

DIGITAL NEWS COVERAGE AND “DOMESTIC TERRORISM” RHETORIC:  
A HISTORICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RACIALIZED SURVEILLANCE AND  
POLICY

By

REBECCA LYNN DENYER, B.A.

Supervisor: Dr. Lyndsey Beutin

A Major Research Paper/Project

Submitted to the Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

in Communication and New Media

McMaster University

© Copyright by Rebecca Lynn Denyer, August 2021

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THEORETICAL POSITIONING	4
METHODOLOGY	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
THE CAPITOL INSURRECTION & TERMINOLOGY	11
THE DEVELOPMENT OF “DOMESTIC TERRORISM” AS A TERM & POLICY IN AMERICAN HISTORY	15
TWITTER NEWS: THE CAPITOL & “DOMESTIC TERRORISM”	29
CONCLUSION	48
REFERENCES	50

## INTRODUCTION

On January 6<sup>th</sup> 2021, supporters of US President Trump stormed the United States Capitol in order to oppose the official certification of Joe Biden's win. The throng of insurrectionists represented far-right, anti-government and white nationalist militias. In the ensuing chaos, fights broke out between Trump supporters and Capital Police guards as the Trump supporters stormed the building, leaving multiple casualties as a consequence. The violence that happened throughout the day was done with a clear intention: to undermine the transition of power as mandated through the election. In the immediate aftermath of the events, a public debate unfolded within the media over how to refer to the events. Was it a riot, an insurrection, domestic terrorism, or something else? Many liberal commentators and politicians chose the term "domestic terrorism" for political reasons. The term was evoked to acknowledge the levels of organized violence and property destruction and to highlight the neo-Nazi, white supremacist iconography during the insurrection. Its usage, though, raises important questions about the term's connection to histories of racialized surveillance (Clarke, 2021; Kornfield, 2021; Haberman, 2021). Prior to the 2021 Capitol insurrection, scholars in the fields of communication studies and political science had examined the ways that Black-led social movements have been the target of militarized surveillance technology that had emerged from "domestic terrorism" security policies (Greenberg, 2011; Saito, 2008; Joseph, 2006; Taylor, 2016). Online media coverage and discussions surrounding the Capitol insurrection present an

important and timely case study into how the discourse of “domestic terrorism” – and subsequent policy responses – construct who and what constitutes a terrorist threat, when, and to whom.

The terms “terrorism” and “domestic terrorism” have a long history of use by the United States government and law enforcement as the foundational part of their foreign and domestic surveillance policies and data collection initiatives. This has included FBI investigations into both Black freedom movements and the KKK that started during the 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s to 1990s (Greenberg, 2011; Joseph, 2006). These investigations have included an increase in the department’s security budget due to the rise in government concern over “terrorism” violence (Greenberg, 2011). This history behind “domestic terrorism” is important to unpack as it highlights the ways that the making of the terrorist figure is not solely a modern phenomenon, but rather it is a continuation of decades of racialized surveillance and expanded security policies. More recently, the conception of the “Arab terrorist” and the “Black Identity Extremist” that emerged from post-9/11 discourse and Black Lives Matter protests represents the separation between the figures of the foreign and the domestic racialized terrorist that is contingent upon who is considered to be an American citizen and who is not. These conversations surrounding domestic terrorism continue to be reflected within digital news coverage of events.

This has historically led to the creation of surveillance security policies and the expansion of police funding for militarized surveillance technology. The

expansion of federal and local surveillance initiatives has historically targeted racialized communities and has resulted in the increased use of new technologies and strategies such as facial recognition technology, data collection and the scanning of social media activity (Levin, 2018; Levin, 2018; German, 2020; Leslie, 2020). With this in mind, the events of the Capitol insurrection have raised concerns about whether the term “domestic terrorism” should be used to label white nationalist violence. On the one hand, its use is a response to social movement activists who have denounced the fact that terrorism is only applied to non-whites (Corbin, 2017; Allam, 2020). By naming white nationalist violence “domestic terrorism”, press and social commentators recast terrorist violence as white. On the other hand, naming the Capitol insurrection “domestic terrorism” was critiqued by social movement activists for how it connects to histories of racialized surveillance that emerge from expanded domestic terrorism security policies (Zerkel, 2021, ACLU, 2021). By unpacking the historical basis of the term – from COINTELPRO through to post-9/11 policies – we can better understand how liberal uses of “domestic terrorism”, while well intended, have the potential to cause further state surveillance of Black and brown Americans.

This paper examines how the use of the term “domestic terrorism” by liberal media outlets and politicians during coverage of the Capitol insurrection attempted to identify the problem of white supremacy, but ultimately failed to adequately address the problem. I offer a historical analysis of how U.S. policy has used the term “domestic terrorism” from the Cold War to the present. I argue that while well

intended, the use of the term in the context of the Capitol insurrection operates as a continuation of, not a departure from, those discourses. I conclude by tracking how the language of “domestic terrorism” has already begun to lead to the expansion of surveillance policies. By situating this research within Charles Mills’s approach to understanding white supremacy as a political system, I ultimately demonstrate that surveillance policies which emerge from domestic terrorism security initiatives result in the continued targeting of Black and brown Americans regardless of whether the program’s initial desire was to stop the violence of far-right groups. In so doing, my paper also contributes to insights into how white supremacy is embedded within institutional structures and results in the expansion of racialized surveillance within domestic terrorism security policies.

### **THEORETICAL POSITIONING**

This research project builds upon literature from political science, Black surveillance studies, and communication studies through Charles Mills to emphasize that the political system of white supremacy is at the root of concerns over surveillance. Mills emphasizes that institutionalized white supremacy does not emerge in the post-9/11 era, but instead comes from histories of anti-Blackness rooted in slavery (Mills, 1997, Browne, 2015). The surveillance and policing of racialized communities traces back to European conquest that, as Mills argues, has resulted in the institutionalized white supremacy that contributes to the “racialized distributions of economic, political, and cultural power that we have

today” (Mills, 1997, p. 98). Structural white supremacy is ingrained within political institutions and is reflected through policy and legislative decisions. These measures result in racialized violence and discrimination through tactics such as surveillance initiatives and militarized law enforcement technology. Understanding this allows us to recognize how this is separate from explicit white supremacy that was witnessed on an individual level by white nationalists during the Capitol insurrection. While white supremacy operates socially, the political system of white supremacy is also embedded within American institutions. Structures of racialized control are part of this political system. Simone Browne makes the racial histories of surveillance explicit. She demonstrates that surveillance traces back to the transatlantic slave trade and that modern surveillance practices engage in the same structures of power and control that emerged from plantation surveillance and data collection are reproduced today within state racialized surveillance practices (Browne, 2015). Drawing on Mills and Browne allows us to understand that the development of racialized surveillance policies, which as I will show have been justified through recourse to preventing “domestic terrorism”, is an institutional problem that has continued to be replicated even if in different forms under political and discursive shifts. This project deconstructs how discourse surrounding domestic terrorism engages with the institutionalized problem of racialized surveillance that is reproduced within terrorism policy responses. In understanding how white supremacy is rooted in histories of slavery, state control and security responses, we can better understand how the term “domestic

terrorism” and the subsequent legislation results in further racialized surveillance that targets Black and brown Americans while failing to address the concern of far-right and white supremacist violence.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This project conducts a rhetorical and historical analysis of the term “domestic terrorism” within U.S. policy and online public discourse. From January to July 2021, I conducted online research by compiling tweets from five news outlets (and their associated journalists): CNN, The New York Times, MSNBC, The Washington Post, and Fox News. I analyzed tweets by examining the language and the connotations of the text in order to ascertain if, and in what ways, news framing promoted increased surveillance policies. I also collected media coverage of the Biden administration, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security’s proposed “domestic terrorism” policies. In addition to analyzing contemporary news coverage, I conducted secondary research into how racialized surveillance comes from the use of the term “domestic terrorism” within American security policy starting at the Cold War and moving into the post-9/11 surveillance era.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This project situates itself within the fields of surveillance studies, cultural studies, and critical terrorism and security studies to examine how surveillance policy and security discourse intersect within American domestic terrorism policy



and language. These fields provide an intersectional understanding into why and how the use of the term “domestic terrorism” in coverage of the Capitol insurrection emerges from the use of surveillance and state violence against Black and brown Americans as a result from the political structure of institutionalized white supremacy. This complicates the use of the term “domestic terrorism” when describing the severity of far-right violence due to the ways that terrorism discourse has historically participated in the expansion of surveillance policies which have disproportionately targeted racialized communities. Furthermore, acknowledging how language is constructed and dictated by news organizations is notable considering that historically, what gets printed on the page is influenced by who creates it (Alamo-Pastrana & Hoynes, 2020). As we know, the journalism industry has long been racialized and the association of “mainstream” media as being white-run media impacts how stories are told and deemed as accredited sources (Alamo-Pastrana & Hoynes, 2020). While this is notable, my research focuses on the policy development and historical analysis component that influences this media framing.

Situating this analysis in the field of surveillance studies provides a critical examination into the ways that the use of technology by the US government and law enforcement reinforces the construction of the racialized terrorist figure. This examination expands upon literature in the field of surveillance studies that historicizes the problem. By understanding how the field of surveillance studies critiques state surveillance through deconstructing systems of power and control,

we can then analyze how this is expanded upon within cultural studies which outlines how these power divisions work to benefit some groups while leading to injustice towards others (Ryan, 2010, p. xii). This critique is explored within scholar Bigo's theory of the "banopticon" that specifically examines the ways that security and surveillance technology used by government participates in profiling classes of citizens considered threats to institutions (Bigo, 2006).

Simone Browne explores the theory of the "banopticon" as a way to outline how government control and power remains at the center of the history of surveillance tactics (Browne, 2015). She argues that the targeting of racialized communities is a result of long histories of white supremacy that trace back to the transatlantic slave trade (Browne, 2015). For Browne, understanding how racialized surveillance has always operated through the use of security technologies since the 1600s is crucial for examining the links between race, surveillance and history that continues to reproduce (Browne, 2015, p. 31-32). She argues that the surveillance technologies and tactics that were developed during slavery – such as advertisements for escaped slaves, plantation surveillance and government data collection – represent the beginning of racialized surveillance. Browne shows us that "the historical formation of surveillance is not outside of the historical formation of slavery" (Browne, 2015, p. 50). Browne's research outlines how the surveillance of Blackness within modern United States federal security surveillance is not merely a post-9/11 reality but is instead "part of a long history of the collection of intelligence on the many black radicals, artists, activists, and

intellectuals who were targeted for surveillance by the FBI” (Browne, 2015, p. 2; Browne, 2015, p. 93). This historical understanding of how state power and control intersect with histories of institutionalized white supremacy and surveillance is important when providing a historical analysis that examines how racialized surveillance and “domestic terrorism” policies all emerge from institutions that have been using technology and language to hold onto power while increasing violence and injustice on racialized communities.

