

Resurrection from Insurrection



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January 6, 2021—the day that white supremacists flooded the Capitol in protest of President Joe Biden’s election—was a moment where the United States of America had to look itself in the mirror and ask a question. *Is this who we really are?*

Nationwide, we have heard and seen the practices of racism and discrimination. We have heard the cries of “Black Lives Matter” and “Say Her Name” by Black Americans asking for justice and equity in America; and we have seen these cries met by much opposition. Following the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other Black lives, we have seen police lined up and ready for war with tear gas and rubber bullets, when Black people were upholding their freedom to protest.

Why is it that when Black lives protest, there is much police opposition, whereas on January 6, a mostly white crowd was able to invade the Capitol? What if the insurrection had been done by a group of Black people? I believe they would not have made it to the steps or even past the fence.

When thinking of the Capitol insurrection, I cannot help but think of the history of the United States of America—specifically, the parts of our American history that people oftentimes try to cast into the darkness. I cannot help but think to the history of slavery, white supremacy and Jim Crow segregation. I cannot help but think of the time when “separate but equal” was the law of the land. I cannot help but feel as if America is going back in time. The fact that this event took place only six days after the start of the new year illuminates that, in spite of America coming a long way, we still have a very long road to follow. To fully understand if this is “who we really are,” we must first unpack the nuance of the insurrection: describe in detail the pain we all felt.

Words cannot describe how disheartening it was to see the Confederate flag being carried through the Capitol rotunda. When I see that flag I think of injustice, inequality, oppression and bondage. I truly view the Confederate

flag as a symbol of hate, and seeing it carried through the Capitol building, while very disheartening, was not something that I am surprised by.

Since I was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, it was not uncommon for me to see the Confederate flag multiple times a week, whether it was on bumper stickers, flown on the backs of trucks or hung in front of people’s houses. Most people who are in support of the Confederate flag argue that it is historical and honors many. Yet, the terrible history that the flag contains is undeniable. Over 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the battle against its hateful imagery persists. The flying of the Confederate flag highlights the prevention of progress and says that no matter how far we come toward the finish line of justice, equality and freedom, this line will continue to be moved further back.

In fact, the Confederate flag was flying high over the South Carolina State House until 2015. It was not until the murder of nine African Americans attending Bible study at Mother Emanuel Church that this symbol of hate was taken down by legislators. According to The State, the Confederate flag was officially removed from the South Carolina State House on July 9, 2015. This was not very long ago. I can vividly remember this day just as I can vividly remember the Capitol insurrection. Both the hateful flag and violent insurrection revealed that our journey as a nation is far from over.

As the rioters and insurrectionists approached the Capitol, they were not striving to make peace. They were striving to bring about pain and destruction. They were armed with not only physical weaponry, but a mindset



of hate; the hate that these insurrectionists acted with is comparable to a wildfire of irreparable destruction fueled by white supremacy.

The overwhelming majority of those that were in attendance at the Capitol insurrection were white individuals, and many of them were fervent supporters of former President Donald Trump. Many recognized hate groups, such as neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan affiliates and the Proud Boys, were present, according to the Washington Post.

One cannot ignore the level of privilege—and freedom—that those individuals had in order to carry out their plan. In spite of Congresspeople and other officials present, there was little push back by security. In fact, many news outlets, including ABC, CNN and CBS, showed a video revealing police officers opening the barricades to insurrectionists, allowing them to enter Capitol grounds prior to reaching the building.

Viewing this situation from the perspective of an African American today, I cannot help but put things into perspective. If Black Lives Matter protesters were at the Capitol, there would be police armed and ready for war. After George Floyd was brutally murdered by police and Black people came together to protest, they were met with police armed with rubber bullets, tear gas and strength in numbers. Where was this army of police on January 6? How were these insurrectionists able to invade one of the most secure buildings in the country with little pushback?

America is not color blind; the Capitol insurrection illuminated that America in fact sees color crystal clear. The insurrectionists were stirring up trouble for America. However, it is high time for us to push for what the late, great politician and activist John Lewis called “good trouble.” In 2020, the former Georgia Representative and close colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described “good trouble”—pushing back against oppression—as necessary to redeem the soul of America.

We must perpetuate good trouble. Just as the hate

that the insurrectionists acted with is comparable to a wildfire, we need some firefighters that are ready to come in and fight this wildfire to end white supremacy and let there be justice for all.

In the critical reflective writing “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community,” published in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., opens his debate with this point: the majority of white Americans consider themselves sincerely committed to justice for Black Americans. They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and open to steady growth toward a middle class utopia embodying racial harmony.

He postulates that unfortunately this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. He further imparted that the movement for Black power did not spring fully grown from the head of philosophical zens, rather it was born from wounds of despair and disappointment. One of the chief affirmations of the Black power movement was the call for the mobilization of political strength for Black people.

The empowerment that Dr. King declared called for the effective challenging of racist narratives: for hate and bigotry to be chopped down to a small, containable burning bush. The chaos of our present time requires a clarion call for a tall cypress tree with extensive branches of justice. In 2021, a

world home to racism, discrimination, injustice, incessant Asian hate and the January 6 Capitol insurrection, we need Dr. King’s words and wisdom to understand our own nation and move forward.

As we watch and reflect upon this year, we should critically analyze the state of our nation. Is this America? Is this the America that we would like to build a future in?

“Is this who we really are?” is a complex question to answer. Instead, we must focus on another: “where do we go from here?” The answer is clear: we must transform that Capitol insurrection into a resurrection of Dr. King’s words. If anything, the Capitol insurrection was a major step back in America; we fell victim to hate and intolerance. A resurrection of justice, equity and love for all mankind can remedy this, and we can learn how to do this “good trouble” through Dr. King’s critical look at America.

I believe that we can transform this insurrection into a resurrection if we seize the gift of the present time to make a better tomorrow. It will not be easy but it can be done. We have come a very long way, yet we still have a long way to go.

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