

THE DAYS AFTER THE ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL



SECONDARY 7-12 SOCIAL STUDIES RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resources from [Dr. Alyssa Hadley-Dunn](#), Associate Professor of Teacher Education at Michigan State University and founder of [Teaching on the Days After: Dialogue & Resources for Educating Toward Justice](#)

Black teachers: I hope that you have time and space to care for yourselves, as you support your students. I hope that you have white colleagues who are talking about this, too, so you do not have to be the only one. I hope that you can find co-conspirators in your schools (or here).

White teachers of white students: You HAVE to talk about what is happening. This is on us, every time and all the time. We cannot pretend to be surprised anymore. We have to do what we said we were going to do all summer when we were reading those anti-racist books and completing those anti-racism checklists. Our white students are not ‘too young’ to learn about this.

White teachers of students of color, especially Black students: Please make sure you know what you are doing before you do it. Please make sure you know how to support your Black students and other students of color if you try to have these conversations. Make sure you do not do more harm by entering into these conversations without careful thought and planning. Ideas/resources/links in comments on Facebook will be updated throughout the evening on our educator’s group: [Teaching on Days After: Dialogue & Resources for Educating Toward Justice..](#)

NAMING THE TRUTH: Think about the language that the media is using, especially when this first started happening. What does this language mean? What does it reveal and what does it obscure? (Hint: Racism.) For example: “protestors” versus “terrorists,” “protest” versus “attack” or “coup.”

ANALYZING IMAGES: There are many images being shared, including some of the Confederate flag in the Capitol building, of someone stealing a Podium, people hanging from the Capitol walls. What do these images tell us? What do they (attempt to) obscure? (Hint: Racism.)

WRITING: If you have students who might better process their thoughts through writing and/or you want to use writing as an intro activity, here are some potential prompts: What do you think happened yesterday? What do you know? What questions do you have? How would you like to process this as a community? If you are doing this virtually, you could have students work in individual or shared Google docs or other apps.

COMPARING A POLICE RESPONSE: There are many Tweets and stories that are being shared that compare images of response to BLM protests and today’s terrorist action. You could use these images to ask students to compare what they think is happening and why it is happening. (Hint: Racism, white supremacy, white rage)

PUSH BACK AGAINST NEUTRALITY: Remember that it will do more harm to teach “both sides.” This is not about both sides. This is about justice. This is a quotation from Tayari Jones that I like to use as a way to think about the “two sides” debate: “The middle is a point equidistant from two poles. That’s it. There is nothing inherently virtuous about being neither here nor there. Buried in this is a false equivalency of ideas, what you might call the “good people on both sides” phenomenon. When we revisit our shameful past, ask yourself, Where was the middle? Rather than chattel slavery, perhaps we could agree on a nice program of indentured servitude? Instead of subjecting Japanese-American citizens to indefinite detention during WWII, what if we had agreed to give them actual sentences and perhaps provided a receipt for them to reclaim their things when they were released? What is halfway between moral and immoral?”

–Tayari Jones, from “[There’s nothing virtuous about finding common ground](#)”, Time Magazine, 2018

ESTABLISH DIALOGUE NORMS: Check out [slides 26-28](#) in this presentation I do about “teaching on days after.” These are some examples of dialogue norms you could discuss and use with your students.

LEARN AND PRACTICE INTERRUPTOR PHRASES: I don’t actually think the classroom SHOULD be safe for all viewpoints. I am not going to debate another person’s right to exist. I am not going to debate another person’s humanity. These phrases can support strategies for harm reduction even if the absence of a completely “safe” space. [Check out slide 31 here for some interruptor phrases](#) to use if you need them:

ENGAGE IN A PEDAGOGY OF POLITICAL TRAUMA: If you are teaching Black students or other students of color, it will be especially important to find multiple ways to support them in this moment. [Check out slides 18-23 in this presentation](#) for descriptions of what teachers have done in moments of political trauma. Some of this was in response to the 2016 election, research done with colleagues Hannah Carson Baggett and Beth Sondel and some is research done for the book that I’m writing right now on all types of days after.

NOTICE AND WONDER: Two great questions to get students thinking/talking (at any age, any grade level, any content) is to start with: What do you notice? What do you wonder? For example, using two paired texts of photos, one of police on the Capitol steps during the summer’s BLM protests compared to a photo of terrorist in Nancy Pelosi’s office, unguarded... What do you notice about each photo? What do you wonder?