Furthermore, scholars from the fields of critical terrorism and security studies have outlined how the history of surveillance and state control is embedded in the way that the term “terrorism” exists with political, historical and racial contexts. Mamdani argues that this social and institutional aspect contributes to the consolidation of state power through the construction of the foreign enemy that seeks to threaten the democratic values of the United States (Mamdani, 2002). This analysis is crucial for understanding how the reinforcement of the “Arab terrorist” within news media coverage of violent attacks participates in what scholar Kumar calls “terrorcraft”, which refers to how “terrorism” discursively becomes a racialized threat and is reinforced through the violence and surveillance of the state (Kumar, 2020). Kumar emphasizes that the construction of the racialized terrorist is a historical process that revolves around the United States’ reliance on state security and increased militarization (Kumar, 2020). This history pre-dates the FBI’s initiatives during the 1960s and is used to identify the foreign “terrorist” as the main threat to the democratic institutions of the United States (Kumar, 2020).

Kumar emphasizes how this is rooted in the desire to “restore and reproduce empire” and has become a foundational factor in the development of the “Arab terrorist” figure that is reinforced socially through stereotyping, racial profiling and news media coverage (Kumar, 2020, p. 36). Scholars like Barkun expand upon the research within American terrorism and security studies by emphasizing the ways that discourse surrounding United States security within media and broader society plays on the “imagery of the landscape of fear” where the creation of an invisible yet racialized Other within post-9/11 news media reinforces how policymakers reproduce mainstream discourse within security legislation (Barkun, 2011, p. 79-80). Barkun’s emphasis on the media’s connection to “domestic terrorism” policy development provides a crucial opportunity to examine how digital media coverage of violent events, and subsequent federal and local law enforcement responses, further the targeting and surveillance of Black-led social movements and reinforce anti-Muslim hate.

The influence of “domestic terrorism” discourse on United States security initiatives has historical roots in the expansion of modern surveillance and the racial profiling of Black and brown Americans that has continued since the 1960s (Joseph, 2006; Taylor, 2016; Saito, 2008; Kumar, 2020). These legislative measures, whether that be the Patriot Act, COINTELPRO or the 2017 “Black Identity Extremism” taskforce, have resulted in increased racialized surveillance that builds upon institutionalized white supremacy. The surveilling and targeting of Black-led social movements and the increase of militarized police responses that

occurred following 9/11 have become an important factor in the development of the “Arab terrorist” figure (Kumar, 2020; Dewan, 2020; Greenberg, 2011; Joseph, 2006; Winter & Weinberger, 2017; German, 2020). Post-9/11 America expanded upon the surveillance tactics from the COINTELPRO era and reinforced the distinction between the domestic and foreign threat. Therefore, the discourse surrounding “domestic terrorism” both draws on and distinguishes itself from the racialized foreign figure. The term “domestic terrorism” has deeply embedded connotations that embodies histories of federal policies and legislation that resulted in state surveillance that disproportionately targets Black and brown Americans (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019). The analysis of the ways that power, empire and language intersect in the field of critical security and terrorism studies is an important component in deconstructing how surveillance policies have continued to reproduce the racialized “terrorist” figure in different forms. Furthermore, it allows for a better understanding of how the term “domestic terrorism” encompasses histories of institutionalized white supremacy that becomes difficult to challenge when adopting the term in reference to the far-right violence perpetrated at the Capitol insurrection.

### **THE CAPITOL INSURRECTION & TERMINOLOGY**

At around 3:30pm on January 6<sup>th</sup>, President-Elect Biden addressed the media and public in the midst of the insurrection that “our democracy is under unprecedented assault” and stating that “this is not a protest, it’s an insurrection”,

calling the group “extremists” (Breuninger, 2021). In the hours following Biden’s speech, both news media and politicians responded to the insurrection following similar framing. Many media outlets began to oscillate on whether or not to use the term “domestic terrorism” throughout the coverage of the Capitol. Politicians including Hillary Clinton and Andre Carson took to Twitter to comment that, “domestic terrorists attacked a foundation of our democracy” and stating that “what happened at the Capitol today is domestic terrorism” (Clinton, 2021; Carson, 2021). Major news reporting networks such as CNN, NPR, CBS and The Washington Post all sent out memos outlining specific terminology that was either expected or recommended for their journalists to use. While most of the internal memos did not state the reasoning behind the carefully chosen language, CBS executives noted that their decision to refrain from the term “terrorism” and “attempted coup” was purely due to ensuring that the reporting was not to be sensationalized (Tani, 2021). Instead, CBS executives told their journalists to use terms such as “protest”, “violent mob”, and “violent protest” in their media coverage during January 6<sup>th</sup> (Tani, 2021). Similarly, NPR also moved away from the term “domestic terrorism” with executives informing their reporters to refer to the group as “a mob, pro-Trump extremists, or rioters, or to refer to the event as an insurrection” (Tani, 2021). Debates surrounding whether to use the term “protesters” during Capitol news coverage were also divided with reporters from The Washington Post being instructed by executives to not use the label “protesters” but rather to say “mob” (Smith, 2021).

Shortly after journalists announced the internal memo from CBS on Twitter, CNN executives followed with a notice encouraging their reporters to do the opposite: to use the term “domestic terrorism”. This notice emerged following reports of the two explosive devices discovered at the Capitol (Tani, 2021; Kornfield, 2021). Shortly after CNN released their internal memo, CNN correspondent Jake Tapper tweeted the definition of “domestic terrorism” on the FBI website stating: “Domestic Terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature” (Tapper, 2021). The announcement from CNN marked a change in the way that the day-of coverage of the events was framed and showcased the ways that the various news agencies were scrambling trying to determine the best terminology to be used to describe the insurrection. What was less explicitly addressed, though, is the political stakes of word choice.

Social movements for racial justice have discussed how the term “terrorist” is historically rarely used in coverage of white nationalist violence – outlining the way that the term has been racialized (see Zerkel, 2021; Allam, 2020). CNN correspondent Van Jones discussed this during live coverage of events of January 6<sup>th</sup> stating that the insurrection was “treason and rebellion” and outlined the contradictory nature of the response to the events as opposed to the coverage of Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 (“Van Jones: US Capitol riot”, 2021). Furthermore, Jones stated that the response to the Capitol insurrection would have

elicited a much stronger outcry if the insurrectionists were Muslim or Black (“Van Jones: US Capitol riot”, 2021). During the same coverage, CNN correspondent Gloria Borger built upon Jones’s comments calling the group “domestic terrorists” who were motivated by the words of Donald Trump (“Van Jones: US Capitol riot”, 2021). This discussion between Borger and Jones outlines how social movement-based messaging has an influence on encouraging the acknowledgment on how the term “domestic terrorism” has been used against Black activists. The critique that the terrorist figure is never white has begun to be reflected in news reporting and is reflected within the Twitter discussions that occurred on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Media coverage of the Capitol insurrection has sparked discussions on whether the term “domestic terrorism” is considered an effective term for far-right violence and whether it should continue to be used due to its history in furthering surveillance of Black and brown Americans. Biden’s speech following January 6<sup>th</sup> called for the public to refer to the far-right group as “domestic terrorists” rather than “protesters”, highlighting the divide within news coverage where reporters were initially using the terms “siege”, “riot” and “protest” as the events unfolded (Gambino, 2021). The use of the term “domestic terrorism” within media coverage of January 6<sup>th</sup> attempts to acknowledge the way that Black Lives Matter activists were called “terrorists” by Trump and other members of the Republican party in 2020. Yet, the labeling of the Capitol insurrection as an act of “domestic terrorism” raises concerns for some civil rights organizations like the ACLU. In a tweet, the ACLU outlined how the expansion of police powers under domestic terrorism



legislation has harmed racialized communities and fails to address white supremacist violence, a point which scholars have also noted (ACLU, 2021; Dewan, 2020; Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). There is good reason for the debates over terminology and its political implications. By tracing how the specific phrase “domestic terrorism” has been used against racial justice organizing in the United States, the implications of terminology, and its connection to historical legacies, become apparent.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF “DOMESTIC TERRORISM” AS A TERM & POLICY IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

The use of the label “domestic terrorism” as a response to the Capitol insurrection was meant to challenge the longstanding truth in American politics that the “terrorists are always Muslim and never white” (Corbin, 2017). This creation of the “racialized terrorist” exists within histories of institutionalized white supremacy that is further reinforced within news media and political rhetoric where anti-Blackness and anti-Muslim hate motivate the assumption of the racialized terrorist (Corbin, 2017). Understanding the history behind the making of the foreign “Arab terrorist” and the framing of the domestic “Black Nationalist terrorist” plays an important role in examining how the current use of the term “domestic terrorism” during the Capitol insurrection attempts to challenge these histories. This section explores the history of how the term “domestic terrorism” has been used to justify United States surveillance policy.

From the 1960s until 1971, the concern over “domestic terrorism” emerged as a key policy issue (Greenberg, 2011, p. 38-39). Beginning during the Cold War, the FBI established a domestic counterintelligence initiative entitled COINTELPRO which – despite its initial desire to protect the United States from foreign threats – quickly changed its focus to targeting political activism through the use of a vast amount of illegal surveillance and intelligence collecting activities (“More About FBI...”, 2021). Although the move towards COINTELPRO’s counterintelligence programs represents an important turning point in how the FBI mobilized against social justice and dissent, it is important to also acknowledge that these campaigns emerged from a history of what Cunningham describes as “mobilization of public hysteria over conspiracy-based threats posed by anarchists, fascists, communists, or terrorists that serve to insulate the Bureau from external regulation or oversight” (Cunningham, 2004, p. 9). Much of the social influences which were exasperated by the politics surrounding the Cold War encouraged the expansion of the FBI’s initiatives. These built upon the ingrained mass fear of communism, xenophobic and racist beliefs in conjunction with deeply rooted American patriotism. Additionally, this increased fear of outside threats played a significant role in the decrease in accountability and regulations within the FBI that resulted in the expansion of the Bureau’s power in engaging in illegal covert actions and surveillance (Cunningham, 2004).

