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USA

Capitol: “He is guilty” said 57 Senators, but Trump walks

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The Senate voted 57 to 43 to find former president Donald J. Trump guilty of incitement of the insurrection at the Capitol building January 6. The vote, however, was not enough to convict Trump of his crime. The Constitution states that a two-third Senate majority is required to convict.

Forty-three Republican Senators voted to acquit based on the false claim that the Senate trial was unconstitutional, though no one defended Trump’s actions leading up to and during the January 6 insurrection.

Trump escaped conviction and disqualification from future office.

In a statement after the verdict, Trump said his “beautiful movement” would be stronger than ever.

The persuasive Impeachment presentation by House members chosen for the job proved that Trump was guilty of the organization over months of what culminated on January 6.

Five people died including a Capitol policeman, and many members of Congress narrowly escaped physical harm or death.

It was Trump’s second “acquittal” in one year. He is the only president to lose the popular vote twice, to be impeached by the House twice, and survive two Senate trials.

Trump’ defense lawyer’s main argument was that the Democrats had a deep “hatred” of Trump, who had a right of “free speech” when he led the march to and attack on the Capitol building.

But video evidence showed Trump cheering on the mob during the violent riot inside the building, not merely exercising his right of “free speech.”

The cynicism of the Republicans afterwards was on full display. Mitch McConnell, the minority leader of the Senate who voted to “acquit,” said Trump was “practically and morally” guilty for the January 6 insurrection but because he is a private citizen, he should not be convicted.

McConnell himself as the then Majority leader of the Senate prevented the Senate from beginning the trial while Trump was still president.

At the end, both the Republican and the Democratic leaders agreed to get the trial over with quickly, for their own reasons.

The Establishment Democrats wanted January 6 put behind them, to “get on” with compromising with Republicans in Congress to “get things done.”

Trump’s lawyers wanted to get the evidence over with.

The Democrats’ House managers at the trial took less than a week to present their case. They called not a single

witness.

An alternative

Consumer advocate and former two-time Green Party presidential candidate, Ralph Nader, in an interview on Democracy Now during the trial observed:

"This is not a criminal proceeding; it's a civil proceeding controlled completely by the U.S. Senate. The Supreme Court ruled in Nixon versus the U.S. years ago that the judiciary has no role whatsoever, There's no appeal. There's no protracted delays. It's all up to the Senate and the Senate rules, number one.

Number two, the purpose of this impeachment effort is prophylactic. It is designed not just to hold Trump accountable under the Constitution, but to prevent future wannabe Trumps from behaving in the same way. Therefore, the only really result of a guilty verdict would be disqualifying Trump from running for federal office anymore....

[Without witnesses], what the Republicans will do is simply say, "This is a video show trial. A lot of the material was taken out of context. And the protagonists were entirely Democratic partisans, members of the House Democratic Party." If you have witnesses, you have the potential of breakthrough testimony. Mike Pence, for example. Jay Rosen, for example. Brad Raffensperger. They might be required to testify about far deeper crimes than simply a telephone call to the Justice Department by Trump or to the Georgia Secretary of State twisting their elbows to try to change the course or the count of the election...."

The presentation of Trump's defense lawyers lasted a little more than three hours, less than a quarter of the time that Trump's lawyers were allotted. They did not even take up the concrete allegations in the impeachment charges. Instead they tried to say that anti-racists and Democrats used the same language Trump used on January 6.

They played so many clips of Representative Maxine Waters, a prominent Black Democrat of California, delivering fiery speeches, that one might have thought that she was on trial.

No surprise there as the Republicans whip up anti-Black racism by stoking white fears of "uppity" Blacks.

Trump's legal argument was also laced with racism and falsehoods. His lawyers blamed "radical" Democrats, Black activists and antifa (antifascists) for what happened.

Anti-Black policies and rhetoric has been the staple of the Trump government and the right-wing media. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was vilified while white supremacist groups were given a pass in such media and outright embraced by Trump.

The BLM mass actions protesting cop violence last year, which were led by Blacks but were joined by many young whites, were attacked by armed, militarized police and troops of federal departments, such as the Border Patrol, answering only to the president.

