

10/27/25

My name is Daniel Hodges. I am speaking in my personal capacity, however I draw upon my experiences as one of the few police officers in this country who has policed both the protests and riots of 2020, as well as the insurrection of January 6th, 2021. I am intimately familiar with political violence, as when I fought to defend the United States Capitol and many of your very lives, I was beaten, bloodied, and crushed, with my eye gouged and skull smashed with my own baton.

Political violence is a worthy topic for discussion, however the press release I saw from the subcommittee chair made it clear this was not to be an honest consideration of various causes and effects, but rather a ham-fisted attempt to propagate the unsupported notion that liberal ideology is the greatest origin of modern political violence. This is particularly galling since every single member of the majority on this subcommittee has either contributed to one of the most infamous examples of conservative political violence of our age or the protection of its perpetrators.

Every majority member who could do so voted to acquit Donald Trump during his second impeachment, and now we find ourselves in a new, horrific age of political violence – one where it is carried out by the state itself. A permanent resident was arrested without a warrant and is being threatened with deportation simply for his politics. A Tennessee man was arrested and is being held on two million dollar bail for sharing a Trump meme on social media. Members of Congress have been denied access to ICE facilities, despite the law granting them unannounced oversight rights. These detentions and prohibitions are all grounded in the threat of deadly force and violence, are absurd or outright illegal, and politically motivated by right-wing ideology. The fact that these actions are carried out by agents of the state doesn't make them acceptable, it makes them far worse.

The current administration is doing whatever it can to downplay the threat that right-wing violence presents to the United States, including literally erasing data. Between September 12th and the 13th of this year, the Department of Justice deleted their own study from their website which came to the conclusion that right-wing extremism poses a much greater threat than left-wing extremism. I quote now the opening paragraph of this National Institute of Justice report, published just last year:

“Militant, nationalistic, white supremacist violent extremism has increased in the United States. In fact, the number of far-right attacks continues to outpace all other types of terrorism and domestic violent extremism. Since 1990, far-right extremists have committed far more ideologically motivated homicides than far-left or radical Islamist extremists, including 227 events that took more than 520 lives. In this same period, far-left extremists committed 42 ideologically motivated attacks that took 78 lives. A recent threat assessment by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security concluded that domestic violent extremists are an acute threat and highlighted a probability that COVID-19 pandemic-related stressors, long-standing ideological grievances related to immigration, and narratives surrounding electoral fraud will continue to serve as a justification for violent actions.”¹

There will always be those who seek to further their own political agenda through extralegal violence, and that is what law enforcement is for. But to reduce the risk of the population at large from falling into radicalization, the solution is simple: unfettered Democracy. One of Democracy's greatest assets is how (when unsullied) it provides a mechanism for everyone to have their voice heard, and when people

¹ Chermak, Steven, Matthew DeMichele, Jeff Gruenewald, Michael Jensen, Raven Lewis, and Basia E Lopez. 2024. “What NIJ Research Tells Us About Domestic Terrorism.” NIJ Journal (285).
nij.ojp.gov:<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/what-nij-research-tells-us-about-domestic-terrorism>

believe their government speaks for them in some manner they are less apt to seek violent means to accomplish their political agendas.

So make voting easier, not harder. Stop gerrymandering people into oblivion. Stand on the strength of your ideals, not the depth of your donor's pockets. Stop shopping for judges and start seeking ideas that withstand scrutiny from any political ideology. When you tell the people that an election was stolen from them, they will take up arms against their own neighbors without a shred of evidence. But if you tell them brilliant political rhetoric is their birthright and civic engagement their privilege, they'll instead take up the book and pen, and we will all be richer for it.