After COINTELPRO’s creation in 1956 under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, the department’s focus was on the New Left movement and anti-war

protests due to the government's fear of Soviet Union influence that viewed civil disobedience as a "[threat] to the established order" (Marcetic, 2016). The department's initial focus in 1956 was on "disrupting" and "neutralizing" the Communist Party USA and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) while also moving to surveil the Puerto Rican independence movement, anti-war protests and the American Indian Movements in the 1960s (Marcetic, 2016). During this time, the FBI oversaw the arrest of hundreds of members of the Communist Party USA and engaged in extensive surveillance and illegal counterintelligence tactics including the planting of evidence, wiretapping and phone misinformation, false correspondence and the use of internal informants and undercover officers (Cunningham, 2004, p. 6 & 236). Furthermore, Hoover's focus for the FBI moved to establishing a new era of "terrorism" under the new label of "domestic security investigations" (Greenberg, 2011, p. 35-36). These tools that the FBI used against political activists were developed from previous tactics that were used by the Bureau internationally against "foreign agents" which aimed to stop any activity they deemed would "influence political choices and social values" within the United States (Aspervil, 2019, p. 911). By the mid-1960s, COINTELPRO's focus expanded from communist fear to the surveillance of the New Left and racial justice movements, including investigations into the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army and the Weather Underground Organization (Greenberg, 2011).

Although COINTELPRO surveilled and infiltrated numerous organizations and movements in a variety of different capacities, this project will focus on two

specific divisions: the “White Hate Group” program and the “Black Nationalist-Hate Group”. While these initiatives appear to outline how the FBI was surveilling both Black nationalist groups and the KKK, the majority of the resources were overwhelmingly spent on surveillance and undercover intelligence gathering of the Black Panther Party and civil rights movements (Cunningham, 2004; Aspervil, 2019). By rhetorically connecting racial justice protesters to the term “domestic dissents” and “foreign agents” through the linguistic coding of “domestic terror”, COINTELPRO was a turning point in how the FBI justified its power and expanding scope (Joseph, 2006, p. 188). With the civil rights protests occurring, the Bureau’s fears that they would be a “threat to the established order” resulted in the use of FBI informants, IRS harassment, eavesdropping and the development of anti-Martin Luther King Jr. propaganda that was spread within the news media (Joseph, 2006, p. 229).

Scholars like Aspervil and Cunningham argue that this narrow focus on the disruption of racial justice and New Left movements outlines the FBI’s desire to dismantle the work of Black activists and social justice organizations and that the “White Hate Group” division was merely developed due to the KKK’s open disdain for government authority (Cunningham, 2004; Aspervil, 2019, p. 913). While the “White Hate Group” division focused on more casual information gathering, the “Black Nationalist-Hate Group” division aimed to break up and divide organizations fighting for racial justice which included 360 operations and 41 field offices in comparison to the 17 offices designed for the “White Hate Group” division (Joseph,

2006; Aspervil, 2019, p. 912 & 914). The FBI's COINTELPRO program used the media to falsely accuse groups like the Black Panther Party for anti-Semitic beliefs and false murder allegations that aimed to encourage the public to turn against the movement for racial justice and led to threats on the safety and livelihood of the activists (Marcetic, 2016). Additionally, the Bureau's focus on the civil rights movement, who they labeled as "armed terrorists", used tactics that caused severe physical, psychological and economic damage to racial justice organizers (Aspervil, 2019; FBI San Diego in Marcetic, 2016). With news of the FBI's counterintelligence tactics becoming more widespread, the 1975 Church Committee was developed to investigate the United States government's involvement in citizen surveillance. The committee found that COINTELPRO used tactics that were both unconstitutional and an abuse of power, and specifically targeted groups that the FBI deemed to be a threat to the political establishment (Aspervil, 2019, p. 916; National Constitution Center, 2019). After the end of the COINTELPRO program, documents indicated that 98% of the project files were aimed at New Left and racial justice movements which included extensive campaigns against Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Panther Party and anti-war protests (Cunningham, 2004, p. 11).

Despite the end of the FBI's COINTELPRO division, the Bureau's use of extensive racialized surveillance measures did not subside as the increased rhetoric on the fears of "domestic terrorism" dominating the United States still remained in the forefront of law enforcement's strategic goals. This rhetoric can be

seen in the era of FBI director L. Patrick Gray III's administration. Gray dictated in a 1972 Bureau memo: "These are not normal times. We are in an age of terrorism. The tactic of the urban guerilla, often used in Latin America, Algeria, the Middle East and elsewhere in the world, was introduced into the U.S. about five years ago and we have seen ample evidence of it in the form of ambushed police officers and terrorist bombings which have included the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon" (Gray in Greenberg, 2011, p. 37). Shortly after, the U.S Justice Department enforced a 1976 policy aimed at combatting terrorism and in 1983, the FBI's new terrorism guidelines were expanded to include environmental activists, anti-apartheid groups, LGBTQIA+ advocacy and the protest organizing of Arab Americans (Greenberg, 2011, p. 38). During the 1980s, the FBI's budget doubled, and the term "terrorism" became the new term that was used to cover any form of public dissent, violence or deviation from the status quo which threatened the institutional structure of the United States (Greenberg, 2011). This move towards "terrorism" policy measures continued within post-9/11 surveillance and news discourse that amplified with the increased funding for federal and local law enforcement.

In the months following 9/11, the Bush administration began to implement advanced policy measures as part of their initiatives against terrorism. During this time, the term "terrorism" became interchangeable with that of the "Arab terrorist" figure which was reinforced in policy and news media coverage (Kazi, 2019). The post-9/11 era highlighted terrorism as foreign and racialized – a construct which

reflected discourse on American hegemony and focused on international and domestic policy and military expansion. This policy expansion included the Patriot Act, which aimed to increase funding towards national security efforts, much of which included surveillance and data legislation as well as expanded funding to federal and local law enforcement (“More About FBI...”, 2021). Under the Patriot Act, National Security Letters (NSLs) were given to FBI agents who needed to obtain personal data without the approval of a judge which included phone records, computer data and financial information (“More About FBI...”, 2021). Within the span of 3 years from 2003 to 2006, over 192,000 NSLs were provided which only lead to one “terror-related conviction” (“More About FBI...”, 2021). Furthermore, “sneak and peek” investigations were introduced for the purpose of halting “domestic terrorism” and included secret home and workplace searches, many of which were used for non-terror related charges. Of the 3,970 conducted in 2010, 76% were for drug-related charges, 24% were classified as other and under 1% were used for terror-related searches (“More About FBI...”, 2021). The expansive power of the FBI under the Patriot Act, despite its claim to be for the purpose of stopping “terrorism”, was largely used for alternative investigative purposes and served to expand the surveillance scope of not only federal agencies, but also local law enforcement. With the addition of Section 802 of the Patriot Act, local law enforcement was given permission to use new surveillance technologies to collect and store personal citizen information with the aim to increase new technology

operations within municipal policing practices (Guariglia & Maass, 2020; Smart Policing Initiative, 2017).

With the Bush administration's initiatives during the "War on Terror", the expansion of FBI and local police responses to increased citizen monitoring in the name of combatting "domestic terrorism" resulted in "threat mongering" that disproportionately targeted racialized communities and progressive social movements (Greenberg, 2011, p. 35; Saito, 2008; "More About FBI...", 2021). This highlighted the way that the administration normalized and institutionalized the fear of "terrorism" into foreign policy and domestic security that was reinforced within media and lead to the targeting of brown and Black Americans (McCrisken, 2011). The use of the term "terrorism" became synonymous to the foreign "Arab terrorist" which emphasized the non-American racialized actor that represented a threat. In contrast, the term "domestic terrorism" symbolized an act of violence from an American actor, which quickly began to be tied to the Black racial justice activist figure (Greenberg, 2011; "More About FBI...", 2021). This binary between "terrorist" and "domestic terrorist" has its roots in the history of who is considered to be an American and who is signified as "foreign" within the media. Within recent years, scholars have highlighted the contradictory ways that news coverage of violence conducted by white Americans in comparison to that of Muslim Americans reinforces anti-Muslim hate that influences policy decisions. Scholars have recognized that violence done by brown Americans makes the news at a higher rate and for a longer period of time than coverage of white nationalist violence



(Chermak & Gruenewald, 2006). The mitigating factor of post-9/11 racialized surveillance profiling of Black and brown Americans also participates in the framing of non-white religious practices and cultural expressions as “abnormal” (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019, p. 871). Furthermore, the media framing of violent attacks as being motivated by religious beliefs by a “foreign” figure are both critical components in how the news emphasizes the fear of the “Arab terrorist” (Kazi, 2019). The expansion of surveillance technology for federal and local law enforcement partnered with the normalization of the term “domestic terrorism” within new coverage is a component in the way that white supremacy as a political structure reinstitutes systems of control within policy, rhetoric and surveillance measures that target racialized Americans.

During the Obama administration, the term “homegrown terrorism” became synonymous with “domestic terrorism” and furthered terrorism discourse that no longer relied solely on the narrative of foreign threats and also acknowledged the increasing prevalence of white nationalist violence. Obama coined the phrase “homegrown terrorism” to indicate that white violence against American Muslims was also a form of terrorism, one which had been developed through state discourses that figured the Arab terrorist (Ackerman, 2015). Following the anti-Muslim hate attack in 2015 that resulted in the murder of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Ben Brumfield from CNN published an article questioning when an act of violence is considered a “hate crime” and claiming that the “‘terrorism’ label... is not applied lightly” to violent offences (Neff & Dewan,

2019; Brumfield, 2015). This, of course, we know not to be true of news media coverage of non-white violent events. In an article from The New York Times, the father of one of the victims outlined the media's hesitation to use the term "terrorism" when describing white violence stating: "If a Muslim man knocked on a door and executed a Christian family in their home with no provocation, that would be called terrorism" (Abu-Salha in Neff & Dewan, 2019).

At the White House's Anti-Terrorism Summit in 2015 that followed the anti-Muslim hate attack in Chapel Hill, Obama spoke about initiatives to "prevent homegrown terrorism" (Ackerman, 2015). Although seemingly well-intentioned by Obama, American Muslim community leaders and activists raised concerns on how the term, as well as the dialogue surrounding violent attacks, worked to amplify anti-Muslim hate within news media and online platforms while normalizing the assumption that Muslim is synonymous to "terrorism" within media and public discourse (Ackerman, 2015). During the Obama administration, domestic terrorism policies and the associated public discourse led to targeted discrimination, increased federal and local law enforcement surveillance and the labelling of racialized Americans as a threat further implements this institutionalized system of white supremacist violence despite the government's acknowledgement of the growing rate of far-right violence. The Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) bill – that was introduced by Bush following 9/11 and allowed for heightened presidential power to fight against foreign terrorism – became relied upon by the Obama administration as a legal basis for both increased international

and domestic militarized surveillance (107th Congress, 2001; Bradley & Goldsmith, 2016).

