

# Heroes, Villains, and Sympathetic Victims

## Identifying the Roles in Domestic Terrorism

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President Franklin D. Roosevelt said December 7, 1941, would be “a date which will live in infamy” because the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces was one of the first acts of war committed on American soil. Decades later, on September 11, 2001, the world was reminded of Roosevelt’s enduring words when the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda orchestrated the deadliest attack on America: crashing planes into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (a fourth plane crashed on a field in Pennsylvania before hitting its intended target). The 9/11 attacks killed nearly 3,000 people and shook America to its core. While the U.S. rightfully mourns the loss of life on the anniversaries of these attacks, another form of terrorism is often disregarded from our nation’s history: domestic terrorism.

The present essay will examine domestic terrorism in the United States through the following attacks: the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, and the Capitol Insurrection in 2021. Additionally, it will investigate why Americans view acts of domestic terrorism so differently in our history. The USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 defines domestic terrorism as:

activities that— (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; (B) appear to be intended— (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination,

or kidnapping; and (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

According to Steven Chermak and Jeff Gruenewald, in any case of terrorism there are always heroes, villains, and sympathetic victims.<sup>2</sup> Domestic terrorists have a skewed perspective of these categories. I will examine how domestic terrorists see themselves as the heroes, U.S. citizens as sympathetic victims, and whomever they have named their target as the enemy. This essay will predominantly use news articles as sources for two major reasons: First, I believe that primary sources are one of the most accurate ways to understand a time period; second, the way the media portrays domestic terrorism/domestic terrorists is relevant to this paper, specifically in the case of the Boston bombers.

Despite the fact that terrorism is conventionally linked to religious extremism, studies reveal that right-wing domestic terrorists target the military, police, and the government.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh targeted a federal government building because of his anti-government and pro-gun views. The Boston Marathon bombers committed an act of extremist special interest terrorism in response to the U.S.'s treatment of Muslims. The Capitol insurrectionists claimed they were patriots obeying orders given to them by former President Donald Trump and that the government was complicitous in election fraud. In cases of international terrorist attacks, like 9/11, it is reassuring to identify the villain as an outsider—a removed, identifiable threat, whereas with domestic terrorism, citizens are not granted this comfort. Citizens are not willing to acknowledge that the threat comes from within the United States and could be a fellow American.

Two categories of terrorism exist—domestic and international—but in November 2020, the FBI updated the following categories of domestic terrorism: racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism; anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism, which will both be explored in more detail in this paper; animal rights/environmental

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<sup>1</sup> 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 3162 USA PATRIOT Act, 106.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Chermak and Jeffrey Gruenewald, "The Media's Coverage of Domestic Terrorism," *Justice Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (December 2006): 429.

<sup>3</sup> Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, Grace Hwang, & Jared Thompson, *The Military, Police, and the Rise of Terrorism in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021), 2.

violent extremism; abortion-related violent extremism; and a more broad category of domestic terrorism threats.<sup>4</sup> The terms “domestic terrorist” and “domestic violent extremist” can be used interchangeably to describe “an individual based and operating primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States who seeks to further their ideological goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence.”<sup>5</sup> I will use the term “domestic terrorist” in this paper because “domestic violent extremist” describes actions that are not prohibited by U.S. law and “the mere advocacy of ideological positions and/or the use of strong rhetoric does not constitute violent extremism.”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, two of the three attacks that will be covered in this essay occurred before the FBI updating their terms for domestic terrorism in 2020.

Before these updated definitions from both the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI accounted for three groups of domestic terrorism: left-wing groups, extremist special interest groups, and domestic right-wing terrorist groups. Left-wing extremist groups “profess a revolutionary socialist doctrine and view themselves as protectors of the people against the ‘dehumanizing effects’ of capitalism and imperialism. They aim to bring about change in the United States...through revolution rather than through the established political process.”<sup>7</sup> Some of these groups include the Weather Underground, also known as the Weathermen, the May 19<sup>th</sup> Communist Organization, the Black Panther Party, and the Earth Liberation Front. The present essay will focus on right-wing terrorist groups and extremist special interest terrorism, which are now the greatest threats to national security. Right-wing terrorist groups “often adhere to the principles of racial supremacy and embrace antigovernment, antiregulatory beliefs,”<sup>8</sup> whereas terrorists who participate in extremist special interest terrorism

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<sup>4</sup> “Domestic Terrorism: Definitions, Terminology, and Methodology” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020), <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/fbi-dhs-domestic-terrorism-definitions-terminology-methodology.pdf/view>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Dale L. Watson, “The Terrorist Threat Confronting the United States.” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 6 February 2002. <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/testimony/the-terrorist-threat-confronting-the-united-states>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

“conduct acts of politically motivated violence to force segments of society, including the general public, to change attitudes about issues considered important to their causes.”<sup>9</sup> All other domestic terrorism threats “could flow from, but are not limited to, a combination of personal grievances and beliefs.... Some actors in this category may also carry bias related to religion, gender, or sexual orientation.”<sup>10</sup>

Dale Watson, former Executive Assistant Director of the FBI over Counterterrorism and Counterintelligence, addressed the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in February 2002 to reveal a shift in patterns of domestic terrorism. From the 1960s to the 1980s, left-wing extremist groups were the most serious domestic threat to the United States, but by the 1990s right-wing extremism was “the most dangerous domestic terrorist threat to the country.”<sup>11</sup> He acknowledged that Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban were all serious international threats, but between 1980 and 2002, the FBI recorded 335 incidents or suspected incidents of terrorism; 247 of them were linked to domestic terrorists.<sup>12</sup>

As recently as 2020, the Department of Defense sent a report to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees stating, “DoD is facing a threat from domestic extremists (DE), particularly those who espouse white supremacy or white nationalist ideologies.”<sup>13</sup> One year prior, this finding was also stated in the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019: “White supremacists and other far-right-wing extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States.”<sup>14</sup> The Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019 also requires the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Director of the FBI to submit an annual report detailing any incidents or suspected incidents of domestic terrorism, though the report must specifically include, “an assessment of the domestic terrorism threat posed by White supremacists and neo-Nazis, including White supremacist and neo-Nazi infiltration of Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and the uniformed

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Domestic Terrorism: Definitions”

<sup>11</sup> Watson.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jones et al., 1.

