

Twitter Thread by [Seth Cotlar](#)



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Historian here, with a message for folks arguing against holding people accountable for the siege of the Capitol because "history will be the judge." We are in this mess, BECAUSE people in the past didn't hold their contemporaries accountable. Please don't repeat that mistake.

Nixon was forced out of office, but he was never held responsible for his egregious actions as President. You'll never guess what sort of precedent and example that set for the future President who most shared Nixon's moral turpitude.

<https://t.co/U5cNtBUvc7>

Trump channels Nixon's vengefulness and racism, but lacks his intelligence and experience. OMG, WE JUST ELECTED DUMB NIXON.

— Seth Cotlar (@SethCotlar) [November 9, 2016](#)

In the 1970s, many "mainstream" media outlets buckled to right wing pressure & lent their platforms to gut bucket racists like James Kilpatrick & Pat Buchanan, rebranding them as "conservatives." We continue to reap the consequences of normalizing racism. <https://t.co/029qQ9fXEp>

I'd forgotten that James J. Kilpatrick, one of Virginia's most staunch segregationists in the 1960s, had a regular gig on 60 Minutes in the 1970s playing the role of the "conservative" in their point/counterpoint segment. This one from 1978 is a trip. <https://t.co/8QwZam99aH>

— Seth Cotlar (@SethCotlar) [May 27, 2020](#)

Here's a thread on Pat Buchanan. In the early 90s Charles Krauthammer and Bill Buckley, staunch conservatives both, called Pat a "fascist" and an "antisemite." And yet he still got major media gigs for DECADES. <https://t.co/Vmj8wuOwf6>

Nuts that Pat Buchanan was a prominent mainstream media talking head in the 80's, 90's, and 00's even though he was considered too antisemitic and "fascistic" for even Charles Krauthammer or Bill Buckley. <https://t.co/HXIoF7gj9r>

— Seth Cotlar (@SethCotlar) [June 3, 2020](#)

Trump's career (and that of his family) is overstuffed with acts of white collar crime for which no one ever received more than a tiny fine as a slap on the wrist. Everyone one in NYC knew Trump was a morally bankrupt and corrupt crook. But somehow NBC still made him a star.

We had almost a century of Jim Crow from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 to the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts in 1964-5 because the nation did not hold white supremacists sufficiently accountable to the 14th Amendment.

AIDS activists who tried to hold the Reagan Administration accountable for its deadly, homophobic, inaction were called "divisive." MLK, Jr was called "divisive." Abolitionists were called "divisive." "Divisiveness" is what reactionaries call "accountability." Don't fall for it.

There's an important distinction between retribution or vengeance on one hand, and accountability on the other. Authoritarian regimes reap vengeance on their "enemies." Democracies hold citizens legally accountable for illegal actions.

Now Trump, and his authoritarian enablers, will try to tell you that there's no distinction between legal accountability and political vengeance. They will say any attempt to try Trump for crimes post January 20 "is just political retribution." Don't fall for it.

The way that a community shows that it truly believes in some important ideal is by holding accountable people who try to smash that ideal. If we believe that trying to violently steal an election by seeking to harm elected officials is wrong, then there must be consequences.

Otherwise, we can't say that as a nation we genuinely believe such things are wrong. In which case, they will just continue to happen. Because authoritarianism is an effective route to power, especially for groups that can't win over their fellow citizens with reasoned arguments.

One last detail to illustrate this point. The P**ud Buoy who were key in instigating the violence on Wednesday start every meeting with a reading from a 2001, fascist book by Pat Buchanan. Oftentimes, the past is prologue.

<https://t.co/sao6dCuONO>

Every time a public figure talks about the P**ud Buoy, they should note that the group conducts readings from Pat Buchanan's 2001 book, *The Death of the West*, at every meeting. That book is a white nationalist screed against immigrants. There is no finessing this.

— Seth Cotlar (@SethCotlar) [October 18, 2020](#)

Pat Buchanan had such a big platform because we gave it to him, even though the overwhelming majority of us (even conservatives) thought his ideas were a threat to our democracy. There was no reason to put him in jail. But we didn't have to put him on PBS and MSNBC!