The introduction of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) grant program during the Obama administration consisted of 31 CVE grants totaling \$10 million in funding and included only one initiative to combat white supremacist violence (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). This program was implemented with the belief that federal law enforcement departments would act as a “community outreach initiative” and search for people who they were concerned would be influenced by foreign groups and become “violent extremists” (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). The idea behind the program was that ISIS was recruiting American citizens which was reflected within the media’s sensationalized news coverage (see Baksh, 2016; Engel, Plessner, Connor & Schuppe, 2016). The CVE programs instead engaged in racial profiling and the targeting of racialized communities that included the surveillance of protests and the everyday activities of brown Americans as part of “predictive risk” tactics (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). These “predictive risk” assessments engage in profiling where law enforcement track individuals who they deem to be a violent threat – often racialized Americans – and engage in surveillance and data collection strategies (Brayne, 2017). This surveillance follows a categorical scale that searched for individuals based on their race, nationality, religion and ethnicity in order to determine whether law enforcement considered them to be a risk for radicalization due to being influenced by ISIS (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019).

Under Obama, the CVE program had one dedicated grant for countering far-right violence, but then Trump's administration promptly cancelled it. Trump refocused the CVE program on the surveillance of racialized communities, with 85% of the grants going towards surveillance and intelligence gathering against Muslim communities, LGBTQIA+ advocacy, Black Lives Matter activists and programs aiding refugees and immigrants (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). These CVE grants built upon the already extensive history of law enforcement engaging in surveillance tactics and violence against Black Americans. With the expansion of the 2012 Bureau of Justice Assistance's Smart Policing Initiative in 2017 and the introduction of the Justice Assistance Grants (JAGs), local police were granted additional funding for militarized software for everyday use such as facial recognition technology as well as the creation of mobile surveillance units (Smart Policing Initiative, 2017). In 2016, Color of Change and the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI for the illegal use of surveillance and data collecting software against Black Lives Matter protesters under their federal "counter-terrorism" division that activists have claimed continues to engage in abusive tactics similar to those used during COINTELPRO (Spencer, 2017). These new policies and the continued use of surveillance tactics against Black-led social movements that emerged from discourse on "domestic terrorism" built upon legislation that emerged from the Bush administration and expanded the power of federal and local law enforcement that targeted racialized communities and failed to address the continuous violence

from white supremacist groups.

In their 2020 annual assessment, the Department of Homeland Security outlined that white supremacy posed the “most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland”, a fact that racial justice activists have been stating for decades (Gross, 2020; Brennan Center for Justice, 2019). Following this report, the Center for Strategic and International Studies – a bipartisan and nonprofit research organization – reported that 41 of the 61 attacks reported as “terrorism” from January 2020 to October 2020 were done by white supremacist groups and the Center for Strategic & International Studies found that white supremacist groups and far-right groups target law enforcement, government facilities and politicians at a higher rate than any other group (Gross, 2020; Jones et al., 2020). Despite this acknowledgment by both federal law enforcement and the American government, the focus for the FBI and Department of Homeland Security remained on the surveillance of Black-led social movements. In 2017, a report was released that outlined the FBI’s new program that categorized that “Black Identity Extremists” as a “threat to law enforcement” following the counter-protests in Charlottesville against the white supremacist Unite the Right rally (Winter & Weinberger, 2017). The FBI report obtained by the news organization Foreign Policy claimed that “the FBI assesses it is very likely Black Identity Extremist (BIE) perceptions of police brutality against African Americans spurred an increase in premeditated, retaliatory lethal violence against law enforcement and will very likely serve as justification for such violence” (Winter & Weinberger, 2017). The

department issued an assessment that argues that the “Black Identity Extremists [are] motivated to target law enforcement officers” that was announced to over 18,000 local law enforcement agencies across the United States (Choudhury & Cyril, 2019).

Following the leak of the document, news outlets and organizations like The New York Times and the Brennan Center for Justice published articles critiquing the use of the term “Black Identity Extremists” and recognizing how this phrase emerges from how surveillance has historically been used for the “intimidation of black Americans that frequently goes beyond legitimate law enforcement into paranoia, racism, and political expediency” (Cohen in Rosenthal, 2017). News media began to report on how this new FBI counterterrorism division had been using their resources to surveil and arrest Black Lives Matter protesters. The department’s tactics include social media data collection of activists through the use of facial recognition technology which – as scholars like Garvie, Bedoya and Frankle have reported – disproportionately targets and criminalizes Black Americans despite the FBI’s acknowledgement of the technology’s high racially biased error rates (Levin, 2018a; Levin, 2018b; Garvie, Bedoya & Frankle, 2021). The use of facial recognition technology became popularized within the FBI and local police agencies following 9/11 and has become a key technology in anti-terrorism surveillance that comes from the history of the phrase “Islamic extremists” (Lyon, 2018, p. 88). Both the framing of the term “Black Identity Extremists” and the surveillance technology used in the FBI’s intelligence program

is rooted in anti-Blackness that emerges from post-9/11 anti-Arab sentiments.

This new category of “Black Identity Extremists” presents a more recent way that state surveillance of Black activists follows similar rhetoric as the FBI’s COINTELPRO program and the targeting of civil rights organizers that were deemed to be a threat to the political system of white supremacy. This history outlines the discursive context in which the Capitol insurrection and the contestations over the use of the term “domestic terrorism” unfolded. Furthermore, it provides a deeper understanding of how the term’s use by news media intends to demonstrate the severity of far-right violence while acknowledging how the terrorist figure is always racialized. Yet, its use presents concerning implications for the potential expansion of additional security policies that will target racialized communities.

### **TWITTER NEWS: THE CAPITOL & “DOMESTIC TERRORISM”**

Since January 6<sup>th</sup>, I have been conducting research of Twitter news coverage of the events with a specific focus on journalists and public pages from CNN, The New York Times, MSNBC, The Washington Post and Fox News in order to examine how the Capitol insurrection has presented contentions over the term “domestic terrorism”. Through an analysis of Twitter posts about the Capitol insurrection from key digital news organizations, the following sections will build upon the historical positioning surrounding the discourse around the term “domestic terrorism” in order to examine how it has continued throughout digital

news coverage of January 6<sup>th</sup>. Furthermore, it seeks to pose concerns about the expansion of surveillance policies that will continue to target racialized Americans and fails to address white nationalist violence.

The use of language in describing the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> was highly contested and differed drastically across the five media outlets analyzed. Although some journalists reported receiving internal memos from the agency's executives on the terminology that they were allowed to use, the Twitter posts and media releases from Biden and other politicians also provided strong direction on how to frame the event. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, Biden tweeted following a press conference stating: "Let me be very clear: the scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not represent who we are. What we are seeing is a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent, it's disorder" (Biden, 2021). The following day, Biden amended his comments by tweeting a quote from his media statement: "They weren't protesters – they were rioters, insurrectionists, and domestic terrorists" (Biden, 2021). Both of these tweets outlined the importance of recognizing the severity of the event and the history of far-right violence which Biden further emphasized in his press conference where he recognized how different the police response was compared to the Black Lives Matter protests the previous summer ("President-elect Joe", 2021). Biden's use of the terms "domestic terrorism" and "extremists" were highlighted within media as newsworthy and represented a key shift in the way that policy and U.S. security was discussed across digital media platforms.



Biden was not the only politician who highlighted the importance in recognizing January 6<sup>th</sup> as an act of “domestic terrorism”; both Democratic and Republican politicians tweeted comments regarding the events. Statements from Democratic politicians highlighted the way that January 6<sup>th</sup> emerges from years of misinformation and division fueled by the Republican party and the Trump administration. Julián Castro tweeted: “Make no mistake: the domestic terrorism at the U.S. Capitol by armed protesters is not only Trump’s fault alone. This is the result of leaders in the Republican Party fueling conspiracy, division, and hatred for years. And it won’t be fixed until they lose their office” (Castro, 2021). This comment was echoed by progressive Democrat Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley who tweeted: “Every complicit actor must be held accountable. Donald Trump must be impeached and removed from office. Every @GOP member who aided & abetted domestic terrorism by perpetuating misinformation about the outcome of the election must resign or be expelled from Congress” (Pressley, 2021). Castro and Pressley’s comments categorized the insurrection as “domestic terrorism” and highlighted the way that the GOP was at fault – a statement which directly criticized the Republican party and later resulted in further investigations into the events of January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Republican politicians also tweeted their statements that attempted to distance themselves from Trump and the motivations behind the insurrectionists. Will Hurd, a Republican U.S. Representative, said: “This isn’t a peaceful protest. This is an attack on our democracy and domestic terrorism to try to stop certifying

elections. This should be treated as a coup led by a president that will not be peacefully removed from power” (Hurd, 2021). Senator Lindsey Graham, although obfuscating the question of responsibility, made similar condemnations of the event in statements claiming that the insurrectionists were “terrorists, not patriots” while also connecting January 6th to the events of 9/11 (Graham in Kornfield, 2021). Senator Ted Cruz, who was accused by Democratic politicians of aiding in inciting the insurrection days prior, tweeted a similar response: “The attack at the Capitol was a despicable act of terrorism and a shocking assault on our democratic system. We must come together and put this anger behind us...” (Cruz, 2021). These statements emerged following the introduction of a resolution from Democratic Congresswoman Cori Bush that outlined that “the Republican members of Congress who have incited this domestic terror attack through their attempts to overturn the election must face consequences” (Bush, 2021). Hurd, Graham and Cruz all used language that emphasized American patriotism while framing their responses to distance themselves from their own involvement with the politics and misinformation from the Republican party that inspired the Capitol insurrectionists. Understanding the history of surveillance and terrorism policy discourse makes these comments alarming: why might it be in the Republican party’s *policy interests* to call their own supporters terrorists?

These tweets showcase how both conservative and liberal politicians moved to recognize January 6<sup>th</sup> as “domestic terrorism”. Hurd, Graham and Cruz’s tweets followed similar framing to that of Biden in calling for the recognition of the

event as “domestic terrorism” and an attack on American patriotism. The framing of the tweets from the Republican politicians attempted to distance themselves from the insurrectionists by acknowledging the severity of their actions. Furthermore, they continued to use language that aimed to aid their image as members of the GOP. In contrast, the tweets from Castro, Pressley and Bush directly attributed the violence to the Republican party and Trump and emphasized the need to recognize the severity of the insurrection. Furthermore, the framing of the events as both an “attack” on American democracy and an act of “domestic terrorism” engaged in framing that encourages a stronger government security response. As previously explored in this paper, the use of this language threatens to authorize additional surveillance policies similar to what occurred during COINTELPRO and following 9/11.

The “domestic terrorism” terminology used by both Republican and Democrat politicians was reflected within news media coverage of the event from CNN, MSNBC, The New York Times, The Washington Post and Fox News. News media companies began using specific terminology to describe the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> with some networks like CNN and MSNBC emphasizing the term “domestic terrorism”. Other agencies like The Washington Post did not adhere to a single term to describe January 6<sup>th</sup> and used both “domestic terrorism” and other terms like “rioters”. Both The New York Times and Fox News relied on either “protest” or “riot” in coverage of January 6<sup>th</sup> with Fox News often connecting the insurrection to Black Lives Matter protests from the previous summer (Dewan,

2020). This same framing between the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> and the racial justice activism in 2020 was seen reflected within the statements from Republican politicians who had referred to both the insurrectionists and Black Lives Matter protesters as terrorists. Besides Fox News, the four other media organizations framed their coverage of the events to different degrees of political leanings with CNN, MSNBC and The Washington Post echoing the statements of Democrat politicians regarding the connection between the far-right violence and Trump and calling for government action.