<sup>14</sup> S. 894 – 116<sup>th</sup> Congress (2019): Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019.

services.”<sup>15</sup> Although the country focused more on international terrorism post-9/11, Watson did not want anyone to dismiss the threat of domestic terrorism. According to the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019, the first recorded case of domestic terrorism in the United States occurred 24 years before passage of this act. The FBI would go on to identify it as “the worst act of homegrown terrorism in the nation’s history.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Oklahoma City Bombing

On April 19, 1995, at 9:02 a.m. a 7,000 pound truck bomb was detonated in front of the Murrah Building, which housed several federal offices in downtown Oklahoma City.<sup>17</sup> One hundred sixty-eight people died, including 19 children, and more than 800 people were severely injured.<sup>18</sup> Former President Bill Clinton addressed the nation later that day saying, “It was an act of cowardice and it was evil. The United States will not tolerate it... Let there be no room for doubt: we will find the people who did this. When we do, justice will be swift, certain, and severe.”<sup>19</sup> After President Clinton spoke, Attorney General Janet Reno answered questions from the press where one reporter asked, “General, [have you] decided whether this is just a coincidence that it happened on the second anniversary of the Waco siege?”<sup>20</sup> Attorney General Reno did not comment because of a scarcity of information at the time, but Americans later learned that it was not a coincidence. To understand the motivation behind this act of domestic terrorism a retrospective is required.

David Koresh was the spiritual leader of the Branch Davidian sect and founded the Mt. Carmel Center in Waco, Texas, on a

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<sup>15</sup> Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019

<sup>16</sup> “Oklahoma City Bombing” (Federal Bureau of Investigation). <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/oklahoma-city-bombing>

<sup>17</sup> *American Experience: Oklahoma City* (PBS, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Lou Michel, “A journalist’s reflections on Timothy McVeigh 25 years after Oklahoma City bombing,” *The Buffalo News*, 18 April 2020. [https://buffalonews.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/a-journalists-reflections-on-timothy-mcveigh-25-years-after-oklahoma-city-bombing/article\\_3ce2d343-fd5a-5c9c-b700-87dffe277de.html](https://buffalonews.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/a-journalists-reflections-on-timothy-mcveigh-25-years-after-oklahoma-city-bombing/article_3ce2d343-fd5a-5c9c-b700-87dffe277de.html)

<sup>19</sup> Bill Clinton, “Remarks Re: The OKC Bombing” (Clinton Presidential Library, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Clinton Presidential Library.

private compound. The FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) discovered illegal weapons and that Koresh was sexually abusing women and children at the compound.<sup>21</sup> This was the second standoff in a matter of a year between the federal government and rogue citizens. In 1992, Ruby Ridge was a violent 11-day standoff between Randy Weaver, a member of the white supremacist group the Aryan Nations, and the FBI, U.S. Marshalls, and BATF. Ruby Ridge ended with Weaver's surrender and the deaths of a U.S. Marshall, Weaver's wife, Vicki, and his son, Sammy. The deaths of the Weavers infuriated white supremacist and anti-government groups who felt the federal government was exerting their power in an aggressive manner.<sup>22</sup> Vicki and Sammy were seen as martyrs for gun rights and white supremacy. The Waco Siege lasted 51 days as the FBI tried to free people from the compound and arrest Koresh.<sup>23</sup> On April 19, 1993, the FBI drove a tank into the building, released tear gas, but unintentionally started a fire. Koresh did not allow people to escape, although some did. In total, 76 people died, including Koresh and 19 children.<sup>24</sup>

These two events enraged Timothy McVeigh. He developed a hatred for the U.S. government after joining the Army and fighting in Iraq during Desert Storm. He could not understand the government's senseless killing of innocent civilians overseas.<sup>25</sup> McVeigh's disillusionment with the U.S. military evolved into a pattern commonly exhibited by domestic terrorists. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) recently proved that veterans are actively recruited by white supremacist and anti-government groups.<sup>26</sup> For example, Randy Weaver was a U.S. Army engineer before joining the Aryan Nations.<sup>27</sup> This trend would continue about 20 years later when many former veterans stormed the U.S. Capitol, using their previous knowledge of military strategies.

According to CSIS, these white nationalist extremist groups target veterans so they can learn tactical and combat skills while

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<sup>21</sup> *American Experience*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Jones et al.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

also developing “proficiency in firing weapons, building explosive devices, conducting surveillance and reconnaissance, training personnel, practicing operational security, and performing other types of activities.”<sup>28</sup> McVeigh recruited Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, who were both also Army veterans, to build the bomb. McVeigh attended gun shows as well, where anti-government and white supremacist rhetoric was promoted and masked as patriotism.<sup>29</sup> Thus, McVeigh did not see Weaver and Koresh’s followers as extremist, right-wing groups but rather as hostages of the federal government and victims of a massacre.<sup>30</sup> He imagined himself as a hero, believing the government was his enemy and that those who perished at Mt. Carmel and Ruby Ridge were the sympathetic victims.

According to Chermak and Gruenewald, if a terrorist attack has victims, it is more likely to receive significant news coverage.<sup>31</sup> McVeigh wanted “a body count” from the explosion so people would pay attention to his message.<sup>32</sup> However, the media initially espoused a theory that the bombing was an act of international terrorism, specifically from the Middle East.<sup>33</sup> The media supported this theory, believing that an act of terrorism on such a large scale could not have been committed by an American citizen.

David Neiwert, author of *Alt-America*, said it best most recently on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing on April 19, 2020: “Americans like to think that they don’t do that sort of thing, only guys in turbans do that.”<sup>34</sup> Yet it was 18 years before this statement that Executive Assistant Director Watson told Americans that Al-Qaeda is made up of “individuals of varying nationalities, ethnicities, tribes, races.”<sup>35</sup> Watson acknowledged that it may be comforting for some Americans to imagine that Middle Eastern people are the enemy, but the reality is that Al-Qaeda recruited globally.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>29</sup> *American Experience*.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Chermak and Gruenewald, 435-436.

<sup>32</sup> *American Experience*.

<sup>33</sup> “Oklahoma City Bombing.”

<sup>34</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, “Oklahoma City Marks 25 Years Since America’s Deadliest Homegrown Attack.” *The New York Times*, 19 April 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Watson.

