

Twitter Thread by Parker Molloy



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If you're curious what Trump's defense will look like, all you have to do is turn on Fox News. My latest at @mmfa

The tl;dr is that for years right-wing media have been excusing Trump's violent rhetoric by going, "Yes, but THE DEMOCRATS..." and then bending themselves into knots to pretend that Dems were calling for violence when they very, very clearly weren't.

And in fact, this predates Trump.

In 2008, Obama was talking about not backing down in the face of an ugly campaign. He said "If they bring a knife to the fight, we bring a gun."

<https://t.co/i5YaQJsKop>

That quote was from the movie The Untouchables. And there's no way anybody reading that quote in good faith could conclude that he was talking about actual guns and knives. But it became a big talking point on the right.

<https://t.co/vBb0gbaQkz>

In 2018, Obama-era Attorney General Eric Holder was speaking to a group of Georgia Democrats about GOP voter suppression. He riffed on Michelle Obama's "When they go low, we go high" line from the 2016 DNC.

"Michelle always says, 'When they go low, we go high.' No. No. When they go low, we kick them. That's what this new Democratic Party is about. We're proud as hell to be Democrats. We're willing to fight for the ideals of the Democratic Party," he said.

So as not to be misunderstood, Holder even said, "Now, when I say, you know, 'we kick 'em,' I don't mean we do anything inappropriate. We don't do anything illegal."

But it didn't matter. It was obvious that he wasn't talking about actually kicking anyone. Fox News just ran with it. They edited out the context where he even explains that he was speaking figuratively. Then they pretended he was being extremely literal.

Seriously, watch this.

Trump called into Fox & Friends that day. He called Holder's comment "disgusting" and "dangerous." Then he went on to talk about how nice and peaceful his rallies were (seriously), and then brought up a conspiracy theory about George Soros paying protesters.

When I wrote about it at the time, I highlighted just how quickly the Holder story spread throughout right-wing media, and how much they all pretended that he was speaking literally. <https://t.co/pzck9v1ncm>

If they thought Holder was being literal when he said "No, when they go low, we kick them," did they think that Michelle Obama meant "when they literally duck down on the floor, we take flight?" No, of course not. They just feign ignorance.

Fox covered that story for about a week. Every once in a while, someone on the right will include Holder saying that in one of their "oooOoOoO, look at Democrats advocating for violence!" compilations, even though that's just flat-out false.

Another example of people on the right purposely taking words out of context to pretend that Democrats advocate violence: In January 2017, Tim Kaine talked about opposing the administration by fighting in Congress, in the courts, in the streets, online, and at the ballot box.

Naturally, right-wing outlets decided to run with that quote, making sure to highlight him saying "in the streets," so as to make it sound like he was talking about actual physical violence rather than, you know, marches. <https://t.co/59mCecNKXr>

In 2018, there was this whole thing about "civility." A Virginia restaurant owner asked Sarah Sanders to leave because of her work in the Trump administration, and it set off a whole controversy.

That story made the rounds on right-wing and mainstream media, which unfortunately resulted in the restaurant owner becoming the target of a pro-Trump mob that would throw actual poop at her restaurant <https://t.co/hgB8AHo4mb>

(If you're unfamiliar with that story, here it is. <https://t.co/y2P38s8lmr>)

Days later, Maxine Waters was speaking to a group of people and basically encouraged them to do what that restaurant owner did should they see members of the Trump administration in public, pointing to the implemented family separation policy.

(What the restaurant owner did, what Waters encouraged, etc., that's something I think reasonable people can disagree on. However, it's clear that Waters wasn't calling for violence, and it's important to keep that separate. Still, that's a major right-wing example used.)

Dan Bongino went on Fox to clutch his pearls. <https://t.co/eOYAyifvIU>

Now, that's not at all to say that there isn't politically-motivated violence from people on the left. Hell, in 2017, a guy whose FB was filled with anti-Trump/anti-GOP content shot 5 people at a GOP baseball practice!