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

REMEMBER THIS IS NOT A SURPRISE: White teachers, do not be the teachers/people who are “surprised” by what is happening. Do not let your students be the students/people who are surprised by what is happening. Contextualize this within a historical lens of whiteness, white supremacy, settler colonialism... A great book to think through extended plans for historically and culturally relevant critical teaching is [Dr. Gholdy Muhammad’s Cultivating Genius](#). It is not just for literacy teachers!

EXPLORE TRUE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE: Despite what some are saying, what we are seeing at the Capitol is not “civil disobedience.” Here are some [lessons from Teaching Tolerance about ACTUAL civil disobedience](#).

CONSIDER/SHARE MEDIA FROM OUTSIDE THE U.S.: Think about how other countries’ media are covering these events. Find [headlines and translations from major newspapers](#) and consider what it means that the coverage is so different (as it will likely be).

Teaching Ideas from Dr. Alan Singer:

Discuss: What happened? Why did it happen? How should the government and the American people respond? do? Start with a video clip (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txh_cfzI-0M) and some photographs and a short reading (one paragraph) from a news source. Organize a class talk around so that every student has a chance to speak.

Aim: How should Americans respond to an assault on the country’s democratic institutions?

Do Now: “Pence and lawmakers evacuated s mobs storms the Capitol, halting Congress’s counting of electoral votes,” **Source:** *New York Times*.

“A mob of people loyal to President Trump stormed the Capitol on Wednesday, halting Congress’s counting of the electoral votes to confirm President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s victory as the police evacuated lawmakers from the building in a scene of violence, chaos and disruption that shook the core of American democracy. Around 2:15 p.m., as the House and Senate debated a move by a faction of Republicans to overturn the election results, security rushed Vice President Mike Pence out of the Senate chamber and the Capitol building was placed on lockdown after angry pro-Trump demonstrators surged past barricades and law enforcement toward the legislative chambers.”

Questions

1. What happened in Washington DC on Wednesday morning?
2. Why was the Capitol build placed on lockdown?
3. What is your reaction to the photograph and news story?
4. In your opinion, were the events in Washington DC a threat to democracy in the United States? Why?

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Motivation/Discussion: Americans are guaranteed basic rights by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” In your opinion, were the protests yesterday and the conduct of the protesters legitimate expressions of Constitutional rights? Explain.

Timeline Activity: Working in teams, examine the timeline of events. In your opinion, who is responsible for what happened? What could have been done differently to protect the democratic process?

Source: *Washington Post*

6:43 AM: Far-right online forums refer to potential violence and urge supporters of President Trump to bring guns to protests in Washington DC when Congress meets to certify the election of Joseph Biden as the 46th President of the United States.

7:19 AM: The city of Washington DC announces street closings. Permit applications with the National Park Service indicate that thousands of President Trump’s supporters are expected in the city to support his claims of fraud in the presidential election.

8:36 AM: D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser requests the National Guardsmen deploy in the nation’s capital in advance of Wednesday’s protests. Pentagon officials announce the Guard wouldn’t carry firearms, use armored vehicles, or helicopters.

8:59 AM: Thousands of Trump supporters wearing MAGA hats and camouflage gear gather on the National Mall. Members of the National Guard, U.S. Secret Service and D.C. police were walking through the area.

10:43 AM: Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump call on members of Congress to reject electoral votes that would confirm their father lost his bid for a second term in office. “To all the Republicans who have not been willing to actually fight, the people who did nothing to stop the steal, this gathering should send a message to them. This isn’t their Republican Party anymore. This is Donald Trump’s Republican Party.”

10:49: Several hundred Trump supporters gathered outside the Capitol Building. The vast majority of the protesters were White, and most were not wearing masks. People posed for photos with Trump 2020 flags and chanted, “stop the steal.”

11:05 AM: DC police announce that they arrested ten pro-Trump protesters, several for firearms offenses.

12:23 PM: President Trump tells a rally in front of the White House, “We will never give up. We will never concede. It doesn’t happen. You don’t concede when there’s theft involved”

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

1:41 PM: Crowd marches from the White House to the Capitol Building chanting "Fight for Trump!"

2:15 PM: Congress meets to count 2020 Electoral College votes. A group toppled barricades and stormed through a grassy field leading to the Capitol Building. Capitol police could not hold back the tide as hundreds of protesters kicked aside the barricades.