Retroactively, the Oklahoma City bombing would be categorized as anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism, which

encompasses the potentially unlawful use or threat of force or violence in furtherance of ideological agendas derived from anti-government or anti-authority sentiment, including opposition to perceived economic, social, or racial hierarchies, or perceived government overreach, negligence, or illegitimacy.<sup>36</sup>

McVeigh felt there was government overreach because of the events of Ruby Ridge and more so because of Waco. He believed the government was a terrorist organization because they used war tactics at Waco, such as blaring sirens, playing the sounds of animals being slaughtered, and flashing blinding lights into the compound.<sup>37</sup> The people who perished at the Waco compound were also American citizens, which McVeigh felt outweighed their devotion to Koresh. McVeigh was arrested two days after the bombing because he was driving a car without a license plate and had a concealed gun, leading the FBI to track him down and make their own arrest.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, McVeigh was sentenced to death and executed on June 11, 2001.

Before McVeigh was executed, media outlets reached out to him for interviews, but he was uninterested in speaking with major outlets. McVeigh did allow only one journalist, Lou Michel of *The Buffalo News*, to write about his life. Michel had frequent epistolary correspondence with McVeigh and even met with him in person with fellow journalist Dan Herbeck. Michel was deeply perplexed by his interactions with the domestic terrorist. McVeigh could talk about planning the bombing, then give Michel camping tips in the same letter. In an article reflecting on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing Michel wrote:

It soon became clear to me that McVeigh had two sides. There was the friendly, boyish Tim who would go on about the Buffalo Bills or his love of

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<sup>36</sup> "Definitions, Terminology, and Methodology."

<sup>37</sup> *American Experience*.

<sup>38</sup> "Oklahoma City Bombing."



his grandfather who taught him about guns. But when he discussed how he carried out the bombing, he was a military tactician, hiding or lacking any compassion for those he had blown up. If anything, he took pride in what he had done.<sup>39</sup>

Allegedly the only remorse McVeigh showed was over the fact that he did not start a revolution against the government.

Oklahoma City tore down the remainder of the Murrah Building and replaced it with the Oklahoma City Memorial and Museum honoring the victims of the attack. The memorial has a Field of Empty Chairs, 168 to represent each of the victims, nine rows to symbolize the nine floors of the building, and a photo of McVeigh. Kari F. Watkins, the museum's executive director, defends this decision in an interview with *The New York Times*: "We felt it was important to show his face, not to give him any credit, but to show people how normal he was... It could be anybody. The terrorist among us."<sup>40</sup> The Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019 makes a point that for the first annual report, all incidents or attempted incidents of domestic terrorism must be included, starting on April 19, 1995. Accepting the fact that McVeigh was an American citizen who committed such an egregious act is an important step of acknowledging domestic terrorism in the United States. Students in Oklahoma know this, as learning about the bombing is mandatory in all Oklahoma schools, yet it is not studied in schools nationally to the same degree as international attacks like 9/11. Although smaller, domestic terrorism plots occur throughout the country, the next major domestic terrorism attack occurred 18 years after the Oklahoma City bombing. The domestic terrorists behind this act were much younger than McVeigh but shared his disillusionment with the U.S. government.

### **The Boston Marathon Bombing**

On April 15, 2013, two backpacks containing "homemade pressure-cooker bomb[s] packed with explosives inside a layer of nails, BBs, and other metal scraps" were detonated by the finish line of the

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<sup>39</sup> Michel.

<sup>40</sup> MacFarquhar.

Boston Marathon on Boylston Street.<sup>41</sup> More than 200 people were severely injured, some lost limbs, and three people died: Krystle Campbell, Lingzi Lu, and eight-year-old Martin Richard. The City of Boston issued a shelter in place order as a manhunt for those responsible for the attacks went on for five days. After reviewing security footage, the Boston bombers were identified as Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Tamerlan died when his brother ran him over with an SUV; Dzhokhar had been shot while escaping a shootout with the police.<sup>42</sup> The new search focused on finding Dzhokhar. Law enforcement encouraged citizens to remain vigilant but continue to shelter in place. On April 19, 2013, David Henneberry, a resident of Watertown, exited his home to smoke when he saw someone covered in blood lying in his boat. He called the authorities, who came to arrest Dzhokhar.<sup>43</sup>

According to *Rolling Stone*, people in Cambridge, Massachusetts, were shocked and horrified that they were friends with, attended school with, lived down the street from, and had smoked weed with the Boston bombers. The Tsarnaevs came to America from Kyrgyzstan in 2002 on a tourist visa and applied for political asylum, which they were granted a year later.<sup>44</sup> Dzhokhar, who went by the name Jahar, assimilated into American life easily, becoming a sociable, popular kid. While in high school he was a member of the National Honor Society, captain of the wrestling team, and received a scholarship to UMass Dartmouth to pursue engineering, nursing, or dentistry.<sup>45</sup> His brother Tamerlan aspired to be a boxer and dreamed of representing America at the Olympics, only to learn that the National Boxing Authority

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<sup>41</sup> *United States v. Tsarnaev*, No. 20-443. Supreme Court of the United States. Argued Oct. 13, 2021—Decided March 4, 2022.

[https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-443\\_m6ho.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-443_m6ho.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> CNN Editorial Research. "Boston Marathon Terror Attack Fast Facts." *CNN*, 23 March 2021. <https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/03/us/boston-marathon-terror-attack-fast-facts/index.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Dan Corey, "David Henneberry, Man Who Found Boston Bomber, Dies at 70." *NBC News*, 29 Sept. 2017. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/david-henneberry-man-who-found-boston-bomber-dies-70-n805991>

<sup>44</sup> Janet Reitman, "Jahar's World." *Rolling Stone*, 17 July 2013. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/jahars-world-83856/>

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

banned all non-U.S. citizens from national competitions.<sup>46</sup> This led Tamerlan to deepen his faith in Islam. Eventually Tamerlan indoctrinated his brother as they struggled together: their parents divorced and moved to Russia; Jahar hated college and was failing; and both brothers lived in Section 8 housing and relied on food stamps. Like McVeigh, the brothers became disillusioned—this time with the idea of the American Dream—and they blamed the government for their suffering.<sup>47</sup>

Jahar's friends knew his brother Tamerlan was a devoted Muslim but thought Jahar resented this lifestyle. In an article published by *Rolling Stone* in July 2013, one friend recalled that once, Jahar defended the 9/11 attacks, claiming that the United States frequently bombed other countries. This is what the FBI refers to as a "leakage."<sup>48</sup> Terrorists, domestic included, try to hide their extremist beliefs from the public to gain trust and acceptance within communities. Because Jahar presumably thought he was going to die on April 19th in the boat, he inscribed the following manifesto: "the U.S. government is killing our innocent civilians... I can't stand to see such evil go unpunished... We Muslims are one body, you hurt one, you hurt us all... Fuck America."<sup>49</sup> The motivation for this bombing is, by definition, an act of extremist special-interest terrorism; although retroactively, it could also be seen as anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism. The two brothers committed an act of violence to try to change and expose the government's views on Muslims. They believed they were standing up for Muslims and fighting against harmful stereotypes that conflate Muslims with terrorism and religious extremism.

