

You Can't Rewrite Facts

Trump is trying to gaslight the country by whitewashing January 6

By Dan Rather, Team Steady

SEP 29, 2025

January 6, 2021, will — or at least should — always be considered one of the darkest days in our nation's history. It is a date cemented to Donald Trump's attempt to overturn a free and fair election that he lost. Trump had a lead responsibility for the violence that day, according to an exhaustive congressional study, among other analyses.

Those are facts, whether Trump likes them or not. Many Americans hope that he cannot rewrite the past, that he cannot erase history. But he and his Republican colleagues are determined to try. And they are bringing the full force of their powers toward efforts to make it happen.

House Republicans have formed a new committee to reinvestigate the insurrection and deliver a rosier report, no doubt demanded by the White House. Trump calls it all a “hoax” and the rioters “political prisoners.” The president is now calling FBI agents stationed in the crowd that day at the Capitol “agitators.”

It is all semantic bunk.

At the time, January 6 was as close as we've ever come to losing our democracy, and the list of those at fault will always begin with Donald Trump.

The January 6 riots did not just happen for no reason. A group of protesters did not march on the Capitol by accident. No, the president of the United States sent out a call to action to his supporters, after months of claiming the results of the 2020 presidential election were rigged and that he was the actual victor. And Donald Trump had been sowing seeds of doubt about election veracity well before Election Day.

Now he is trying to erase the worst and rewrite the rest of what happened that day. So in case it is needed, here is a brief history:

On every January 6 following a presidential election, a joint session of Congress is convened to officially count the Electoral College votes. The vice president, as president of the Senate, presides over the count and announces the results. Historically, this has been a formality.

At noon on January 6, 2021, a “Save America” rally convened at the Ellipse just south of the White House. Trump addressed the crowd in person, reiterating that the 2020 election had been “stolen by emboldened radical-left Democrats” and demanding that Vice President Mike Pence reject Biden's victory. “If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore,” he warned.

The mob, many of whom belonged to far-right extremist groups like the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, marched to the United States Capitol with the intention of stopping the certification of the election results. Thousands breached the building's perimeter, climbed walls, broke windows, and forced their way inside the Rotunda. They proceeded to loot and vandalize the Capitol and assault law enforcement for hours.

At 2:24 pm, Trump tweeted that Pence “didn't have the courage to do what should have been done.” Supporters on social media then called for Pence to be hunted down. Rioters in the Capitol were heard saying they wanted to execute the vice president. Trump's reaction to the threats against Pence was “So what?”

Trump resisted sending in the National Guard to quell the insurrection. After multiple calls for help from Republican lawmakers inside the Capitol, he posted a Twitter video repeating the stolen election claims but did tell the rioters to “go home in peace.”

Pence and the lawmakers remained unharmed, but 174 police officers were injured, and one died of a stroke the following day. One protester was shot and killed trying to climb in through a window. Four officers died by suicide within seven months of the insurrection. The rioters caused \$2.7 million in property damage, according to the U.S. attorney’s office.

Eventually, 1,424 arrests were made; 1,010 pleaded guilty; two-thirds served jail time. The leader of the Proud Boys, Enrique Tarrio, received the longest sentence, 22 years in prison.

On January 13, the House impeached Trump — for a second time — for inciting an insurrection. Though the Senate voted 57-43 to convict, that fell short of the 67 votes needed. The Senate also blocked a bill that would have created an independent bipartisan commission to investigate, so the House did it alone.

On June 9, 2022, the House Select Committee on the January 6th Attack held its first public hearing. In her opening statement, committee vice chair and Republican Congresswoman Liz Cheney said, “On the morning of January 6, President Donald Trump’s intention was to remain president of the United States, despite the lawful outcome of the 2020 election and in violation of his Constitutional obligation to relinquish power.”

Six months later, the committee issued an 845-page final report. According to The New York Times’s brief of the report, Trump “lied to the American people, ignored all evidence refuting his false fraud claims, pressured state and federal officials to throw out election results favoring his challenger, encouraged a violent mob to storm the Capitol and even signaled support for the execution of his own vice president.”

In August 2023, special counsel Jack Smith presented his findings to a grand jury, which indicted the president on four charges: conspiracy to defraud the United States, conspiracy to obstruct official proceedings, obstruction of and attempt to obstruct an official proceeding, and conspiracy against rights.

Trump’s efforts to change the narrative and absolve himself officially began on the first day of his second term. He signed an executive order granting clemency to all of the insurrectionists, including those convicted of violent crimes. He also purged the Department of Justice, which has since dropped the charges against him, of almost everyone involved in January 6 investigations and prosecutions.

Since then many DOJ webpages with information about January 6 have been deleted. Thankfully several organizations have archived the information, which helped while researching this writing.

Recently, Trump has pushed the House to convene a new committee to “reinvestigate” the January 6 House investigation. Unsurprisingly, he has gotten his wish. Many House Republicans are still bitter about the first select committee’s findings. According to Rep. Clay Higgins, a Republican from Louisiana, “That thing was never legitimate. It was always biased.” Higgins served on the first committee and is now on the second.

Speaker Mike Johnson called the new panel “a committee investigating the previous committee.” And characterized the prior investigation as “rigged,” on CNN.

Make no mistake, January 6 has been investigated and reviewed. The original House investigation was not the only one. The Capitol Police inspector general’s office issued several reports. There was a bipartisan Senate review and one from retired Army Lt. General Russel Honoré. Special counsel Smith’s investigation led to a presidential indictment.

The purpose of the new “investigation” is to minimize Trump’s culpability and lay blame elsewhere.

“They can’t even seem to settle on which conspiracy theory they want to advance. Was it Antifa? Did it not happen at all? Did Donald Trump really win the election? They can’t figure out what it is they want to say, and it’s because it’s just a tissue of lies and conspiracy theories,” Democratic Representative Jamie Raskin told Politico.

Trump is also making noises about going after former FBI director Christopher Wray, suggesting he covered up FBI agents “acting as agitators and insurrectionists” during January 6. He accused Wray of “inappropriate behavior” and said to NBC News that he “would think” the Justice Department is investigating him.

This followed his Saturday post that the FBI “secretly placed, against all Rules, Regulations, Protocols, and Standards, 274 FBI Agents into the Crowd just prior to, and during, the January 6th Hoax.”

These unsubstantiated claims have been floating around for several years. A December 2024 DOJ inspector general’s report found no evidence that undercover FBI agents were at the protest.

This is a short history of an attack on our democracy perpetrated by the sitting president. It is a story that must be preserved for the ages. This blight on our collective history should not be whitewashed because Trump in 2025 doesn’t like how Trump’s 2021 actions almost ended “the last great experiment,” American democracy.