In a video tweet from MSNBC's Mehdi Hasan that featured contributor Brittany Packnett, the journalists stated the importance of naming and how that connects with racialized police responses to violent events: "Labels – including by people in our industry and the media – are also important right now. These groups have been called protesters, or mobs, or rioters. Other people say: 'No, let's call them terrorists. Let's call them insurrectionists. Let's call them words that actually describe the gravity of what happened today'. Pretty sure if a group of Black protesters or a group of Muslims had stormed the Capitol today, we wouldn't just be calling them protesters, or even a mob" (Hasan, 2021). Hasan's discussion with Packnett examined the way that the insurrectionists were able to both plan and infiltrate the Capitol building with little police resistance or police violence against them – an incident that the journalists state would have resulted in an immediate response from law enforcement if the insurrectionists had not been white. This acknowledgement presents an important fact in understanding how the Capitol

insurrection outlines how the language surrounding “terrorism” is rooted in histories of anti-Blackness and anti-Muslim hate. The desire for the media to address the severity of white nationalist violence during media coverage of the Capitol recognizes the problem that social movements have been advocating to address – that the “terrorist” figure in news media is never white. This desire to acknowledge the far-right violence at the Capitol as an act of “domestic terrorism” continued to be seen on Twitter from news outlets including CNN, MSNBC, The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Following the discovery of two bombs at the Capitol, CNN reporter Jeff Yang tweeted: “There were live pipe bombs and incendiary devices placed at the Capitol. You can’t call this anything other than terrorism, directly incited by the outgoing president” (Yang, 2021). Yang’s statement was reflected amongst other CNN journalists and Twitter accounts who tweeted about the “terrorist mob” and attributed the spread of election misinformation to Fox News and Trump (Harwood, 2021; The Lead CNN, 2021). These tweets followed the memo from CNN executives encouraging their journalists to recognize the events as “domestic terrorism” following the discovery of bombs on the premise (Tani, 2021). Similarly, a January 6<sup>th</sup> memo from The Washington Post informed reporters to not refer to the insurrection as a “protest” which led to tweets referring to the event as “domestic terrorism” or a “mob” which reflected the same framing seen in the tweet from CNN’s The Lead (Smith, 2021; The Washington Post, 2021). Yang’s connection between the discovery of pipe bombs – typically associated with war –

and the use of the term “terrorism” was used to justify why January 6<sup>th</sup> was deemed to be more than a protest. The emphasis on not using “protest” in Capitol reporting by CNN and The Washington Post was important in recognizing how the term would legitimize white nationalist violence by placing it in the same category as the Black Lives Matter protests. Furthermore, it signals the importance in recognizing how an act of protest is a constitutional right that advocates for change and progress despite this not being the case for racial justice activism. Journalists from MSNBC also followed similar framing with contributor Joyce Alene stating: “Lots of people need to be held accountable for supporting this domestic terrorism. That’s what this is. Insurrection & terrorism. And anyone who fueled it or could stop it now is as responsible as the people breaking into the Capitol” (Alene, 2021). By highlighting the way that Trump and other members of the Republican party have encouraged the misinformation and politics that have sparked the Capitol insurrection, Alene presents potent commentary on how the use of the term “terrorism” is vital the case of Trump’s impeachment trial that followed. Through arguing that Trump was just as guilty as the insurrectionists, Alene’s comment outlines how severe the situation was and furthers the argument that an impeachment was necessary.

The official MSNBC Twitter account tweeted a clip from their show outlining the connection between the insurrection and far-right media and election misinformation stating that: “This is our new domestic terror threat- brainwashed Americans” (MSNBC, 2021). The choice of the words “brainwashed Americans”

refers to the Trump supporters who stormed the Capitol, yet it fails to acknowledge the racism that drove the insurrection and the way that both Trump and far-right media reinforced it. This move by the media outlets also aimed to recognize the lack of law enforcement response to January 6<sup>th</sup> and states that the hesitation to arrest the insurrectionists would have not occurred had they been Black or brown Americans (CNN, 2021). This acknowledgement by CNN's Twitter account outlines the history behind the policing of Black-led social movements and how Black Lives Matter protests have resulted in violence from law enforcement and the arrest of protesters that was not present during the Capitol insurrection. Mehdi Hasan stated the social impact of conservative media on the insurrectionists in a tweet saying: "To be clear: Fox News, OANN, the far-right echo chamber incited a lot of what we're seeing today. But the rest of us in the so-called mainstream or liberal media need to accept that, for far too long, we weren't clear-eyed about the nature of the threat that Trump/Trumpism posed" (Hasan, 2021). Although liberal journalists tend to blame misinformation, I read Hasan's statement to the "nature of the threat" as signaling that Trumpism captured pre-existing racism at the heart of America. Hasan's tweet highlights how the misinformation and deep-rooted racism that encouraged the Capitol insurrection was reinforced by Trump and far-right media. By recognizing CNN and MSNBC's framing, we can better understand how the frequent use of the term "domestic terrorism" was a well-intentioned choice that aimed to highlight the severity of the event and the racialized history of the term. While well intentioned, the use of the term still presents a complicated

situation where the call for action against far-right violence threatens to expand security legislation that can result in further surveillance of Black and brown Americans.

Fox News's Twitter accounts provided a distinctly different response to the Capitol insurrection than the other news networks analyzed for this project. Fox News tweeted false claims that highlight the way that right-wing media differed in their response to calls for investigations into security concerns by stating: "Trump says he requested 10k National Guard troops at Capitol on day of riot" (Fox News, 2021). This tweet contradicted reporting from outlets like The Washington Post who stated that the Pentagon had restricted the authority of the National Guard commander prior to January 6<sup>th</sup> which limited his ability to provide backup during the insurrection (The Washington Post, 2021). While the tweets from Fox News included statements that supported Trump and his response to the Capitol insurrection, the news outlet also tweeted claims blaming progressive Democrat representatives for not aiding the Capitol police. The accusations included statements that they had not supported a bill to fund \$1.9 billion in emergency spending for expanding Capitol security, a claim which failed to accurately present all the information and did not mention that the bill was passed on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (Fox News, 2021). Although the tweets from Fox News outlined a more complex way that media engages in reimplementing narratives of security and law enforcement responses, all of these news outlets reproduced the narrative that fighting "terrorism" requires the expansion of government surveillance. These



responses further normalize surveillance and racial targeting, in the name of racial justice.

The varying ways that “domestic terrorism” was used by digital news media during the Capitol insurrection also coincided with discussions on Twitter surrounding state security and law enforcement responses to the event. As news coverage continued to emerge following the violence at the Capitol building, the lack of law enforcement response during the insurrection led to a wave of calls for the expansion of surveillance policies and enhanced police presence at the Capitol building. Responding to calls to introduce new legislation, MSNBC reporter Chris Hayes tweeted his concerns by stating: “This is a really bad idea. The government absolutely *\*already\** has the legal tools it needs, and the new administration and FBI should focus those powers smartly and effectively” (Hayes, 2021). Elie Mystal, a justice correspondent from *The Nation*, responded to this tweet stating: “So with you. Have these people learned *\*nothing\** from post-9/11?” (Mystal, 2021). Mystal spoke on MSNBC about his concerns regarding potential legislation that will emerge following the Capitol insurrection and stated: “We don’t need new domestic terrorism laws... We need to take the laws we already have and apply them to white people” (Mystal in Harriot, 2021). Mystal and Hayes’s tweets outline how the development of sufficient “domestic terrorism” policies already exist and the expansion of new security legislation would not fix the problem of how federal law enforcement has continuously failed to use the resources available to address far-right and white supremacist violence. The introduction of new policies would

potentially further surveil racialized communities and Black-led social movements who have historically been subject to violence and discrimination from state security legislation. This is reflected in the discussions by journalists over the ways that surveillance policies under domestic terrorism initiatives were used during Black Lives Matter protests in comparison to the Capitol insurrection in the hours and days following January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Fox News tweeted about comparisons between January 6<sup>th</sup> and 9/11 and rejected the comparison while referring to the insurrection as a “riot”. In one storyline, they stated that the “sister of pilot killed on 9/11 slams comparison between riot and 2001 terrorist attacks” (Fox News, 2021). Although the terminology to describe the events of the Capitol insurrection has evolved over time, Fox News’ consistent use of the term “riot” and focus on tweeting photos of Black individuals who they claim to be “hardcore leftist[s]” involved in the events on January 6<sup>th</sup> showcases part of how the media, in addition to law enforcement, have responded in comparison to the Black Lives Matter protests during the summer of 2020 (Fox News, 2021). Journalists, politicians and Joe Biden engaged in discussions over how law enforcement response to far-right violence at the Capitol demonstrated the opposing ways that police react to Black-led social movements in comparison to white supremacist violence, leading to the highly militarized responses conducted against Black activists.

This desire for journalists to emphasize the severity and outrage behind what was occurring at the Capitol was dictated by the move towards recognizing

how the kind of violence that was occurring from far-right and white nationalist groups did not result in a significant police or government security response compared to the rate of police surveillance and violence seen at Black Lives Matter protests. This recognition by liberal news outlets highlighted how the lack of police response and public outrage to far-right violence at the Capitol compared to the level of militarized surveillance and policing that occurred during the Black Lives Matter protests the previous summer. Tweets from reporters and news agencies began to surface comparing the lack of security response in comparison to the extensive law enforcement violence which erupted as a response to Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 which included unidentified federal agents grabbing protesters off the streets and city-wide curfews which resulted in expanded police and army violence (Vera, Toropin & Campbell, 2020). Maggie Haberman, a reporter from The New York Times, tweeted about the city-imposed curfew during the evening of January 6th claiming that “based on images on TV, the 6 p.m. curfew in DC for the rioters at the Capitol doesn’t seem to be being enforced with the same vigor that curfews were enforced against people who rioted in DC last year” (Haberman, 2021). These comments from Haberman present an opportunity to analyze how white people committing crime is not perceived to be a threat, but Black activists voicing opinions and protesting for change results in immediate police response. In addition to the ways that law enforcement response was minimal compared to that of Black Lives Matter protests the year before, the language of “terrorist” used by media outlets during the Capitol insurrection was

used by both far-right news outlets and Trump himself to describe racial justice protesters the year before (Dewan, 2020).