It is worth noting that many Americans were enraged with *Rolling Stone* for allegedly glorifying the domestic terrorist by putting a photo of him on the cover and making him the cover story of the print edition of the August 2013 issue with the headline: "The Bomber: How a Popular, Promising, Student Was Failed by His Family, Fell Into Radical Islam, and Became a Monster." Admittedly, some of this rage was justified, especially when the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

magazine described Jahar as “a beautiful, tousle-haired boy with a gentle demeanor, soulful brown eyes and the kind of shy, laid-back manner that ‘made him that dude you could always just vibe with.’”<sup>50</sup> *Rolling Stone* attempted to explain how these tragedies happen and the motivations behind domestic terrorism, but Americans seemingly did not want to believe the facts. Yet, this was not the first time someone tried to humanize a domestic terrorist. Michel and Herbeck would go on to write *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & The Oklahoma City Bombing*, a book about McVeigh’s life leading up to his execution. Although not classified as domestic terrorists, *Time* put the Columbine shooters, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, on the cover of their magazine as well, but people saw their story as a tragedy.<sup>51</sup> Because the Tsarnaev brothers were Muslim and not natural-born citizens, they reinforced stereotypes and fear that had already existed in American society. Additionally, by the U.S. Census standards, the two brothers also would have been classified as White, however their religion negated this fact. In an interview with *NPR*, Professor David J. Leonard, who specializes in race studies, argued that race, class, and religion are all factors that contribute to how people view mass shooters, but this can also be applied to domestic terrorists.<sup>52</sup> Jahar did actually become a naturalized U.S. Citizen on September 11, 2012, while his brother Tamerlan passed a U.S. Citizen test in 2013, but his citizenship application was not immediately approved.<sup>53</sup>

According to the *United States v. Tsarnaev* Supreme Court opinion, Jahar is indicted on 30 crimes, 17 of which are capital offenses.<sup>54</sup> Jahar is trying to make the argument that his brother was the true orchestrator of the attacks and he had been forced to participate. In June 2015, Jahar received the death penalty; however, in July 2020 the U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston overturned his

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> “Rolling Stone’s Tsarnaev Cover: What’s Stirring Such Passion?” *NPR*, 17 July 2013. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2013/07/17/202956379/rolling-stones-tsarnaev-cover-whats-stirring-such-passion>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Reuters* Staff, “Boston bomber passed citizen test months before deadly attack: paper.” *Reuters*. 29 Feb. 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-boston-bombing-citizenship/boston-bomber-passed-citizen-test-months-before-deadly-attack-paper-idUSKCN0W21S7>

<sup>54</sup> *United States v. Tsarnaev*

death sentence. Judge O. Rogeriee Thompson wrote, “a core promise of our criminal justice system is that even the very worst among us deserves to be fairly tried and lawfully punished.”<sup>55</sup> The appellate court found that the judge for the initial case did not screen jurors and the case was held in Boston, creating a bias that did not offer Jahar a fair trial. To clarify, this does not mitigate Jahar’s guilt: the new trial will focus on whether he should receive the death penalty or life in prison without the possibility of release.

The decision has angered many Bostonians. Patricia Campbell, the mother of Krystle Campbell who was one of the three people who died, told *The Boston Globe*: “It’s just terrible that he’s allowed to live his life. It’s unfair... He did a vicious, ugly thing”<sup>56</sup> Former President Trump also expressed outrage and referred to Jahar as “the animal that killed so many people.”<sup>57</sup> The decision certainly invites conflicting opinions, but not all of the victims believe Jahar should receive the death penalty.

Bill and Denise Richard’s eight-year-old son Martin died the day of the bombing while their daughter, who was seven years old at the time, was injured after the explosion. The Richard family urged the Department of Justice to give Jahar life in prison without the possibility of release rather than the death penalty in an editorial they wrote for *The Boston Globe* in April 2015. They expressed that death penalty prosecutions take years to decide, and it forces victims to relive “the most painful day of our lives.”<sup>58</sup> As it turns out, the Richard family was correct. Jahar was 19 years old when he set off the bomb at the marathon; he is now 28 and his fate is still undecided. Currently, the Biden administration

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<sup>55</sup> Nina Totenberg, “The Boston Marathon bomber case reaches the Supreme Court.” *NPR*, 13 Oct. 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/13/1045101062/boston-marathon-bomber-case-reaches-the-supreme-court>

<sup>56</sup> Alanna Durkin Richer, “Court overturns Boston Marathon bomber’s death sentence.” *Associated Press*, 31 July 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/sports-ri-state-wire-ma-state-wire-dzhokhar-tsarnaev-trials-af38a703ab88fe922629dcc254cb41df>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Bill and Denise Richard, Bill and Denise Richard: To end the anguish, drop the death penalty.” *The Boston Globe*, originally published in April 2015, republished on July 31, 2020. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/07/31/metro/bill-denise-richard-end-anguish-drop-death-penalty-2/>

supports a death sentence in Jahar's case.<sup>59</sup> The next significant act of domestic terrorism was a direct attack on the Capitol, provoked by the country's most powerful leader.

### The Capitol Insurrection

Three words spoken by former Vice President Mike Pence to the acting defense secretary sent Congress, D.C., and all of America into a frenzied panic on Jan. 6, 2021: "Clear the Capitol." The Capitol was evacuated at 1:26 p.m. and the building was breached at around 2 p.m.<sup>60</sup> Vice President Pence barely made it to safety as the mob chanted "Hang Mike Pence!" Capitol Police Officer Eugene Goodman (who would later be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for his bravery) directed the mob to an alternate route, so Vice President Pence could be taken to a secret hiding spot. Pence, his wife and daughter, and his advisers were taken to "a loading dock in an underground parking garage beneath the Capitol complex."<sup>61</sup> The mob also made threats to execute Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.<sup>62</sup> Tear gas, gun shots, and screams overwhelmed the estimated 100 Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers for nearly eight hours, as the Capitol was not declared safe until 8 p.m. Two explosives were also found near the Republican National Committee that afternoon.<sup>63</sup> Americans watched in horror as it seemed the sanctuary of our democracy fell to domestic terrorists.

