December 7, 2020, <https://www.factcheck.org/2020/12/video-doesnt-show-suitcases-of-illegal-ballots-in-georgia/>, accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>12</sup>Lauren Mayk and NBC10 Staff, “Trump Says ‘Bad Things Happen in Philadelphia’ at Polls. Here’s the Whole Story,” NBC10, September 30, 2020, <https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/politics/decision-2020/trump-says-bad-things-happen-in-philadelphia-at-polls-heres-the-whole-story/2546636/>, accessed May 13, 2022; “Fact-check: Did Pittsburgh and Philadelphia count 600,000 illegal votes?” *Austin American-Statesman*, November 13, 2020, updated November 20, 2020, <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/11/13/fact-check-did-pittsburgh-and-philadelphia-count-600000-illegal-votes/43144661/>, accessed May 9, 2022.

<sup>13</sup>Yvonne Wingett Sanchez and Ronald J. Hanson, “White House phone calls, baseless fraud charges: The origins of the Arizona election review,” *Arizona Republic*, November 17, 2021, updated November 21, 2021, <https://www.azcentral.com/in-depth/news/politics/elections/2021/11/17/arizona-audit-trump-allies-pushed-to-undermine-2020-election/6045151001/>, accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>14</sup>Michael C. Bender, *Frankly, We Did Win This Election: The Inside Story of How Trump Lost* (New York: Twelve, 2021), 369. Kindle.

<sup>15</sup>Alan Feuer, “Fears of White People Losing Out Permeate Capitol Rioters’ Towns, Study Finds,” *New York Times*, April 6, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/06/us/politics/capitol-riot-study.html>, accessed January 6, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Bender, *Frankly, We Did Win This Election*, 377.

bidding.<sup>17</sup> The mob built gallows, Spiderman-crawled their way up the side of the wall, shattered windows and doors, invaded the Capitol, carried the flags of the Confederacy and Trump in the corridors, beat and bear-sprayed police officers trying to defend the citadel of American democracy, and hunted their prey through the halls and chambers searching for those who were supposedly the capitulators to or facilitators of this epic theft.<sup>18</sup> It was stunning.

Yet, while the violence and the motivation seemed unprecedented, unfortunately, it was not. Successful overthrows of duly elected governments occurred in 1873 in Colfax, Louisiana and in 1898 in Wilmington, North Carolina. The root was the same. Anger that African Americans overcame a tidal wave of disfranchising measures, aligned with a sizeable share of white voters, and elected officials that advocated for, among other things, Black citizenship rights. There's another troubling similarity, the outcome of both of those violent coups in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was legitimized by entities that had the authority to rebuke those efforts – the U.S. Supreme Court (Colfax), and the governor of North Carolina (Wilmington) – but chose not to do so. The consequences of their acquiescence were horrific. The court's ruling in *Cruikshank* removed the ability of the federal government to stop white domestic terrorism. While the approved coup in Wilmington set the stage for North Carolina's revised constitution that disfranchised Black voters for nearly seven decades. The Supreme Court and the governor treated the assaults on American democracy as legitimate political discourse. As a result, the troops who died trying to defend the local seat of democracy in Colfax as well as the elected officials in Wilmington's City Hall, who were terrorized into resigning as they were surrounded by burning buildings and corpses, would not have the very reason they put their lives on the line honored or even acknowledged.<sup>19</sup> How could this have happened in the land of the free?

Colfax and Wilmington battered American democracy with the Scylla and Charybdis of voter suppression and White Rage. Those same forces were at work in the January 6<sup>th</sup> invasion of the U.S. Capitol.

Those voter suppression techniques, buttressed by the spurious charges of “massive, rampant voter fraud”<sup>20</sup> directed against African Americans and Hispanics, were unleashed by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) decision, which gutted the Voting Rights

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<sup>17</sup>Martin Pengelly, “Trump considered blanket pardon for Capitol insurrectionists-report,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/02/trump-blanket-pardon-capitol-attack-january-6>, accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Dmitriy Khavin et al., “Day of Rage: An In-Depth Look at How a Mob Stormed the Capitol,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2021, [www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/100000007606996/capitol-riot-trump-supporters.html](http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/100000007606996/capitol-riot-trump-supporters.html), accessed July 3, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Lane, *The Day Freedom Died: The Colfax Massacre, the Supreme Court, and the Betrayal of Reconstruction* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2008); David Zucchino, *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2020).

<sup>20</sup>Lisa Falkenberg, Luis Carrasco, Michael Lindenberger and Joe Holley, “The Big Lie,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 2021 (updated May 9, 2022), <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/editorials/big-lie-series/>, accessed May 9, 2022.

