

Dear Conservatives, I Apologize

My "Team" was Taken in By Full-Spectrum Propaganda

**Dr Naomi Wolf** ✓

Mar 9



3,204



3,743



There is no way to avoid this moment. The formal letter of apology. From me. To Conservatives and to those who “put America first” everywhere.

It’s tempting to sweep this confrontation with my own gullibility under the rug — to “move on” without ever acknowledging that I was duped, and that as a result I made mistakes in judgement, and that these mistakes, multiplied by the tens of thousands and millions on the part of people just like me, hurt millions of other people like you all, in existential ways.

Outspoken with Dr Naomi Wolf is a reader-supported publication. To receive new posts and support my work, consider becoming a free or paid subscriber.

But that erasure of personal and public history would be wrong.

I owe you a full-throated apology.

I believed a farrago of lies. And, as a result of these lies, and my credulity — and the credulity of people similarly situated to me - many conservatives’ reputations are being tarnished, on false bases. The proximate cause of this letter of apology is the airing, two nights ago, of excerpts from tens of thousands of hours of security camera footage from the United States Capitol taken on Jan 6, 2021. The footage was released by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) to Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson [<https://www.axios.com/2023/03/08/mccarthy-defends-jan-6-footage-tucker-carlson-fox-news>].

While “fact-checkers” state that it is “misinformation” to claim that Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi was in charge of Capitol Police on that day

[<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2021/07/27/fact-check-nancy-pelosi-isnt-in-charge-capitol-police/8082088002/>], the fact is that the USCP is under the oversight of Congress, according to — the United States Capitol Police: [<https://www.uscp.gov/the-department/oversight>].

This would be the same Congress that convened the January 6 Committee subsequently, and that used millions of dollars in taxpayer money to turn that horrible day, and that tragic event, into a message

point that would be used to tar a former President as a would-be terrorist, and to smear all Republicans, by association, as “insurrectionists,” or as insurrectionists’ sympathizers and fellow-travelers.

There is no way to unsee Officer Brian Sicknick, claimed by some Democrats in leadership and by most of the legacy media to have been killed by rioters at the Capitol that day, alive in at least one section of the newly released video. The USCP medical examiner states that this Officer died of “natural causes,” but also that he died “in the line of duty.” Whatever the truth of this confusing conclusion, and with all respect for and condolences to Officer Sicknick’s family, the circumstances of his death *do* matter to the public, as without his death having been caused by the events of Jan 6, the breach of the capitol, serious though it was, cannot be described as a “deadly insurrection.”

[<https://www.uscp.gov/media-center/press-releases/medical-examiner-finds-uscp-officer-brian-sicknick-died-natural-causes>] Sadly, though the contrary was what was reported, Officer Sicknick died two days after Jan 6, from suffering two strokes. <https://lawandcrime.com/u-s-capitol-siege/capitol-police-officer-brian-sicknick-died-of-natural-causes-after-suffering-two-strokes-day-after-jan-6-report/>

There is no way for anyone thoughtful, even if he or she is a lifelong Democrat, not to notice that Sen Chuck Schumer did not say to the world that the footage that Mr Carlson aired was not real. Rather, he warned that it was “shameful” for Fox to allow us to see it. *The Guardian* characterized Mr Carlson’s and Fox News’ sin, weirdly, as “Over-Use” of Jan 6 footage. Isn’t the press supposed to want full transparency for all public interest events? [<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2023/mar/07/biden-medicare-taxes-desantis-trump-2024-live-updates>] How can you “over-use” real footage of events of national relevance?

Sen Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senate minority leader, did not say the video on Fox News was fake or doctored. He said, rather, that it was “a mistake” to depart from the views of the events held by the chief of the Capitol Police. This is a statement from McConnell about orthodoxy — not a statement about a specific truth or untruth. [<https://www.c-span.org/video/?c5060662/senator-mcconnell-calls-tucker-carlsons-depiction-january-6-attack-mistake>]

I don’t agree with Mr Carlson’s interpretation of the videos as depicting “mostly peaceful chaos.” [<https://thehill.com/homenews/media/3887103-tucker-carlson-shows-the-first-of-his-jan-6-footage-calls-it-mostly-peaceful-chaos/>] I do think it is a mistake to downplay how serious it is when a legislative institution suffers a security breach of any kind, however that came to be.

But you don’t have to agree with Mr Carlson’s interpretation of the videos, to believe, as I do, that he engaged in valuable journalism simply by airing the footage that was given to him.