According to Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in an Instagram Live video, "One of the things that I would like us to dispel

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<sup>59</sup> Totenberg.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Farley, Timeline of National Guard Deployment to Capitol." *FactCheck.org*, 13 Jan. 2021, updated on 24 May 2021. <https://www.factcheck.org/2021/01/timeline-of-national-guard-deployment-to-capitol/>

<sup>61</sup> Rosalind S. Helderman and Josh Dawsey, "Jan. 6 committee reveals new details about Pence's terrifying day." *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/16/jan-6-committee-reveals-new-details-about-pences-terrifying-day/>

<sup>62</sup> Lisa Mascaro et al., "Clear the Capitol," Pence pleaded, timeline of riot shows." *Associated Press*. 10 April 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/capitol-siege-army-racial-injustice-riots-only-on-ap-480e95d9d075a0a946e837c3156cdcb9>

<sup>63</sup> Harry Dunn, Testimony to The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol (2021).

is the idea that this insurrection and this attack happened suddenly...the week prior to the insurrection, I started to get text messages that I needed to be careful and that in particular I needed to be careful about the 6th.”<sup>64</sup> Although people questioned Representative Ocasio-Cortez’s account, the facts do match her story. National Guardsmen were assigned to D.C. on Jan. 3, but not to protect the Capitol; they were to assist with traffic control and crowd management for President Trump’s “Save America” rally.<sup>65</sup> Representative Ocasio-Cortez said insurrectionists actually arrived in D.C. on Jan. 4. Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and the Department of Defense had repeatedly called Capitol Police to see whether more National Guardsmen were needed, which Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund repeatedly declined.<sup>66</sup> On Jan. 5, an FBI office in Virginia found an online thread with messages like “Stop calling this a march, or rally, or protest. Go there ready for war.”<sup>67</sup> The FBI issued a warning for Jan. 6, but it was not until 1:09 p.m. on that day, after former President Trump had finished his “Save America” rally, that Chief Sund decided the National Guard was needed.

The National Guard was not sent to the Capitol until 5:40 p.m.<sup>68</sup> Many people rightfully question why it took three hours for the National Guard to arrive on the scene. First of all, the President is responsible for deploying the National Guard. Several anonymous sources told media outlets that President Trump refused to give his approval. House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy tried calling President Trump personally, urging him to stop the violence, to which President Trump replied, “Well Kevin, I guess these people are more upset about the election than you are.”<sup>69</sup> This shows that President Trump wanted the domestic terrorists to incite fear and violence at the Capitol. Vice President Pence was actually the one who deployed the National Guard.<sup>70</sup> Second, while the Capitol was

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<sup>64</sup> Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Instagram Live video (12:03-14:28).

<sup>65</sup> Farley.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Colleen Long, “Impeachment isn’t the final word on Capitol riot for Trump.” *Associated Press*, Feb. 14, 2021 <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-capitol-siege-riots-statutes-acquittals-a6725eb4bce09d9b395ca9f945c5fa6e>

<sup>70</sup> Farley.

ransacked by domestic terrorists, President Trump encouraged their actions, which led to his second impeachment.<sup>71</sup>

Earlier that day, President Trump held a “Save America” rally, where he gave an hour-long speech to supporters in which he promoted his message that he had won the 2020 Election. He blamed the “fake news media,” “radical-left Democrats,” and Vice President Pence for the loss. He tweeted in the midst of the insurrection: “Mike Pence didn’t have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution.”<sup>72</sup> By blaming Vice President Pence, the former president made him a scapegoat, a target of the mob, and gravely endangered his life. While hidden in the underground garage, the Secret Service wanted Vice President Pence to evacuate the premises and had a vehicle ready for him. According to the Jan. 6 committee trials and *The Washington Post*, the Vice President refused to leave.<sup>73</sup> President Trump also told members of the crowd that they are “American patriots who are committed to the honesty of our elections and the integrity of our glorious republic” and “the real people, ...the people that built this nation.”<sup>74</sup> This pseudo-patriotic rhetoric made the crowd believe that they were simply supporting their president. They believed they were going to save their country and be heroes. According to *The New York Times*, protesters were recorded on social media videos yelling: “Our president wants us here... We wait and take orders from our president,” “Fight for Trump!” and “We are a force to be reckoned with. We are not going away.”<sup>75</sup>

The last remarks President Trump made to his supporters were the most incriminating in his impeachment trial: “And we

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Legare, “Trump can be sued for role in January 6 attack on Capitol, federal judge rules,” *CBS News*, 19 Feb. 2022. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-january-6-lawsuits-damages/>

<sup>72</sup> Farley.

<sup>73</sup> Helderman and Dawsey.

<sup>74</sup> Brian Naylor, “Read Trump's Jan. 6 Speech, A Key Part Of Impeachment Trial.” *NPR*, 10 Feb. 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/10/966396848/read-trumps-jan-6-speech-a-key-part-of-impeachment-trial>

<sup>75</sup> Dan Barry, Mike McIntire, and Matthew Rosenberg, “Our President Wants Us Here: The Mob That Stormed the Capitol.” *The New York Times*. 9 Jan. 2021, updated on 10 Nov. 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/us/capitol-rioters.html>



fight. We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore... So we're going to, we're going to walk down Pennsylvania Avenue... And we're going to the Capitol, and we're going to try and give [sic].”<sup>76</sup> This inflammatory and violent language motivated and inspired the crowd to break into the Senate Chambers and “stop the steal” because Jan. 6 was the day Congress was counting the electoral college votes to announce the winner of the 2020 Election. This is a textbook example of anti-government or anti-authority violent extremism.<sup>77</sup> The insurrectionists rebelled against the government because they believed they were providing legitimate political discourse; they were told they were defending their president and their country from fraudulent votes. Domestic terrorists chanted “Hell no, never Joe [Biden],” and “Stop the Steal.”<sup>78</sup>

It was not until 4:17 p.m. that the former president published a video telling his supporters, “We had an election that was stolen from us... but you have to go home now. We have to have peace. We have to have law and order. ... We love you. You're very special... But go home and go home in peace.”<sup>79</sup> Two hours later he tweeted, “Remember this day forever!”<sup>80</sup> Some of the insurrectionists felt an immediate sense of disillusionment and betrayal after President Trump posted the video. They felt they had risked their lives for their country and their president, who seemingly gave up on his own cause.<sup>81</sup> Although the former president told his supporters to go home in peace, the violence and damage was already done. Additionally, he still continued to call them patriots and told them to remember Jan. 6, as if it had actually been a war battle, praising their actions rather than condemning them, like President Clinton had done after the Oklahoma City bombing or President Barack Obama after the Boston Marathon bombing.