While the Capitol insurrection provides a crucial example into the comparison of the police response between white nationalist insurrectionists and Black Lives Matter protesters, it also outlined the way that the use of “domestic terrorism” has the potential to further surveillance policies that target racialized communities. Nicole Chavez from CNN tweeted a response to the divide between federal and local law enforcement response at the insurrection and emphasized the need to separate the event from a protest due to the way that “the insurrection at the Capitol was triggered by lies and deeply rooted racist stereotypes” (Chavez, 2021). Although CNN’s Twitter responses tended to remain focused on emphasizing the insurrection as “domestic terrorism”, Chavez highlighted how the use of the term fails to acknowledge the way that surveillance policies that emerge from security responses have consistently been used against Black-led social movements (Chavez, 2021). The tweet and accompanied news article highlight how the framing of movements like Black Lives Matter as “riots” and “domestic terrorism” continues the use of legislation to further institutionalized violence against racialized communities and has been implemented even further due to comments from Fox News and Trump who have categorized Black Lives Matter as “domestic terrorism”. This same language used to describe the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 by far-right news is now being implemented to describe the violence by white supremacists at the Capitol insurrection that has led to

discussions by journalists and lawmakers for the need to expand surveillance policy. In other words, the term “domestic terrorism” is being used by both sides to indict the other, but in both cases its usage leads to calls to expand surveillance policy, which will disproportionately harm racialized communities. It is too reductive to imagine this scenario as “both sides call each other names” though, because it operates through the institutional structure of white supremacy that is embedded within policy and bureaucratic decision-making. The creation of domestic terrorism laws has failed to address white violence, but instead continues the image of the racialized “terrorist” figure that furthers surveillance policies that targets Black activists and brown Americans. In light of the Capitol insurrection, this potential for expanded domestic terrorism legislation has already begun with announcements from the Biden administration and the FBI on proposed policies that aims to address the aftermath of January 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Policy Implications**

Shortly after Biden took office, federal government departments, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security began to develop plans to expand upon previous “domestic terrorism” legislation. Yamiche Alcindor, an MSNBC contributor, tweeted about comments from FBI director Christopher Wray regarding the insurrection saying: “...Wray making clear white supremacy is the biggest domestic terrorism threat in this country. He said white supremacy is a “persistent, evolving threat” and represents the “biggest chunk of racially motivated violent

extremism in the U.S.” (Alcindor, 2021). Wray’s comments emerged in reference to the Capitol insurrection, yet the FBI’s knowledge of the problem of far-right violence traces back to the COINTELPRO era and has failed to be addressed despite the increase of funding and development of specific task forces. Despite this, the Biden administration and federal law enforcement began to state the importance of addressing white supremacist violence and moved to increase “domestic terrorism” legislation.

In late January, the National Terrorism Advisory System released a warning to the public on the “potential violence by domestic extremists” resulting from the election outcomes which The Washington Post reported was typically reserved for “warnings about attacks by foreign actors” (The Washington Post, 2021). Following the Capitol insurrection, there has been a rise in responses by federal actors to expand upon current security programs in order to stop the potential for further events similar to that of January 6<sup>th</sup>. The Biden administration, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security began to engage in discussions surrounding the introduction of new policies and legislation which would emerge under the previous federal initiatives on “domestic terrorism”. This resulted in a new security program entitled the “National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism,” announced on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2021, that aims to address “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate for the superiority of the white race and anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists, such as militia violent extremists” (The White House, 2021). This new strategy includes the expansion of domestic terrorism

prevention resources and services as well as designating “Domestic Violent Extremism” as a new National Priority Area in the Department of Homeland Security (The White House, 2021). While it is promising that the US government and law enforcement are using their powers and resources to specifically apprehend white nationalists in an effort to combat far-right violence, it is also crucial to acknowledge that the expansion of these kinds of programs tend to disproportionately affect racialized communities.

The Biden administration’s new domestic terrorism strategy is not the only program that emerged following the Capitol insurrection. On May 10th 2021, the Department of Homeland Security announced their online strategy to scan for potential “domestic terrorist” discussions that would lead to similar events that occurred on January 6th through a “warning system” conducted by employees who will scan for specific narratives that may encourage these acts (Loeb, 2021). Following this news, an organization of “amateur sleuths” called the “Sedition Hunters” has been working with the FBI to try to identify those at the Capitol insurrection, presenting concerns over the precedent this will set and the potential that these programs and the normalization of civilian surveillance will result in further targeting and profiling of racialized communities (Yaffe-Bellany, 2021). In June of 2020, The Department of Homeland Security announced that they have developed a wing of their intelligence division for the purpose of combatting “domestic terrorism” in addition to a newly constructed center that aims to provide aid to state and local law enforcement agencies to stop “violent extremists” in light

of the Capitol insurrection (Sullivan, 2021). This news emerges as the most recent update on policy initiatives that have been developed under the Biden administration following January 6th. The language used during this press conference closely mirrors the narrative that we have seen reflected since the Cold War era's legislation on "domestic terrorism" that included a statement by the Homeland Security Secretary saying: "Individuals who may be radicalizing, or have radicalized, to violence typically exhibit behaviors that are recognizable to many but are best understood by those closest to them, such as friends, family, and classmates" (Sullivan, 2021). This call to the fears of the public to be observant to those around them dangerously appeals to inherent personal biases, stereotyping and racism that has historically been reinforced through news media's "Arab terrorist" and "Black Identity Extremist" narratives. This in turn engages in what bell hooks calls the "threatening Other" where terror is rooted in anti-Blackness where the community in the public sphere participates in the profiling and surveillance of racialized communities which then appeals to the political structure rooted in white supremacy (hooks, 1997).

We can see how law enforcement participates in profiling of movements and actions by Black and brown Americans deemed to be signs of "domestic terrorism" both federally and locally. Concerns over the enactment of policy measures in response to "domestic terrorism" claims have been at the heart of discussions surrounding the responses from the Biden administration and Congress. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, Human Rights Watch and 151 other organizations



wrote a letter to Congress urging them to halt any proposed expansions on “domestic terrorism” charges outlining that “confronting white nationalist violence is not a question of not having appropriate tools to employ, but a failure to use those on hand” (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Furthermore, the coalition stated the ways in which these federal policies specifically target Black and brown Americans leads to over-criminalization and advanced law enforcement surveillance tactics (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

In a study on post-9/11 police surveillance, Alimahomed-Wilson discovered that the racialized state surveillance of Arab and Muslim Americans emerges from the post-9/11 “terrorist” fear where the use of surveillance by the FBI reinforced inherent biases of the “Arab terrorist” and results in the criminalization of normal behaviors and characteristics that are only deemed to be proof of a “terrorist” because of them being Muslim and/or Arab (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019). This profiling of Black and brown Americans on the basis of concerns of “domestic terrorism” means policies become rooted in perceived notions of a “racialized terrorist” that we have seen within media. Through examining the media responses from CNN, The Washington Post, The New York Times and Fox News during the Capitol insurrection, we can see the way that the responses from journalists relying on “domestic terrorism” build upon these histories and work towards the expansion of surveillance and security programs similar to the Patriot Act post-9/11 that will result in further harm towards Black and Brown communities.

## CONCLUSION

The influence of “domestic terrorism” discourse on United States security initiatives has historical roots in the expansion of modern surveillance and the racial profiling of Black and Brown Americans that many scholars have indicated has continued since the 1960s (Joseph, 2006; Taylor, 2016; Saito, 2008; Kumar, 2020). By analyzing how the racialized history of American domestic terrorism policy continues to be reproduced today, we can better understand how institutionalized white supremacy exists as a political system rooted in structures of power and control. This is continued through the creation of the racialized “terrorist threat” which traces back to histories of slavery and is continued within narratives of citizenship that constructs who is considered to be a “terrorist” and who is not. These legislative measures have resulted in technological and traditional data surveillance advancements that disproportionately harm Black and brown Americans as well as the labelling of the racialized activist as a “domestic terrorist” (Dewan, 2020; Clarke, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021; Greenberg, 2011; Joseph, 2006; Winter & Weinberger, 2017; German, 2020). The surveillance and policing of Black and Brown Americans under domestic terrorism legislation is an institutional problem that highlights how these policies have historically targeted racialized communities while failing to address far-right violence and racism.

Through a case study of the 2021 Capitol insurrection, this project examined how the racialized history of security policies and state surveillance is crucial to unpack in order to analyze how new security legislation in response to white

nationalist threats would, counter-intuitively, will target racialized communities. An examination of the Capitol insurrection, and the history that influences it, shows that despite liberal media's desire to recognize the severity of far-right violence, the use of the term "domestic terrorism" continues to participate in the political structure of white supremacy where the distribution of political power and surveillance continues to be racialized (Mills, 1997). While understanding the political system of white supremacy that Mills addresses is a crucial component in examining the influence on policy-making and bureaucratic power, critiquing the ways that white nationalist violence displayed by the insurrectionists operates and is reproduced within digital media is equally as important. By deconstructing how white supremacy both operates on an institutional and social level, we can see what is at stake in naming the Capitol insurrection "domestic terrorism". In understanding this, it is clear how the well-intentioned use of the term "domestic terrorism" in coverage of the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> threatens to continue to result in the development of policing initiatives that targets Black and brown Americans. Furthermore, a critique of the events through a historical and discourse analysis lens allows for a better understanding of how language and framing influence policy creation and how the history of surveillance policy in the United States continues to amplify the idea of the "racialized terrorist" and fails to address the problem of far-right and white supremacist violence.

## REFERENCES

- ACLU (2021). More About FBI Spying. Retrieved from *American Civil Liberties Union*: <https://www.aclu.org/other/more-about-fbi-spying>.
- ACLU. [@ACLU]. (2021, February 22). *Time and time again, domestic terrorism police powers have been used to harm Black and Brown communities. There is no need for a new law, law enforcement has all the powers it needs* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ACLU/status/1363990034202959876>.
- Ackerman, S. (2015, February 13). Anti-terrorism summit reinforces ‘fear and hate’ towards Muslims, critics warn; Muslim leaders say White House conference to ‘counter violent extremism’ is well intentioned but risks stigmatizing and endangering Muslims in America. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: [https://go-gale-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=ocul\\_mcmaster&id=GAL/A401474386&v=2.1&it=r&sid=ebsco](https://go-gale-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=ocul_mcmaster&id=GAL/A401474386&v=2.1&it=r&sid=ebsco).
- Alamo-Pastrana, C. & Hoynes, W. (2020). Racialization of News: Constructing and Challenging Professional Journalism as “White Media”. *Humanity & Society*, 44(1), 67-91. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0160597618820071>.
- Alcindor, Y. [@Yamiche]. (2021, March 2). *FBI Director Wray making clear white supremacy is the biggest domestic terrorism threat in this country. He said white supremacy is a “persistent, evolving threat” and the “biggest chunk” of racially motivated violent extremism in the U.S.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Yamiche/status/1366779909402673159>.
- Alene, J. [@JoyceWhiteVance]. (2021, January 6). *Lots of people need to be held accountable for supporting this domestic terrorism. That’s what this is. Insurrection & terrorism. And anyone who fueled it or could stop it now is as responsible as the people breaking into the Capitol* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JoyceWhiteVance/status/1346910435413422080>.
- Alimahomed-Wilson, S. (2019). When the FBI Knocks: Racialized State Surveillance of Muslims. *Critical Sociology*, 45(6), 871-887. <https://journals-sagepub-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0896920517750742>.
- Allam, L. (2020, December 29). Nashville Bombing Revives Debate Over Which

Acts Get Terrorism Label. Retrieved from *NPR*:  
<https://www.npr.org/2020/12/29/951026739/nashville-bombing-revives-debate-over-which-acts-get-terrorism-label>.