And remember, by law that footage belongs to us — it is a public record, and all public records literally belong to the American people. “In a democracy, records belong to the people,” explains the National Archives. [<https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/1-about-archives.html>]

You don’t have to agree with Carlson’s interpretation of the videos, to notice the latest hypocrisy by the Left. My acquaintance and personal hero Daniel Ellsberg was rightly lionized by the Left for

having illegally leaked the Pentagon Papers. *The New York Times* was rightly applauded for having run this leaked material in 1971. [<https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1435/daniel-ellsberg>].

I do not see how Mr Carlson's airing of video material of national significance that the current government would prefer to keep hidden, or Fox News' support for its disclosure to the public, is any different from that famous case of disclosure of inside information of public importance.

You don't have to agree with Mr Carlson's interpretation of the videos, to conclude that the Democrats in leadership, for their own part, have cherry-picked, hyped, spun, and in some ways appear to have lied about, aspects of January 6, turning a tragedy for the nation into a politicized talking point aimed at discrediting half of our electorate.

From the start, there have been things about the dominant, Democrats' and legacy media's, narrative of Jan 6, that seemed off, or contradictory, to me. (That does not mean I agree with the interpretation of these events in general on the right. Bear with me).

There is no way to un-hear the interview that Mr Carlson did with former Capitol police officer Tarik Johnson, who said that he received no guidance when he called his superiors, terrified, as the Capitol was breached, to ask for direction. [<https://www.foxnews.com/media/tucker-carlson-talks-exclusively-key-capitol-police-officer-ignored-by-jan-6-panel-amid-footage-release>]

That situation is anomalous.

There is *always* a security chain of command in the Capitol, at the Rayburn Building, at the White House of course, and so on, which is part of a rock-solid "security plan."

[<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2014/09/30/written-testimony-usss-director-house-committee-oversight-and-government-reform>].

There are usually, indeed, multiple snipers standing on the steps of the Capitol, facing outward. I made note of this when I was researching and writing *The End of America*. There is *never* improvisation, or any confusion in security practices or in what is expected of "the security plan", involving "principals" such as Members of Congress, or staff at the White House. I know this as a former political consultant and former White House spouse.

The reason for a tightly scripted chain of command and an absolutely ironclad security plan in these buildings, is so that security crises such as the events of Jan 6 *can never happen*.

The fact that so much confusion in security practice took place on Jan 6, is hard to understand.

There is no way to not see that among the violent and terrifying scenes of that day, as revealed by Mr Carlson, there were also scenes of officers with the United States Capitol Police accompanying one protester who would become iconic, the "Q-Anon Shaman", Jacob Chansley - and escorting him peaceably through the hallways of our nation's legislative center.

[<https://www.foxnews.com/media/former-lawyer-qanon-shaman-says-jan-6-footage-wasnt-shown-client-calls-prison-sentence-tragedy>].

I was oddly unsurprised to see the "Q-Anon Shaman" being ushered through the hallways by Capitol Police; he was ready for the cameras in full makeup, horned fur hat, his tattooed chest bare (on a freezing day), and adorned in other highly cinematic regalia. I don't know what Mr Chansley thought

he was doing there that day, but so many subsequent legacy media images of the event put him so dramatically front and center — and the barbaric nature of his appearance was so illustrative of *exactly* the message that Democrats in leadership wished to send about the event — that I am not surprised to see that his path to the center of events was not blocked but was apparently facilitated by Capitol Police.

A point I have made over and over since 9/11 is that many events in history are *both* real and hyped. Many actors in historic events have their agendas, but are *also* at times used by other people with their own agendas, in ways of which the former are unaware. Terrorists and terrorism in the Bush era are one example. This issue was both real and hyped.

“Patriots” or “insurgents” (depending on who you are) entering the Capitol can be part of a real event that is *also* exploited or manipulated by others. We don’t know yet if this is the case in relation to the events of Jan 6, or to what extent it may be the case. That is where a *real* investigation must come in. But as someone who has studied history, and the theatrics of history, for decades, I was not at all surprised to see, on Mr Carlson’s security camera footage, the person who was to become the most memorable ‘face’ of the ‘insurrection’ (or the riot, or the Capitol breach) — escorted to the beating heart of the action, where his image could be memorialized by a battery of cameras forever.



There are other aspects of the Jan 6 breach that seemed anomalous to me from the start. I study the relationship in history of buildings such as The White House and the Capitol, to the US public; I follow the way in which the public is either welcomed into or barred from these structures.

In the media furore around Jan 6, it was erased from memory that the White House itself and the Capitol too have always been open to US citizens and foreign visitors. The interior of the Capitol is open to the public. These are public buildings.

The US government website, Visitthecapitol.gov, explains that anyone can watch Congress in session; tickets to the gallery are available from one’s Representative.

[<https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/visit/know-before-you-go/watching-congress-in-session>] You can

also enter the Capitol, show ID, and visit the Exhibition Hall. Passes to the gallery are issued to foreign visitors right when they walk in:

[https://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/visiting_galleries.htm].