Vice President Pence addressed the Senate and the nation after the Capitol was declared safe at 8 p.m. He said, “To those who wreaked havoc in our Capitol today, you did not win. Violence never

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<sup>76</sup> Naylor.

<sup>77</sup> “Domestic Terrorism: Definitions.”

<sup>78</sup> Barry et al.

<sup>79</sup> Farley.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Barry et al.

wins. Freedom wins, and this is still the people's house."<sup>82</sup> Senator Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, who had been a close ally to President Trump, could not idly ignore the attack. He continued to dispel the President's beliefs of rampant voter fraud and reassured Americans that Congress would never simply give President Trump the winning votes because he asked for them: "If this election were overturned by mere allegations from the losing side, our democracy would enter a death spiral."<sup>83</sup> Congress members stayed to count the votes and Vice President Pence affirmed that Joe Biden had won the 2020 election. Though Senator McConnell is often considered a controversial figure, one can appreciate his public condemnation of the violence on that day:

I want to say to the American people, the United States Senate will not be intimidated. We will not be kept out of this chamber by thugs, mobs or threats. We will not bow to lawlessness or intimidation. We are back at our posts. We will discharge our duty under the Constitution and for this nation and we're going to do it tonight... The clockwork of our democracy has carried on.<sup>84</sup>

Although Senator McConnell has been outspoken about President Trump's role in causing the Insurrection, he did not vote to convict President Trump for inciting an insurrection for two reasons. First, Senator McConnell felt that if Congress were to have a trial while President Trump was still in office there would not have been sufficient time for due process.<sup>85</sup> Second, Senator McConnell, some Republicans, and President Trump's legal team believed that it is unconstitutional to try a former federal official.<sup>86</sup> Because

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<sup>82</sup> Farley.

<sup>83</sup> Mitch McConnell, "Full Remarks on Electoral College" (C-SPAN, 2021).

<sup>84</sup> Mitch McConnell, "Senate will not be intimidated by 'thugs, mobs or threats,' McConnell says" (*PBS Newshour*, 2021).

<sup>85</sup> Ben Leonard, "'Practically and morally responsible:' McConnell scorches Trump—but votes to acquit." *Politico*, 13 Feb. 2021. <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/13/mcconnell-condemns-trump-acquitted-469002>

<sup>86</sup> "Senate Acquits Trump in Impeachment Trial—Again," *NPR*, 13 Feb. 2021. <https://www.npr.org/sections/trump-impeachment-trial-live->

President Trump is now a private citizen he cannot be convicted and removed from office. The vote to impeach the former president on Jan. 13, 2021, passed 232–197 votes, with 10 Republicans voting to impeach.<sup>87</sup> A month later on Feb. 13, 2021, Trump was acquitted on the charge of incitement of an insurrection. Seven Republican senators voted to convict Trump; no president has ever been found guilty by more senators of his own party.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, President Trump and his lawyers believe that his speech at the Save America rally is protected by the First Amendment and that the former president did not know his words would incite violence. Senator McConnell found this argument to be blasphemous: “There’s no question—none—that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day... The leader of the free world cannot spend weeks thundering that shadowy forces are stealing our country and then feign surprise when people believe him and do reckless things.”<sup>89</sup> Federal Judge Amit Mehta believes that Trump’s speech was “selfishly motivated” and the speech was “an implicit call for imminent violence or lawlessness,” thus it is not protected by the First Amendment.<sup>90</sup> The lawsuits held against Trump, the Oath Keepers, and the Proud Boys, the latter two groups being far-right extremist groups, are raised under the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 which states “that it is illegal for a group to conspire to prevent federal government officials from carrying out their lawful duties.”<sup>91</sup> In this case, the conspiring groups are the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, as well as President Trump, and the lawful duty they disrupted was certifying the results of the 2020 Election. The

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updates/2021/02/13/967098840/senate-acquits-trump-in-impeachment-trial-again

<sup>87</sup> Bill Chappell, “House Impeaches Trump A 2nd Time, Citing Insurrection At U.S. Capitol.” *NPR*. 13 Jan. 2021. <https://www.npr.org/sections/trump-impeachment-effort-live-updates/2021/01/13/956449072/house-impeaches-trump-a-2nd-time-citing-insurrection-at-u-s-capitol>

<sup>88</sup> Lisa Mascaro et al. “Trump acquitted, denounced in historic impeachment trial.” *Associated Press*, 13 Feb. 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-capitol-siege-riots-trials-impeachments-b245b52fd7d4a079ae199c954baba452>

<sup>89</sup> Leonard.

<sup>90</sup> Legare.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

Oath Keepers have objected to this claim, because they believe that certifying election results is not “an official duty” of Congress to which Judge Mehta responded, “This reading of the Constitution defies common sense.”<sup>92</sup> Finally, Representative Liz Cheney argued that if Trump had such a significant amount of power over the Insurrectionists, that he should have intervened sooner and more forcefully to stop the violence: “There has never been a greater betrayal by a President of the United States of his office and his oath to the Constitution.”<sup>93</sup>

On July 27, 2021, Americans learned the gruesome details of Jan. 6 from four officers who testified in front of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. U.S. Capitol Police Sergeant Aquilino Gonell, an immigrant to the United States from the Dominican Republic, served in Iraq as a sergeant in the Army and said, “On January 6, for the first time, I was more afraid to work at the Capitol than during my entire Army deployment to Iraq... nothing in my experience in the Army, or as a law enforcement officer, prepared me for what we confronted on January 6.”<sup>94</sup> The officers detailed that many of the insurrectionists came armed to the rally. They brought hammers, rebar, knives, batons, police shields, bear spray, pepper spray, and tear gas.<sup>95</sup> Daniel Hodges, a DC Metropolitan Police Officer, said, “There were a significant number of men dressed in tactical gear attending the gathering, wearing ballistic vests, helmets, goggles, military face masks... they appeared to be prepared for much more than listening to politicians speak in a park.”<sup>96</sup>

CSIS reports that the number of former law enforcement and military personnel involved with domestic terrorism has been increasing within the past few years.<sup>97</sup> They reported that one reservist, one National Guard member, at least 31 veterans, four police officers, and three former officers face federal charges for their involvement with the Capitol Insurrection.<sup>98</sup> Officer Gonell sensed

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Chappell.