Act's pre-clearance provisions. The subsequent wave of voter roll purges,<sup>21</sup> poll closures,<sup>22</sup> voter ID laws,<sup>23</sup> and cuts to early voting both in terms of polling places and days were applied "with almost surgical precision"<sup>24</sup> and were devastatingly effective in 2016, the first presidential election in fifty years held without the VRA's protection. Black voter turnout dropped by seven percent from what it had been in 2012<sup>25</sup> and seemed to provide a recipe in 2020 to politically neutralize the growing and changing racial demographics in American society.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the very demographic changes that so frightened the insurrectionists. In other words, by casting suspicion on Black and other minority voters, by identifying the alleged rampant fraud as occurring in cities with sizeable minority populations, by criminalizing African American voters, and by building a phalanx of obstacles to the ballot box targeted at urban areas,<sup>27</sup> all under the guise of election integrity, the Big Lie was years in the making and ready for Donald Trump to seize upon it to an audience that had been primed to not only hear it but believe it.

Having the President of the United States, U.S. Senators, Congressional Representatives, states' attorneys general, and state legislatures give the White Rage aura of legitimacy to specious claims of widespread voter fraud stoked the flames of insurrection. These elected officials provided policy cover, in terms of:

- state legislative hearings that allowed Rudy Giuliani to run amok with lies;<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Kevin Morris, Myrna Perez, Jonathan Brater, and Christopher Deluzio, "Purges: A Growing Threat to the Right to Vote," Brennan Center for Justice, July 20, 2018, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/purges-growing-threat-right-vote>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>22</sup>Stephen Fowler, "Why Do Nonwhite Georgia Voters Have To Wait In Line For Hours? Too Few Polling Places," NPR, October 17, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/17/924527679/why-do-nonwhite-georgia-voters-have-to-wait-in-line-for-hours-too-few-polling-pl>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>23</sup>Michael Wines, "Some Republicans Acknowledge Leveraging Voter ID Laws for Political Gain," *New York Times*, September 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/17/us/some-republicans-acknowledge-leveraging-voter-id-laws-for-political-gain.html>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>24</sup>Ari Berman, "The Country's Worst Anti-Voting Law Was Just Struck Down in North Carolina," *The Nation*, July 29, 2016, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-countrys-worst-anti-voting-law-was-just-struck-down-in-north-carolina/>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>25</sup>Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Black voter turnout fell in 2016 even as a record number of Americans cast ballots," Pew Research Center, May 12, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/12/black-voter-turnout-fell-in-2016-even-as-a-record-number-of-americans-cast-ballots/>, accessed May 12, 2022.

<sup>26</sup>Bender, *Frankly, We Did Win This Election*, 328; Andy Kroll, "The Plot Against America: The GOP's Plan to Suppress the Vote and Sabotage the Election," *Rollingstone*, July 16, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/trump-campaign-2020-voter-suppression-consent-decree-1028988/>, accessed May 15, 2022.

<sup>27</sup>David Pepper, "Ohio Democrats Expose New Ohio Voting Law as Modern-Day Literacy Tests, Voter Suppression," *Huffington Post*, April 8, 2016, updated April 9, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ohio-democrats-expose-new\\_b\\_9643250](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ohio-democrats-expose-new_b_9643250), May 13, 2022; Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018, 2019), 151-152.

<sup>28</sup>Greg Bluestein, "Court suspends Giuliani's law license, citing his lies about Georgia election," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 24, 2021, <https://www.ajc.com/politics/politics-blog/court-suspends-giulianis-law-license-citing-lies-about-georgia-election-fraud/KEIRAIRJYNBYTGFPKJB4ARSZ5Q/>, accessed May 13, 2022.

- lawsuits from attorneys general challenging the election results in other states;<sup>29</sup>
- U.S. senators demanding the resignation of a secretary of state who refused to override the will of the voters; and<sup>30</sup>
- members of the U.S. House of Representatives who claimed that “there was MASS voter fraud on a scale that should terrify every American regardless of party” and that “if only lawful votes cast by eligible American citizens were counted, Donald Trump should be serving his second term as President of the United States.”<sup>31</sup>

These actions combined to stoke the sense of a theft so immense and a system so illegitimate that it would shamelessly hand over the presidency to someone, who only won because of the criminal activity of minorities in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Detroit, Maricopa County, and Milwaukee.

In short, the fallout of a lie that has been amplified for years by policymakers about widespread voter fraud committed in places where “bad things happen,” exploded on January 6, 2021.

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<sup>29</sup> “AG Paxton Sues Battleground States for Unconstitutional Changes to 2020 Election Laws,” press release, December 8, 2020, <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/news/releases/ag-paxton-sues-battleground-states-unconstitutional-changes-2020-election-laws>, accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Christina Wilkie, “GOP Sens. Loeffler and Perdue demand that Georgia’s Republican secretary of state resign,” CNBC, November 9, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/09/loeffler-perdue-demand-resignation-of-georgia-gop-secretary-of-state-.html#>, accessed May 13, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Dale, “Fact check: 11 false claims Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene has tweeted in the last month,” CNN, January 21, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/21/politics/fact-check-marjorie-taylor-greene-twitter-election-capitol/index.html>, accessed May 13, 2022; Travis Gettys, “Mo Brooks throws Trump under the bus in response to lawsuit that accuses him of inciting MAGA mob,” *Raw Story*, July 6, 2021, <https://www.rawstory.com/mo-brooks-2653685982/>, accessed July 6, 2021.