Massing peacefully at the Capitol and other public buildings, and indeed entering the Capitol to observe the legislators at work, is part of our rights and inheritance as citizens, and this use of our First Amendment right to assemble has a long history.

The Gallery -the upper balcony that surrounds the legislative action — was constructed in 1857 *in order* to allow the public to watch their legislators and to listen to debates. Even before the had a vote, women had recourse to a “Ladies’ Gallery”; and African Americans also joined observers in the gallery, after Reconstruction.

Newly enfranchised African American citizens, thronging the interior of the Capitol building after Reconstruction, were depicted in Frank Leslie’s periodical:



[<https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/Capitol/1857-1950/Gallery-Level/>]

In 1876 and 1877, massive, raucous public crowds thronged the Gallery to observe the outcome of a contested Election — between Rutherford B Hayes and Samuel J Tilden.



This, above, is the Electoral Commission of 1877, with the public crowding the gallery, as the outcome of the contested Rutherford/Tilden Presidential election was decided.

[<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/looking-back-the-electoral-commission-of-1877>]

January 6's narrative, via the Democrats in leadership, is a departure from our history (and from our Constitution) in messaging to the nation the novel theme that the public is categorically forbidden to enter the Capitol, and that the Capitol is the province of legislators alone.

This is simply not true.

The Capitol is not a sealed space exclusively for legislators, but it is one that is supposed to, and indeed was constructed to, welcome and host the public, in an orderly way.

[[https://history.house.gov/Collection/Search?](https://history.house.gov/Collection/Search?Term=Search&Classifications=Historical+Artifacts%3A+Passes&CurrentPage=1&SortOrder=Title&ResultType=Grid&PreviousSearch=Search%2CTitle)

[Term=Search&Classifications=Historical+Artifacts%3A+Passes&CurrentPage=1&SortOrder=Title&ResultType=Grid&PreviousSearch=Search%2CTitle](https://history.house.gov/Collection/Search?Term=Search&Classifications=Historical+Artifacts%3A+Passes&CurrentPage=1&SortOrder=Title&ResultType=Grid&PreviousSearch=Search%2CTitle)].

We should not be encouraged to forget this.

Indeed, inaugurations themselves have been open public events in which the US citizenry simply entered the building for the celebration; this tradition lasted from President Jefferson's inauguration in 1801, to 1885.

Things got very chaotic indeed in 1829. "On March 4, 1829, Andrew Jackson upholds an inaugural tradition begun by Thomas Jefferson and hosts an open house at the White House.

After Jackson's swearing-in ceremony and address to Congress, the new president returned to the White House to meet and greet a flock of politicians, celebrities and citizens. Very shortly, the crowd swelled to more than 20,000, turning the usually dignified White House into a boisterous mob scene.

Some guests stood on furniture in muddy shoes while others rummaged through rooms looking for the president—breaking dishes, crystal and grinding food into the carpet along the way. [...]

The White House open-house tradition continued until several assassination attempts heightened security concerns. The trend ended in 1885 when Grover Cleveland opted instead to host a parade, which he viewed in safety from a grandstand set up in front of the White House.”

[<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jackson-holds-open-house-at-the-white-house>].

And inaugurations were not the only occasions in which US citizens approached or entered their public buildings in Washington.

The Bonus Army, which massed in the summer of 1932, during the Depression, to claim the financial “bonus” promised to veterans who had served in World War I, is an example of citizens assembling peaceably at the Capitol. When I was an undergraduate, we were taught that the Bonus Army sat on the steps of the Capitol and lobbied the legislators who were entering and leaving the building. I remember from my history textbook, images of crowds seated on the Capitol steps in 1932.



“[M]ore than 25,000 veterans and their families traveled to Washington, DC, to petition Congress and President Herbert Hoover to award them their bonus immediately. Fortunately for the marchers, Pelham Glassford, the local police chief and a veteran of the war himself, made accommodations for this influx, including the creation of an enormous camp in the Anacostia Flats [...]. Glassford understood that Americans had an inherent right to assemble in Washington and petition the government for the “redress of grievances” without fear of punishment or reprisals. [...]

On June 15, the House of Representatives passed the new bonus bill by a vote of 211 to 176. Two days later, some 8,000 veterans massed in front of the Capitol as the Senate prepared to vote, while another

10,000 assembled before the raised Anacostia drawbridge. The police were anticipating trouble because of the large crowds. The Senate debate continued until after dark. [...]