<sup>94</sup> Aquilino Gonell, Testimony to The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol (2021) (28:37–29:22).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Daniel Hodges, Testimony to The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol (2021) (58:13–58:26).

<sup>97</sup> Jones et al.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 1.

this was true the day of the insurrection, telling the committee: “Based on the coordinated tactics we observed and verbal commands we heard, it appeared that many of these attackers had law enforcement or military experience.”<sup>99</sup> This is alarming for a number of reasons, but most notably, these insurrectionists were once people who defended our country. Because the majority of the domestic terrorists were armed and had previous knowledge of police and military tactics, this added an additional challenge for officers who tried to fight back. This creates a fear and paranoia in citizens because if law enforcement and military personnel—people whom citizens trust to protect them and who have a great deal of authority—succumb to the inflammatory rhetoric of domestic extremism, whom are citizens to trust? The threat is no longer identifiable.

The day of the insurrection, many officers faced this same fear. Officer Hodges, who consistently referred to the rioters as domestic terrorists, testified about these events:

To my perpetual confusion, I saw the thin blue line flag, a symbol of support for law enforcement more than once, being carried by the terrorists ...The terrorists alternated between attempting to break our defenses and shouting at and/or attempting to convert us. Men alleging to be veterans told us how they had fought for this country and were fighting for it again.<sup>100</sup>

Although Trump supporters are often associated with the Blue Lives Matter movement,<sup>101</sup> these officers realized during the insurrection that their lives did not matter; they were targets of a mob. The Capitol Police and D.C. Metropolitan Police were not persuaded and continued to hold the line of defense, which further enraged the domestic terrorists.

The domestic terrorists removed D.C. Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone’s badge, radio, and ammunition, and tried to remove his gun as well. Officer Fanone detailed the account: “I

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<sup>99</sup> Gonell Testimony (32:06–32:26).

<sup>100</sup> Hodges Testimony, (1:05:46- 1:06:40)

<sup>101</sup> Nathalie Baptiste, “The Mob at the Capitol Proves That Blue Lives Have Never Mattered to Trump Supporters.” *Mother Jones*, 2021. <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/01/the-mob-at-the-capitol-proves-that-blue-lives-have-never-mattered-to-trump-supporters/>

heard chants of, 'Kill him with his own gun'... At some point during the fighting, I was dragged from the line of officers and into the crowd. I heard someone scream, 'I got one.'"<sup>102</sup> Officer Fanone felt he was going to die and as his own personal last line of defense, screamed "I've got kids!" to which a few people gave him space and helped him off the ground. Officer Hodges also had his radio stolen, which gave the insurrectionists an advantage and compromised any plans of defense the officers had. Officer Fanone, Sergeant Gonell, and Officer Hodges all remembered the domestic terrorists calling them "traitors."<sup>103</sup>

The warped viewpoint of heroes, villains, and sympathetic victims by the domestic terrorists is how the insurrectionists justified their actions against the officers. The roles of heroes, villains, and sympathetic victims were defined by former President Trump, and the insurrectionists believed him. They saw themselves as heroes because President Trump told them they were patriots who had a Constitutional right to revolt; they saw the Capitol Police, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, Vice President Pence, and Democrats as the enemy; the sympathetic victim to them was President Trump.

Furthermore, many white supremacist groups, notably the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, participated in the Capitol Insurrection. CSIS reports that in 2020 alone there were 110 domestic terrorist attacks and plots, in which 66 percent of these were conducted by "White supremacists, extremist militia members, and other violent far-right extremists."<sup>104</sup> This brings up the importance of race during the insurrection as Harry Dunn, a U.S. Capitol Police Officer, who is also a Black man, was repeatedly called the n-word during the attacks. He enumerated his and other Black officers' accounts to the committee:

No one had ever—ever—called me a "nigger" while wearing the uniform of a Capitol Police officer... Yet another Black officer later told me he had been confronted by insurrectionists inside the Capitol,

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<sup>102</sup> Michael Fanone, Testimony to The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol (2021) (45:17–50:42).

<sup>103</sup> Fanone testimony (45:17–45:31), Gonell testimony (30:01–30:14), Hodges testimony (1:02:08–1:02:20)

<sup>104</sup> Jones et al., 8.

who told him to “Put your gun down and we’ll show you what kind of nigger you really are!”<sup>105</sup>

This was not the first time that race came up during the committee hearing. Officer Hodges said one domestic terrorist shouted at him, “do not attack us, we are not Black Lives Matter.” This particular insurrectionist implied that it is acceptable for officers to attack and arrest Black Lives Matter protesters, but he saw the insurrection as a worthy cause. Officer Gonell was the first to compare defense responses between Black Lives Matter protests and the Capitol Insurrection:

There are some who expressed outrage when someone kneeled while calling for social justice. Where are those same people expressing outrage to condemn the violent attack on law enforcement officers, the Capitol, and our American democracy? As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive the timely reinforcements and support we needed. In contrast, during the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response?<sup>106</sup>

These different responses showed that the domestic terrorists at the Capitol used their white privilege to their advantage, while other protesters fear being arrested for their actions.

President Trump was impeached a second time on Jan. 13, 2021, because he “gravely endangered the security of the United States and its institutions of government, threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power, and imperiled a coequal branch of government.”<sup>107</sup> Additionally, as of Jan. 6, 2022, 725 domestic terrorists had been arrested following the insurrection,<sup>108</sup> with the total arrests

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<sup>105</sup> Dunn Testimony, (1:24:11–1:24:46).

<sup>106</sup> Gonell Testimony, (38:56–39:46).

<sup>107</sup> Chappell.

<sup>108</sup> Ryan Lucas, “Where the Jan. 6 insurrection investigation stands, one year later.” *NPR*, Jan. 6, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/06/1070736018/jan-6-anniversary-investigation-cases-defendants-justice>

reaching 900 as of July 7, 2022.<sup>109</sup> Because many of the insurrectionists posted on social media about attending the insurrection, the FBI was able to use this information to track down those affiliated.

