Twitter Thread by Darren Samuelsohn



Darren Samuelsohn
@dsamuelsohn

NEW: After the violent and mostly White pro-Trump mob attacked the Capitol last week, Black & brown people had to clean up the mess. Several told @Politicsinsider they were well aware of the racial dynamics. By @elvina_nawaguna & @KaylaEpstein ($)

The Trump supporters who broke into the Capitol left behind shards of broken glass and ripped-apart furniture, blood, empty bottles, and even feces smeared on the walls.

The custodial staff cleaned up in places where people were bludgeoned & in one instance fatally shot, & where dozens of Capitol Police officers were wounded. "It felt bad. It's degrading," said a custodial employee in his 30s, who works for the Architect of the Capitol.

Several Capitol janitorial and labor employees — all of whom were Black or Latino — told Insider they no longer feel safe at their workplace, which is supposed to be one of the most secure in the country.

They recounted the hurt of cleaning up after white nationalists who could have threatened their lives, and they feared what's yet to come in the days leading to and on Inauguration Day.

"I was here on 9/11 & that was probably the most scared I've ever been in my 25 years here but this one is a step a notch on the scale," said a longtime Capitol staffer. "It's a little bit worse than 9/11 for me. It was a little more personal, in a sense."

That employee said he was dismayed at just how easily the attackers bypassed Capitol police & how police officers appeared to treat with kid gloves all the people he described as "the radicals." While he was hiding in the Capitol, his family members frantically called and texted.

"I'm a man of faith, so that helps me, you know," he said, but he remained concerned about what would have happened if the rioters "would confront me personally" and how he'd have responded.

"I'm going to tell it like this: if I were the Capitol Police, I wouldn't have a job the next day. If my life is in danger, then I'm going to do what I can to defend myself," the longtime Hill staffer said as he climbed the escalators near the Senate subway.

Another man who performs janitorial services told Insider he hid in a large room during the riots after his supervisor told him to seek shelter. "I was all by myself," he said. His mother gave him minute to minute updates by phone because "I didn't know what was going on."

A spokesperson for the Architect of the Capitol told Insider that the office has an "Employee Assistance Program", which is a "free, voluntary and confidential program that can assist AOC employees as they work through stress and personal or professional challenges.

Employees have access to a service that offers immediate, 24/7 telephonic access to confidential, in-the-moment counseling support delivered by qualified behavioral health professionals, no appointment necessary."

Some workers also expressed fears for their safety in the days surrounding Biden's inauguration as intel officials warn of other armed protests. "I do not want to work on inauguration, no I do not," a Hill employee said. "I honestly fear for my life. I've got 2 children at home."

"I hope nothing else happens because these people were talking about killing us, federal employees, killing police...I felt kind of disgusted," added another employee who said he'd worked at the Capitol for more than 28 years.

A 45-year-old janitorial employee who helped restore the Capitol the day after the attack said he was "used to" cleaning up after white supremacists at the Capitol even before the pro-Trump attackers ransacked the buildings.

"I'm used to it...the building we work in, you think they were the only ones here?" he said of the rioters. He clarified that he was referring to some of the lawmakers in the Capitol, and added that he prays for them.

Eye-opening read from @elvina_nawaguna & @KaylaEpstein after talking to the many people who do the hard work in the Capitol that keeps it running day and night. Here's how to subscribe to @businessinsider - https://t.co/aC5iwU4Ch6