When it appeared that the bonus would not be paid, many of the marchers refused to leave, and President Hoover ordered the Army to evict them. Using tear gas, tanks, and a troop of saber-wielding cavalry commanded by Major George S. Patton, U.S. Army chief of staff General Douglas MacArthur drove the marchers out of Washington and burned their main camp on the Anacostia Flats.”[<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/essays/the-bonus-army/>]

I mention the massing of the Bonus Army on the Capitol steps in 1932, to note that the dominant narrative around Jan 6 today, often implies that it is an act of violence or of “insurrection” simply to march en masse peacefully to the Capitol.

But we should be wary of allowing history to be rewritten so as to criminalize peaceful, Constitutionally-protected assembly at “The People’s House.”



The violence of Jan 6 and its subsequent service as a talking point by the Democrats’ leadership, risks its use also to justify the closing off of our public buildings from US citizens altogether.

This would be convenient for tyrants of any party.

Leaving aside the release of the additional Jan 6 footage and how it may or may not change our view of US history — I must say that I am sorry for believing the dominant legacy-media “narrative” pretty completely from the time it was rolled out, without asking questions.

Those who violently entered the Capitol or who engaged in violence inside of it, must of course be held accountable. (As must violent protesters of every political stripe anywhere.)

But in addition, anyone in leadership who misrepresented to the public the events of the day so as to distort the complexity of its actual history — must also be held accountable.

Jan 6 has become, as the DNC intended it to become, after the fact, a “third rail”; a shorthand used to dismiss or criminalize an entire population and political point of view.

Peaceful Republicans and conservatives as a whole have been demonized by the story told by Democrats in leadership of what happened that day.

So half of the country has been tarred by association, and is now in many quarters presumed to consist of chaotic berserkers, anti-democratic rabble, and violent upstarts, whose sole goal is the murder of our democracy.

Republicans, conservatives, I am sorry.

I also believed wholesale so much else that has since turned out not to be as I was told it was by NPR, MSNBC and *The New York Times*.

I believed that stories about Hunter Biden’s laptop were Russian propaganda. Dozens of former intel officials said so. Johns Hopkins University said so. [<https://sais.jhu.edu/news-press/hunter-biden-story-russian-disinformation-dozens-former-intel-officials-say>].

“Trump specifically cited a “laptop” that contained emails allegedly belonging to Hunter Biden”, said ‘CNN Fact-Check’, with plenty of double quote marks.

[https://www.cnn.com/factsfirst/politics/factcheck_036fb62c-377f-4c68-8fa5-b98418e4bb9c]

I believed this all — til it was debunked.

I believed that President Trump’s campaign colluded with Russia — until that assertion was dropped.

[<https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2019/03/mueller-concludes-investigation/>]

I believed that President Trump was a Russian asset, because the legacy media I read, said so

[<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/29/trump-russia-asset-claims-former-kgb-spy-new-book>].

I believed in the entire Steele dossier, until I didn’t, because it all fell apart.

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63305382>].

Was there in fact an “infamous pee tape”? So many other bad things were being said about the man — why not? [<https://www.businessinsider.com/christopher-steele-trump-pee-tape-probably-exists-2021-10>]

I believed that Pres Trump instigated the riot at the Capitol — because I did not know that his admonition to his supporters to assemble “peacefully and patriotically” had been deleted from all of the news coverage that I read. [<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-11/trump-team-hoping-peacefully-and-patriotically-will-be-shield>]

Because of lies such as these in legacy media — lies which I and millions of others believed — half of our nation’s electorate was smeared and delegitimized, and I myself was misled.

It damages our nation when legacy media put words in the mouths of Presidents and former Presidents, and call them traitors or criminals without evidence.

It damages our country when we cannot tell truth from lies. This is exactly what tyrants seek — an electorate that cannot know what is truth and what is falsehood.

Through lies, half of the electorate was denied a fair run for its preferred candidate.

I don't like violence. I do believe our nation's capitol must be treated as a sacred space.

I don't like President Trump (Do I not? Who knows? I have been lied to about him so much for so long, I can't tell whether my instinctive aversion is simply the habituated residue of years of being on the receiving end of lies).

But I like the liars who are our current gatekeepers, even less.

The gatekeepers who lie to the public about the most consequential events of our time — and who thus damage our nation, distort our history, and deprive half of our citizenry of their right to speak, champion and choose, without being tarred as would-be violent traitors - deserve our disgust.

I am sorry the nation was damaged by so much untruth issued by those with whom I identified at the time.

I am sorry my former "tribe" is angry at a journalist for engaging in — journalism.

I am sorry I believed so much nonsense.

Though it is no doubt too little, too late —

Conservatives, Republicans, MAGA:

I am so sorry.

Outspoken with Dr Naomi Wolf is a reader-supported publication. To receive new posts and support my work, consider becoming a free or paid subscriber.