Yet the aftermath of the insurrection is ongoing for the officers who defended the Capitol, both physically and mentally. Five people died the day of the insurrection, including Ashli Babbitt, a Trump supporter and Air Force veteran.<sup>110</sup> She was shot by officers protecting the Senate Chambers. Brian D. Sicknick, a Capitol Police Officer, suffered two strokes during the insurrection and died. Officer Fanone suffered a heart attack during the insurrection because of the number of times he was electrocuted with a taser. He was also diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. Four officers who served on Jan. 6 have committed suicide in the months after the insurrection: MPD Officer Gunther Hashida, MPD Officer Kyle DeFretag, MPD Officer Jeffrey Smith, and U.S. Capitol Police Officer Howard Liebgood. Unfortunately, misinformation has continued to spread about the Capitol Insurrection, despite the testimonies of witnesses.

Conspiracy theories have spread that the insurrection never happened or that its severity was exaggerated by the media.<sup>111</sup> Representative Ocasio-Cortez specifically named Senator Josh Hawley, Representative Mo Brooks, and Senator Ted Cruz for inciting rioters and for downplaying the atrocities that took place that day. In Officer Fanone's closing remarks, he emphasized how infuriating it is for officers to hear these theories and to have members of Congress proclaim them as well: "I feel like I went to hell and back to protect them [U.S. citizens] and the people in this room, but too many are now telling me that hell doesn't exist, or that hell actually wasn't that bad."<sup>112</sup> Sergeant Gonell expressed to the committee that it is not well known to the public, but many officers have resigned as a result of the Capitol Insurrection.

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<sup>109</sup> Kyle Cheney and Josh Gerstein, "Where Jan. 6 prosecutions stand, 18 months after the attack." *Politico*. 7 July 2022. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/07/07/jan-6-prosecutions-months-later-00044354>

<sup>110</sup> Mascaro et al.

<sup>111</sup> David Klepper, "Conspiracy theories paint fraudulent reality of Jan. 6 riot." *PBS*, 1 Jan. 2022. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/conspiracy-theories-paint-fraudulent-reality-of-jan-6-riot>

<sup>112</sup> Fanone Testimony (53:50–54:17).



Officer Fanone resigned from the Metropolitan Police Department in December 2021 after 20 years on the force because some of his colleagues still showed support for Trump. Ironically, Fanone voted for Trump in 2016 but is now unapologetically vocal about the actions of certain Republicans in Congress post-Insurrection. He once said that he felt distraught that U.S. Capitol Police Officers “have to walk the same halls as some of these insurrectionist members of Congress... I couldn’t imagine sharing a workspace with those jackasses.”<sup>113</sup> Additionally, his colleagues mocked and shunned him for appearing on news outlets discussing the aftermath of the Insurrection. Fanone is now a Law Enforcement Analyst for CNN.

### **The Government’s Response to Domestic Terrorism**

Current Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III confirms the Department of Defense will strengthen efforts to combat growing extremism in the military. CSIS provides at least three hypotheses as to why veterans are persuaded to join right-wing extremist groups. One, assimilating from war to civilian life can lead to a hatred of society and the government. Two, it is possible that the political polarization in the United States has negatively affected military personnel and officers. Three, the Internet and social media contribute to radicalization by providing a platform for these ideas to grow and spread.<sup>114</sup> The Department of Veterans Affairs may need to create more outreach efforts to veterans about right-wing extremism, seeing as they are a target amongst these groups. The Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019 states that the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Director of the FBI must provide training on national, state, and local levels to law enforcement agencies to caution them against domestic terrorism. They are responsible for “understanding, detecting, deterring, and investigating acts of domestic terrorism and White supremacist and neo-Nazi infiltration of law enforcement agencies.”<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Jason Zengerle, “To Hell and Back, Then to CNN.” *The New York Times Magazine*. Jan. 26, 2022, updated Jan. 28, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/26/magazine/michael-fanone-cnn.html>

<sup>114</sup> Jones et al.

<sup>115</sup> Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019.

The FBI established the Counterterrorism Center in 1996 to combat domestic and international terrorism, but the FBI also found significant progress in collaborating with other federal agencies such as the CIA, Secret Service, and the Department of State which provided “an unprecedented opportunity for information sharing, warning, and real-time intelligence analysis.”<sup>116</sup> Technology has offered ground-breaking prevention methods and an expansion of the terrorist threat warning system, as used by the National Infrastructure Protection Center and the Awareness of National Security Issues and Response program. The FBI can also transmit messages through the New Threat Warning System (NTWS) directly to American citizens in the event of an active terrorism attack.<sup>117</sup>

More recently, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019 is meant “To authorize dedicated domestic terrorism offices within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to analyze and monitor domestic terrorist activity and require the Federal Government to take steps to prevent domestic terrorism.”<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the Civil Rights Unit of the FBI will work in conjunction with each other to investigate hate crimes to see their relation to domestic terrorism.

## **Conclusion**

In his testimony, Sergeant Gonell said, “To be honest, I did not recognize my fellow citizens who stormed the Capitol on January 6, or the United States they claimed to represent.”<sup>119</sup> Americans minimize domestic terrorism because it requires us to confront the idea that domestic terrorists are often American citizens whose love for their own extremist ideology outweighs the safety and well-being of others. The FBI is aware of the complexities surrounding these roles. They state on their website: “we recognize actors’ motivations vary, are nuanced, and sometimes are derived from a blend of ideologies.”<sup>120</sup> Domestic terrorists warp the hero,

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<sup>116</sup> Watson.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019.

<sup>119</sup> Gonell Testimony, (28:25–28:33).

<sup>120</sup> “Definitions, Terminology, and Methodology.”

villain, and sympathetic victim(s) roles to justify their own actions and agendas. McVeigh targeted the Murrah building because a BATF office was located there, and the BATF had been involved in the Waco siege and Ruby Ridge. McVeigh saw himself as a champion for gun rights and the anti-government movement. The Tsarnaev brothers believed they were heroes bringing awareness to the U.S. government's treatment of Muslims. Finally, the Capitol Insurrectionists touted themselves as heroes and patriots who were fighting for their country and on behalf of their president.

Furthermore, the growing polarization in America is causing more radical ideology to spread. As Senator Mitch McConnell said the night of the insurrection, "We cannot keep drifting apart into two separate tribes with a separate set of facts and separate realities, with nothing in common, except our hostility towards each other and mistrust of the few national institutions that we all still share."<sup>121</sup> There needs to be an active, united front against domestic terrorism in the United States. The threat to America is not always going to be an international threat. Unfortunately, sometimes the threat lives amongst us, looks like us, and are even people who were once considered good.

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<sup>121</sup> McConnell, "Full Remarks on Electoral College."

*Confluence*