<https://t.co/J0SKny65Xw>

After that shooting, right-wing media jumped in to blame everyone from Snoop Dogg to Shakespeare for it.

<https://t.co/V33bnZWFeL>

Another example from 2017 that right-wing media tried to turn into an example of "Democrats call for violence" was the mangling of Loretta Lynch urging people to keep pushing forward even if times were tough. <https://t.co/7oHUP7YajS>

Going into the 2018 midterms, the GOP and right-wing media coalesced around a message of "Jobs Not Mobs." The idea was that Democrats were violent while the GOP would never do such a thing. <https://t.co/QN0jVexW1w>

Fox & Friends' election message: Dems are the party of the mob and antifa, Republicans are the party of jobs.

<pic.twitter.com/nwNPaN05PP>

— Matthew Gertz (@MattGertz) [October 15, 2018](#)

Fox even went so far as to pretend that a Proud Boys attack on protesters was "the mob" of the left attacking Republicans. Just the total polar opposite of reality. <https://t.co/P9ir9IEUIs>

Fox & Friends is ignoring the Proud Boys' violent attack on protesters Saturday following its leader's speech to a GOP group. Instead, the show is talking about left-wing incivility <pic.twitter.com/HaeRfoWJwP>

— Media Matters (@mmfa) [October 15, 2018](#)

The entire strategy going into those midterms was basically to try to scare their viewers into thinking that Democrats were trying to literally kill them. As [@MattGertz](#) wrote at the time: <https://t.co/OHVvd2miGI>

<https://t.co/eKwsKWrr3>

<https://t.co/5mrqgvZVnU>

That night, Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes volunteered the group to be "foot soldiers" for the Republican Party

<https://t.co/Pf94Bfy98W>

It should also be noted that the "Jobs Not Mobs" video that started that whole slogan in October 2018 originated on the ultra-violent r/The_Donald reddit page (which has since moved to its own site) <https://t.co/8n90WkphEN>

But the whole thing is all part of a larger strategy of accusing Democrats of inciting violence by pointing to statements and actions that absolutely do not incite violence.

Right-wing blogger and crusades-enthusiast Ryan Saavedra tried to pretend that Biden called for a "physical revolution" in 2019 (he didn't; he called for finding common ground, explicitly saying that he wasn't calling for a revolution)
<https://t.co/QN35wlumPx>

We all understand that simply using the word "fight" or "beat" or whatever... that's not necessarily a call for violence.

Anyone who says that "Well, Politician X said we have to fight for this bill clearly means physical violence!" is not a serious person.

And throughout Trump's entire time in office, that's been a common theme: pretending that the issue people have with something Trump said being a specific forbidden word being used rather than what he said in using it.

When Trump called a handful of places "shithole countries," the right-wing response was "Look, here's an example of someone else saying the word 'shit!'" which is very obviously not the problem people had with it. Same goes with the Access Hollywood tape.

It was good to see [@RepCicilline](#) explicitly lay this out during the first day of the trial. <https://t.co/HUdWqtRyaj>

In May 2020, ABC News was able to find 54 cases of people invoking Trump in connection to violence/treats/assaults
<https://t.co/UEeL0GUY6K>

Last month, Vox catalogued all the times Trump encouraged political violence. <https://t.co/pHP7JvXbDj>

The only surprise about January 6 was that it took this long for his violent mob of supporters to try to overthrow the government.

He's been doing this the whole time, and he's been praised for it. Here's Fox & Friends excitedly tweeting about Trump's "strong message" in 2016 <https://t.co/QWda6AGCWm>

"I'd like to punch him in the face." [@realDonaldTrump](#) sends strong message to protester at rally last night!
<https://t.co/hYBRI3IIHz>

— FOX & friends (@foxandfriends) [February 23, 2016](#)

I try to cover that and more in my piece published today. It's what you're likely to hear in Trump's defense:
<https://t.co/HUdWqtRyaj>