2: 29 PM: The Senate stops its proceedings. The House doors are closed and barricaded. U.S. Capitol Police announce no entry or exit is permitted in buildings within the Capitol Complex. Hundreds of protesters sing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

2:37 PM: Washington DC Mayor announces a 6 PM curfew. President Trump tweets that protestors should remain peaceful. Ivanka Trump calls on "American Patriots" to respect law enforcement.

3:15 PM: Rioters use ropes and makeshift ladders to reach the north side of the Capitol. Dozens of rioters scale a wall and climb up scaffolding and stairs set up in preparation for Joseph Biden's inauguration.

3:22 PM: Pro-Trump supporters enter the Senate chamber and Congressional offices. Police use tear gas.

3:36 PM: Law enforcement uses batons against demonstrators who swing flagpoles. Both sides use pepper spray. Trump supporters call police "traitors." D.C. National Guard will be activated.

4:01 PM: Trump supporters start to flee the Capitol area.

4:17 PM: On national television, President-elect Joe Biden called on President Trump to "go on national television now to fulfill his oath and defend the Constitution and demand an end to this siege." On Twitter, President Trump repeats "This was a fraudulent election," but "We have to have peace. So go home, we love you, you're very special."

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Activity: Working in teams, read and discuss the quotes from different government officials. Which quote has the most meaning for you? Why? In your opinion, what should Congress do in response to the events on January 6?

“We will never give up. We will never concede. It doesn’t happen. You don’t concede when there’s theft involved. We won this election, and we won it by a landslide. This was not a close election.” – President Donald Trump, speaking at a rally in front of the White House, Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 12:23 PM

“The voters, the courts and the states have all spoken. If we overrule them all, it would damage our republic forever . . . If this election were overturned by mere allegations from the losing side, our democracy would enter a death spiral.” – Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican from Kentucky and Senate majority leader

“Just evacuated my office in Cannon due to a nearby threat. Now we’re seeing protesters assaulting Capitol Police. This is wrong. This is not who we are. I’m heartbroken for our nation today.” – Representative Nancy Mace, Republican from South Carolina

“This is what the president has caused today, this insurrection.” –Senator Mitt Romney, Republican of Utah

“Protesters have a Constitutionally-protected right to be heard, but I urge them to remain peaceful. – Kevin McCarthy, Republican from California and Republican leader in the House of Representatives

“This is a coup attempt.” – Representative Adam Kinzinger, Republican of Illinois.

“This is not dissent. It’s disorder. It’s chaos. It borders on sedition, and it must end now. I call on this mob to pull back and allow the work of democracy to go forward . . . I call on President Trump to go on national television now to fulfill his oath and defend the Constitution and demand an end to this siege . . . At this hour our democracy is under unprecedented assault . . . Today is a reminder, a painful one, that democracy is fragile.” – President-elect Joseph Biden on National television

“I am asking for everyone at the U.S. Capitol to remain peaceful. No violence! Remember, WE are the Party of Law & Order — respect the Law and our great men and women in Blue . . . We had an election that was stolen from us, it was a landside election, and everyone knows it, especially the other side, but you have to go home now. We have to have peace. We have to have law and order . . . This was a fraudulent election, but we can’t play into the hands of these people . . . Go home in peace.” – President Donald Trump on Twitter

Activity: Full class talk around about the events in Washington DC focusing on the aim question: How should Americans respond to an assault on the country’s democratic institutions? Everyone will have two minutes to speak without interruption. After everyone who wants to has spoken, students will have an opportunity to respond. The rules are we must listen to and respect each other. If democracy in the United States is being threatened, we have to model that it is possible to have an open and honest exchange of ideas.

Exit Ticket and Summary discussion: In your opinion, how should Americans respond to an assault on the country’s democratic institutions?

Other Resources:

[The Clearing Protocol: To use for discussions like these events](#)

[What's Going On in This Picture?](#) Intriguing Times images stripped of their captions -- and an invitation to students to discuss them live.

[News Compare: Get the real story and filter the spin with side-by-side comparison of the news](#)

[Resources from Teachers across the nation: #sschat](#)

[Take this in: Never once, in the years 1860-1865, was this flag ever paraded in the halls of the American capitol.](#)

[Peaceful Transfer of Power \(Infographic\)](#)

[Nearpod Lesson](#)

[Classroom resource: Three ways to teach the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol](#)