AP. [@AP]. (2021, January 7). *President-elect Joe Biden calls the pro-Trump mob at the U.S. Capitol “domestic terrorists” and blames President Donald Trump for the violence* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/AP/status/1347259936443686913>.

Aspervil, A. (2019). If the Feds Watching: The FBI’s Use of a “Black Identity Extremist” Domestic Terrorism Designation to Target Black Activists & Violate Equal Protection. *Howard Law Journal*, 62(3), 907-945.  
<https://heinonline-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/howlj62&id=947&collection=journals>.

Authorization for the Use of Military Force of 2001, 115 Stat. 224, 107th Congress (2001). <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ40/PLAW-107publ40.pdf>.

Baksh, N. (2018, January 18). Montreal mother’s odyssey to rescue daughter from ISIS pays off. Retrieved from *CBC*:  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/daughter-isis-returns-1.4490313>.

Barkun, M. (2011). *Chasing Phantoms: Reality, Imagination, and Homeland Security Since 9/11*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Biden, J. [@JoeBiden]. (2021, January 6). *Let me be very clear: the scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not represent who we are. What we are seeing is a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent, it’s disorder. It borders on sedition, and it must end. Now.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JoeBiden/status/1346928275470299142>.

Biden, J. [@JoeBiden]. (2021, January 7). *What we witnessed yesterday was not dissent- it was disorder. They weren’t protesters- they were rioters, insurrectionists, and domestic terrorists. I wish we could say we couldn’t see it coming, but that isn’t true. We could.* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/JoeBiden/status/1347276822078218241>.

Bigo, D. (2006). Security, Exception, Ban and Surveillance. In D. Lyon, *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond* (pp. 46-68). London: Willan Publishing. <https://www.taylorfrancis->

[com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9781843926818/theorizing-surveillance-david-lyon](https://www.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/books/edit/10.4324/9781843926818/theorizing-surveillance-david-lyon).

Bradley, C.A. & Goldsmith, J.L. (2016). Obama's AUMF Legacy. *The American Journal of International Law*, 110(4), 628-645. [https://www.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/stable/10.5305/amerjintelaw.110.4.0628?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/stable/10.5305/amerjintelaw.110.4.0628?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

Brayne, S. (2017). Big Data Surveillance: The Case of Policing. *American Sociology Review*, 82(5), 977-1008. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417725865>.

Brennan Center for Justice (2019, September 9). Why Countering Violent Extremism Programs Are Bad Policy. Retrieved from *Brennan Center for Justice*: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-countering-violent-extremism-programs-are-bad-policy>.

Breuninger, K. (2021, January 6). Watch: Joe Biden to address riots at the Capitol. Retrieved from *CNBC*: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/06/watch-joe-biden-to-address-riots-at-us-capitol.html>.

Browne, S. (2015). Notes on Surveillance Studies: Through the Door of No Return. In S. Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (pp. 31-62). Durham: Duke University Press. <https://www.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/stable/j.ctv11cw89p.7>.

Brumfield, B. (2015, February 13). Chapel Hill Shooting: When is a crime a 'hate crime'? Retrieved from *CNN*: <https://www.cnn.com/2015/02/12/us/chapel-hill-shooting-hate-crime-explainer/index.html>.

Bush, C. [@RepCori]. (2021, January 6). *I believe the Republican members of Congress who have incited this domestic terror attack through their attempts to overturn the election must face consequences. They have broken their sacred Oath of Office. I will be introducing a resolution calling for their expulsion* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RepCori/status/1346926083350794240>.

Cabrera, A. [@AnaCabrera]. (2021, May 26). *In a statement obtained by CNN, Gladys Sicknick writes, "My son, Capitol Police Officer, Brian Sicknick, died on January 7, 2021. He died because of the insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol Building on January 6"* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AnaCabrera/status/1397633373250727936>.

Carson, A. [@RepAndreCarson]. (2021, January 6). *I said it then and I'll say it*

*again now -- what happened at the Capitol today is domestic terrorism. It's the greatest threat to our national security, and our own President is encouraging it* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/RepAndreCarson/status/1346969659816501248>.

Castro, J. [@JulianCastro]. (2021, January 6). *Make no mistake: the domestic terrorism at the U.S. Capitol by armed protesters is not only Trump's fault alone. This is the result of leaders in the Republican Party fueling conspiracy, division, and hatred for years. And it won't be fixed until they lose their office* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/JulianCastro/status/1346923776479535107>.

Chavez, N. [@NicoleChavz]. (2021, January 13). *I wrote about how the insurrection at the Capitol was triggered by lies and deeply rooted racist stereotypes. Experts and lawmakers say you can't compare the rioters motivations to Black Lives Matter protesters* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/NicoleChavz/status/1349541003779256320>.

Chermak, S. M. & Gruenewald, J. (2006). The Media's Coverage of Domestic Terrorism. *Justice Quarterly*, 23(4), 428-461. <https://www.tandfonline.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/doi/full/10.1080/07418820600985305>.

Choudhury, N. & Cyril, M. (2019, March 21). The FBI Won't Hand Over Its Surveillance Records on 'Black Identity Extremists,' so We're Suing. Retrieved from the ACLU: <https://www.aclu.org/blog/racial-justice/race-and-criminal-justice/fbi-wont-hand-over-its-surveillance-records-black>.

Clarke, C. P. (2021, January 22). *A New Era of Far-Right Violence*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/22/opinion/domestic-terrorism-far-right-insurrection.html>

Clinton, H. [@HillaryClinton]. (2021, January 6). *Today, domestic terrorists attacked a foundation of our democracy: the peaceful transfer of power following free elections. We must reestablish the rule of law and hold them accountable. Democracy is fragile. Our leaders must live up to their responsibility to protect it* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton/status/1346947444664369152>.

CNN. (2021, January 6). *Van Jones: US Capitol riot is treason and rebellion. Period*. [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLBLgH3PAel>.

CNN Politics [@CNNPolitics]. (2021, June 1). *Michael Flynn and the endless*

*insurrection | Analysis* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/CNNPolitics/status/1399872670079107073>.

Cohen, Z. [@ZcohenCNN]. (2021, January 7). *CNN officially characterizing today's violence on Capitol Hill today as domestic terrorism* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ZcohenCNN/status/1346995206269194240?s=20>.

Corbin, C.M. (2017). Essay: Terrorists Are Always Muslim But Never White: At the Intersection of Critical Race Theory and Propaganda. *Fordham Law Review*, 86(2), 455-485.

Cruz, T. [@SenTedCruz]. *The attack at the Capitol was a despicable act of terrorism and a choking assault on our democratic system. We must come together and put this anger and division behind us. We must, and I am confident we will, have a peaceful and orderly transition of power. My full statement:* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/SenTedCruz/status/1347089034846330880>.

Cunningham, D. (2004). *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1525/9780520939240>.

Dewan, A. (2020, July 26<sup>th</sup>). Trump is calling protesters who disagree with him terrorists. That puts him in the company of the world's autocrats. Retrieved from CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/25/politics/us-protests-trump-terrorists-intl/index.html>.

Engel, R., Plessner, B., Connor, T. & Schuppe, J. (2016, May 16). The Americans: 15 Who Left the United States to Join ISIS. Retrieved from NBC: <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/americans-15-who-left-united-states-join-isis-n573611>.

Fox News [@FoxNews]. (2021, January 17). *FBI arrest Florida 'hardcore leftist' who plotted armed attack on pro-Trump protesters at state Capitol* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1350835464635379713>.

Fox News [@FoxNews]. (2021, May 28). *Sister of pilot killed on 9/11 slams comparison between Capitol riot and 2001 terrorist attacks* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1398358916140990468>.

Fox News [@FoxNews]. (2021, May 20). *Squad Dems break with Pelosi and reject \$1.9 billion for additional Capitol security* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1395472420593704964>.



Fox News [@FoxNews]. (2021, March 1). *Trump says he requested 10K National Guard troops at Capitol on day of riot* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1366362163888197635>.

Fox News [@FoxNews]. (2021, January 18). *Twitter bans Trump, but left wing activist charged in Capitol riot still has access to post on social media platform* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/FoxNews/status/1350956235630194689>.

Garvie, C., Bedoya, A. & Frankle, J. (2016). The Perpetual Line-Up: Unregulated Police Face Recognition in America. *Georgetown Law: Center on Privacy & Technology*. <https://www.perpetuallineup.org/>.

Gambino, L. (2021, January 7). Biden decries Trump mob: ‘Don’t call them protesters. They were domestic terrorists’. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/07/joe-biden-trump-mob-domestic-terrorists>.

German, M. (2020, June 26<sup>th</sup>). The FBI Targets a New Generation of Black Activists. Retrieved from *Brennan Center for Justice*: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/fbi-targets-new-generation-black-activists>.

Greenberg, I. (2011). The FBI and the Making of the Terrorist Threat. *Radical History Review* (11), 35-50.

Gross, J. (2020, October 24). Far-Right Groups Are Behind Most of U.S. Terrorist Attacks, Report Finds. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/us/domestic-terrorist-groups.html>.

Guariglia, M. & Maass, D. (2020, September 23). How Police Fund Surveillance Technology is Part of the Problem. Retrieved from *EFF*: <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2020/09/how-police-fund-surveillance-technology-part-problem>.

Haberman, M. [@maggieNYT]. (2021, January 6). *Based on images on TV, the 6 p.m. curfew in DC for the rioters at the Capitol doesn't seem to be being enforced with the same vigor that curfews were enforced against people who rioted in DC last year* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/maggieNYT/status/1346977253675118593>.

Haberman, M. [@maggieNYT]. (2021, January 22). *Military Veterans*

*Overrepresented In Those Charged in Jan. 6 Capitol Riot: NPR* [Tweet].  
Twitter. <https://twitter.com/maggieNYT/status/1352608367689273345>.

