Twitter Thread by Seth Abramson



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(THREAD) To understand the second impeachment of Donald Trump, we must understand the words that preceded and augmented his January 6 incitement of insurrection. This thread unpacks four key speeches—Don Jr., Giuliani, Mo Brooks, and Eric Trump. I hope you'll read on and RETWEET.



1/ If you haven't yet seen my analysis of Trump's January 6 "incitement to insurrection" speech, you can find it at the link below. This thread will look at four shorter—but deeply consequential—speeches just before Trump's, all by Trump allies or family. https://t.co/qdRpGXjFB4

> (THREAD) Media has yet to do a deep dive on precisely what Trump *said* in his January 6 speech in DC\u2014a speech now called an "incitement to insurrection," and the basis for an article of impeachment coming Monday. This

thread unpacks the speech. I hope you'll read on and RETWEET. pic.twitter.com/ba6eaNScNW

— Seth Abramson (@SethAbramson) January 9, 2021

2/ DONALD TRUMP JR.

Trump Jr.'s speech on January 6—which ended less than an hour before his father incited an insurrection—is one of the most inscrutable of the day, because its beginning includes some promisingly responsible rhetoric. Then it descends into madness and chaos.

3/ "I'm looking at the crowd here, and you did it all [congregate here] without burning down buildings! You did it without ripping down churches! Without looting! I didn't know that that was possible!" Within 2 hours of his speech, Don Jr.'s audience would be looting the Capitol.

4/ So obviously Don Jr.'s opening is ironic to a historic degree, but this isn't the first time we've heard this rhetoric from him. He habitually ignores right-wing violence because he knows that his chief rhetorical canard—which marries progressivism and violences—gets applause.

5/ For this reason, I don't know that we can take his next words as *specific to the occasion* so much as merely his standard, long-standing rhetorical sleight-of-hand: calling anything his father produces peaceful, and anything left-wing activists produce dangerous and unhinged.

6/ The latter part of his next riff is facially semi-responsible: "According to the media, when you have a large gathering of peaceful protestors, they're supposed to burn it all down! See, guys, *we* can do it right." He lies about media—but does say "peaceful" and"do it right."

7/ But he then says the "peaceful" gathering is a "message" to "Republicans who have not been willing to actually fight!" So which is it? Just as his father will use the word "peaceful" once but then ignore it, Don Jr. says "peaceful" once and then says "peace" equals "fighting."

8/ Don Jr. infamously wrote about the George Orwell novel 1984 after his dad was banned from Twitter; he didn't seem to know anything about the book. But his mantra—that being "peaceful" means "fighting" in extraordinary ways—would have made the villains of 1984 nod approvingly.

9/ He implies that this crowd—which he estimates at 100,000—will, unlike Republicans at the Capitol—do "something" to "fight" for Trump by "stop[ping] the steal" of the election. Milling about in "peaceful" fashion would be incongruous with the intent Trump attaches to the crowd.

10/ One could argue that Don Jr. is talking about peaceful protest, but how would that constitute "fighting" the "steal" in a way that "stops" it? It makes no sense unless something more than milling about blocks from the Capitol is what the Trumps anticipate happening right now.

11/ "This gathering should send a message to [Capitol Republicans]! This isn't their Republican Party anymore! This is *Donald Trump's* Republican Party!"

A few notes. First, understand that Donald Trump Jr. is *shouting* his entire speech—something very few other speakers did.

12/ Second is the obvious—there are fascist overtones here, as Trump Jr. is speaking of his father's ownership over a political party in acquisitive, possessive terms, not just metaphoric ones. Third is how much Don is setting the table for his father to issue *orders* later on.

13/ Remember that Donald Trump Sr. is just an hour away from inciting an insurrection, and here's his son *shouting* that his father owns the party now—the implication being that he is the Dear Leader whose least whims move the vast, chaotic network of the Republican Party cause.

14/ But fourth we must note what Jr. is really getting at here: the *way of doing things* the Republicans up at the Capitol have chosen (a peaceful transfer of power) is *over*.

And it has been replaced, Don Jr. thunders, by... well, whatever my father is about to ask you to do.

15/ Remember, nearly all the House/Senate Republicans Trump Jr. is attacking (1) supported his father's re-election, (2) supported his father's post-election lawsuits, and (3) supported his father's past and present political rhetoric and agenda. So what's the radical break here?

16/ In other words, the only way Trump Jr.'s words make sense is if the mob he's shouting at is going to make a *radical break* with the decisions being made by House and Senate Republicans—none of whom support Biden politically—on that very day of insurrection, January 6, 2021.

17/ No one could possibly think a "radical break" would be achieved by... milling about DC a few blocks from the Capitol waving flags. That wouldn't "stop the steal" and it wouldn't be fundamentally different from the passive objection to Biden's ascension the GOP already offers.

18/ But don't worry, Don is about to make things explicit.

"This is the Republican Party that will fight....this is the Republican Party that's not just going to roll over and die because the Democrats would like you to!"

He's asking for the mob to do the *bold and unexpected*.

19/ Don Jr. gives the recent Georgia elections—November (Trump lost) and January (two GOP senate candidates lost)—as an example of what the mob *cannot* do.

You have to really follow Trump Jr. closely here to see what he does with his rhetoric about Georgia. Here's what he says:

20/ {mimicking—via a "dumb-sounding" voice—the weak Republicans the mob must be unlike}:

"Well, I don't like the way the game is played, so let's take our ball and go home."

The idea is that the *new* GOP—Trump's—(a) shows up [at the Capitol] and thereby (b) *changes the game*.

21/ Trump Jr. is telling a mob of 100,000 people that a "game" is being played a certain way up at the Capitol they're about to march to, and that they must go there (instead of "going home") and *not play the game the way it is being played*. What would that look like, exactly?

22/ Well, we know one thing: it's something that must upset Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi profoundly, as Don Jr. tells the mob that playing the game legally—via certification of Biden's win—is "music to Chuck Schumer's ears" and "music to Nancy Pelosi's ears." But there's more.

23/ Just as we can draw a straight line between the president's later speech and insurrectionists chanting "Hang Mike Pence!" and literally *hunting* Pence in the Capitol, remember that the other person the seditionists *hunted* when they got to the Capitol was the House Speaker.

24/ So Don is telling a mob—one he knows is about to march to a building Nancy Pelosi is inside—that it must change the game in a dramatic way that "fights," "stops" what's happening at the Capitol, and profoundly *upsets* Nancy Pelosi.

And so they do. With a clear focus on her.