The BLM leaders have repeatedly pointed out the hypocrisy of U.S. "democracy" and dual legal systems—one for whites, one for Blacks and other oppressed people.

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When the rioters on January 6 were finally escorted out of the Capitol, they were treated with kid gloves and no arrests were made and even their names were not recorded. Subsequent arrests of some of the insurrectionists are based on minor charges.

The Democrats response to the slander and lies about the BLM at the Senate trial was to call it a distraction and diversion from the real issue of Trump’s actions.

The Democrats did not put white supremacy on trial in the Senate even though violent white supremacists were those who attacked the Capitol, and were organized and led by the openly white supremacist President Trump.

They couldn’t do this because they themselves have stoked white supremacy, although not as blatantly as they did for eight decades of their support to the Jim Crow system in the South, and not as blatantly as Trump.

They use “dog whistles” and code words, and led the charge of criminalizing Blacks in the 1980s and ‘90s that led to them and Latinos being funneled into the system of mass incarceration underlying the “New Jim Crow”.

White supremacy is the ideology the whole ruling class and its politicians have used to justify the oppression of Blacks for the last four centuries.

The Democrats couldn’t put that on trial.

Why did the establishment Republicans remain loyal to Trump? They recognize that Trump has some 70-80 percent of voting Republicans in his base. Many in his base have even threatened violence against elected Republicans who voted against Trump in the House of Representatives and Senate, and state offices.

Since the trial, Republicans who voted to impeach Trump in the House or to convict him in the Senate, have been censured by Republican machines in the states they represent.

The mob leaders in ultra white nationalist fascist groups like the Proud Boys, Three Percenters, Boogaloo Bois and Oath Keepers who don’t agree on many topics are all followers of Trump. They admit they went to Washington D.C. with weapons to support Trump and attack the capital under his orders.

These fascist groups represent tens of thousands, while Trump’s supporters number in the tens of millions. But they are tolerated by most among his supporters as part of their movement.

Trump has openly supported these groups, and as January 6 demonstrated, he can mobilize them to commit violence when and if he deems it necessary.

The dilemma facing elected Republicans and Democrats going forward is the cloud of Trump is above their heads. Both ruling class parties seek to protect the idea of the “presidency” while not admitting the reality of how much power the presidency has acquired over time.

Trump established in practice that the Executive branch has all the power, and he could do what he wanted in foreign and domestic affairs without personal consequences.

What next

Trump could face criminal charges in New York, Georgia and Washington, D.C. He faces a rape charge in a civil

case in New York City.

Trump is not interested in democracy. He is an authoritarian in the Bonapartist mold. He wants to be president for life. That's why to this day he refuses to recognize the Biden win and presidency. He still refers to himself as the president.

Who says he will not be a candidate again? And take his acquittal as proof he should act before the election takes place to “stop the steal”?

Or, he may be thinking of a Trump dynasty. A key Republican leader, Senator Lindsey Graham, has endorsed Lara Trump's announcement she is considering running for Senator from North Carolina in 2022.

The seat she would run for is that of Senator Burr, who will not run again. Burr was one the the senators who voted to convict Trump, which riled up Trump's base in the state.

As of now, the Republican Party remains Trump's party. There are new fissures in the party, as exemplified by Republican's in the House voting to impeach, and Senators to convict.

McConnell's comments that Trump was guilty of organizing and inciting the insurrection is another indication.

But Republicans know they cannot win elections without Trump's base. How this conflict will play out remains to be seen.

Establishment Democrats are not ready to fight Trump or his far-right base. They look to win “moderate” Republicans, not more progressive supporters.

Biden seeks to accommodate the conservatives and move on to “normal” partisan debates.

As leaders of African Americans, immigrants and indigenous people know from history that arguments of false equivalency between white supremacists and fighters for equal rights will be used to attack uprisings by Black and Brown and Native American people.

The progressive movement and socialist left must mobilize against white racism, defend Black and Brown communities and actively oppose the imperialist foreign policy of Republicans and Democrats.

A mass response is the only way to stop neo fascist ultra-nationalist forces. It is never by elections.

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