Haberman, M. [@maggieNYT]. (2021, January 8). *Some new details about the lead-up to Wednesday's march: people at the White House knew a march was going to happen from the rally to the Capitol. The president told aides he wanted to march but aides said no, citing security* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/maggieNYT/status/1347729067857096706>.

Haberman, M. [@maggieNYT]. (2021, January 6). *The protesters didn't hang a US flag from the Capitol balcony. They hung a Trump flag* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/maggieNYT/status/1346928649455472643>.

Harriot, M. [@michealharriot]. (2021, January 7). *"We don't need new domestic terrorism laws... We need to take the laws we already have and apply them to white people... It tastes just like chicken!"* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/michaelharriot/status/1347952035489083393>.

Harwood, J. [@JohnJHarwood]. (2021, January 6). *This is correct. Fox News bears an awful lot of responsibility for this* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/JohnJHarwood/status/1346923571302555648>.

Hasan, M. [@mehdirhasan]. (2021, January 6). *To be clear: Fox News, OANN, the far-right echo chamber incited a lot of what we're seeing today. But the rest of us in the so-called mainstream or liberal media need to accept that, for far too long, we weren't clear-eyed about the nature of the threat that Trump/Trumpism posed* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/mehdirhasan/status/1346933401199251456>.

Hasan, M. [@mehdirhasan]. (2021, January 7). *"We wouldn't be calling Black people or Muslim people or immigrants who had marched and stormed the Capitol 'terrorists' or 'thugs'. Unfortunately, we'd likely be calling many of them 'injured', 'arrested' or 'dead'"* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/mehdirhasan/status/1347078491209129985>.

Hayes, C. [@chrishayes]. (2021, January 8). *This is a really bad idea. The government absolutely \*already\* has the legal tools it needs, and the new administration and FBI should focus on using those powers smartly and effectively.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/chrishayes/status/1347584336355336192>.

hooks, b. (1997). *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Human Rights Watch (2021, January 25<sup>th</sup>). Coalition Urges Congress Not to Expand Domestic Terrorism Charges. Retrieved from *Human Rights Watch*: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/25/coalition-urges-congress-not-expand-domestic-terrorism-charges>.
- Hurd, W. [@WillHurd]. (2021, January 6). *This isn't a peaceful protest. This is an attack on our democracy and domestic terrorism to try to stop certifying elections. This should be treated as a coup led by a president that will not be peacefully removed from power* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/WillHurd/status/1346912043031429122>.
- Jones, S.G., et al. (2020). *The War Comes Home: The Evolution of Domestic Terrorism in the United States*. Center for Strategic & International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-comes-home-evolution-domestic-terrorism-united-states>.
- Joseph, P.E. (2006). *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*. New York: Owl Books.
- Kazi, N. (2019). *Islamophobia, Race and Global Politics*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Inc. <http://libaccess.mcmaster.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1891781>.
- Kornfield, M. (2021, January 7). What happened at the Capitol 'was domestic terrorism,' lawmakers and experts say. Retrieved from *The Washington Post*: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/01/07/domestic-terrorism-capitol-mob/>.
- Kumar, D. (2020). Terrorcraft: Empire and the Making of the Racialized Terrorist Threat. *Race & Class*, 62(2), 34-60.
- Leslie, D. (2020). *Understanding bias in facial recognition technologies: an explainer*. The Alan Turing Institute. [https://www.turing.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/understanding\\_bias\\_in\\_facial\\_recognition\\_technology.pdf](https://www.turing.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/understanding_bias_in_facial_recognition_technology.pdf).
- Levin, S. (2018, May 11). Black activist jailed for his Facebook posts speaks out about secret FBI surveillance. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/11/rakem-balogun-interview-black-identity-extremists-fbi-surveillance>.
- Levin, S. (2018, May 25). Stabbed at a neo-Nazi rally, called a criminal: how

police targeted a black activist. Retrieved from *The Guardian*:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/25/neo-nazi-rally-california-stabbing-police-target-black-activist>.

Loeb, S. (2021, May 10). DHS launches warning system to find domestic terrorism threats on public social media. Retrieved from *NBC News*:  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/dhs-launches-warning-system-find-domestic-terrorism-threats-public-social-n1266707>.

Lyon, D. (2018). *The Culture of Surveillance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mamdani, M. (2002). Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), 766-775.

Marcetic, B. (2016, August 31). The FBI's Secret War. Retrieved from *JACOBIN*:  
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/fbi-cointelpro-new-left-panthers-muslim-surveillance>.

Mills, C. W. (1997). *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

MSNBC. [@MSNBC]. (2021, January 6). "This is our new domestic terror threat – brainwashed Americans," @NicolleDWallance says after Trump supporters storm the US Capitol in protest of Pres.-elect Biden's win. [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/MSNBC/status/1346964507793362945>.

Mystal, E. [@ElieNYC]. (2021, January 8). So with you. Have these people learned \*nothing\* from post-9/11? [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/ElieNYC/status/1347585500316622848>.

National Constitution Center (2019, January 27). Looking back at the Church Committee. Retrieved from *National Constitution Center- Constitution Daily*: <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/looking-back-at-the-church-committee>.

Neff, J. & Dewan, S. (2019, June 12). He Killed 3 Muslim Students. But Did He Commit a Hate Crime? Retrieved from *The New York Times*:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/12/us/hate-crime-muslim-students.html>.

Pressley, A. [@RepPressley]. (2021, January 8). Every complicit actor must be held accountable. Donald Trump must immediately be impeached & removed from office. Every @GOP member who aided & abetted domestic terrorism by perpetuating misinformation about the outcome of

*the election must resign or be expelled from Congress* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/RepPressley/status/1347596002488889348>.

Rosenthal, A. (2017, October 19). The FBI's Black Phantom Menace. Retrieved from *The New York Times*:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/19/opinion/columnists/fbi-blacks-civil-rights.html>.

Ryan, M. (2010). *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcmu/reader.action?docID=480480>.

Saito, N.T. (2008). Enhancing Whose Security? People of Color and the Post-September 11 Expansion of Law Enforcement and Intelligence Powers. In C. Stokes, *Race and Human Rights* (pp. 28-89). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Smart Policing Initiative. (2017). Smart Policing Initiative: Data, Analysis, Solutions. Retrieved from *The U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance*:  
<https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/SmartPolicingFS.pdf>.

Smith, B. [@benyt]. (2021, January 6). “*Washington Post EIC Marty Baron has told Post reporters to use “mob,” not “protesters,” to describe people storming capitol, a staffer tells me*” [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/benyt/status/1346916596556722180>.

Spencer, R. C. (2017, November 13). Black Identity Extremists: COINTELPRO 2017. Retrieved from *Black Perspectives*: <https://www.aaihs.org/black-identity-extremists-cointelpro-2017/>.

Sullivan, E. (2021, May 11). Homeland Security announces new efforts to combat violent extremism in the U.S. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/11/us/politics/homeland-security-domestic-terrorism.html>.

Tani, M. [@maxwelltani]. (2021, January 6). “*CBS News internal guidance also advises staff to avoid the coup or insurrection label: “We don’t need to go out of our way to give this an overly dramatic label, This story doesn’t need that. We should not be calling this an attempted coup or a terrorist attack”*” [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/maxwelltani/status/1347197103013982214>.

Tani, M. [@maxwelltani]. (2021, January 6). “*CNN just sent internal guidance*”

*saying staff can refer to the Capitol Hill rioting today as “domestic terrorism.”* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/maxwelltani/status/1347018373721415682>.

Tani, M. [@maxwelltani]. (2021, January 7). *“NPR’s guidance yesterday was to refer to the group as a mob, pro-Trump extremists, or rioters, or to refer to the event as an insurrection, but advised reporters not to refer to the group as terrorists.”* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/maxwelltani/status/1347197103013982214>.

Tapper, J. [@jaketapper]. (2021, January 6). *“Domestic Terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature”* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/jaketapper/status/1346954572942565376>.

Taylor, K.Y. (2016). *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

The Lead CNN [@TheLeadCNN]. (2021, January 7). *“‘Trial by combat. Take back our country. You have to show strength. Stand up and fight.’ Those are the words the terrorist mob heard from President Trump and his allies before they followed the President’s instruction.”* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/TheLeadCNN/status/1347283438651514897>.

The Washington Post [@washingtonpost]. (2021, January 26). *D.C. National Guard commander says Pentagon restricted his authority ahead of Capitol riot, which cost time as day turned deadly* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1354102308196528131>.

The Washington Post [@washingtonpost]. (2021, January 28). *Opinion: Republican weakness enables domestic terrorism* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1354864369553825798>.

The Washington Post [@washingtonpost]. (2021, January 29). *Opinion: We’re still too complacent about the threat of violent domestic extremism* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1355030881912713219>.

The Washington Post [@washingtonpost]. (2021, January 27). *U.S. government issues rare warning to Americans about potential violence by domestic extremists agitated by Biden’s election* [Tweet]. Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1354501041413386251>.

- The White House. (2021, June 15). FACT SHEET: National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism. [Press Release].  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/15/fact-sheet-national-strategy-for-countering-domestic-terrorism/>.
- Vera, A., Toropin, K. & Campbell, J. (2020, July 20). US attorney requests DHS investigation after video shows masked, camouflaged federal authorities arresting protesters in Portland. Retrieved from CNN:  
[https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/18/us/portland-arrests-federal-authorities/index.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twcnbrk&utm\\_content=2020-07-18T05%3A34%3A03&utm\\_term=link](https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/18/us/portland-arrests-federal-authorities/index.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twcnbrk&utm_content=2020-07-18T05%3A34%3A03&utm_term=link).
- Winter, J. & Weinberger, S. (2017, October 6<sup>th</sup>). The FBI's New U.S. Terrorist Threat: 'Black Identity Extremists'. Retrieved from *Foreign Policy*:  
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/06/the-fbi-has-identified-a-new-domestic-terrorist-threat-and-its-black-identity-extremists/>.
- Yaffe-Belany, D. (2021, June 7). The Sedition Hunters. Retrieved from *Bloomberg*: [https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2021-capitol-riot-sedition-hunters/?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=businessweek&utm\\_source=twitter&cmpid=socialflow-twitter-businessweek&utm\\_campaign=socialflow-organic](https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2021-capitol-riot-sedition-hunters/?utm_medium=social&utm_content=businessweek&utm_source=twitter&cmpid=socialflow-twitter-businessweek&utm_campaign=socialflow-organic).
- Yang, J. [@originalspin]. (2021, January 6). *There were live pipe bombs and incendiary devices placed at the Capitol. You can't call this anything other than terrorism, directly incited by the outgoing president* [Tweet]. Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/originalspin/status/1346955638115430400>.
- Zerkel, M. (2021, January 14). Why we should rethink calling white supremacist violence "terrorism". Retrieved from AFSC:  
<https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/problem-labeling-violence-domestic-terrorism>.