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**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** NARAL Pro-Choice America Research Team

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## **Anti-Choice Violence and the U.S. Capitol Insurrection**

**At a glance:** Several high profile anti-choice leaders and activists were involved in promoting the Jan. 6th insurrection to overturn the 2020 election results. The history of anti-choice politics intertwining with white supremacy is well-documented and anti-choice extremists wrote the playbook on violent disruption.

### **Summary:**

January 6, 2021 will be remembered as one of the darkest days in U.S. history after armed pro-Trump insurrectionists mounted an attack on our nation's capitol as lawmakers met to certify Joe Biden's election to the presidency. Much of the spotlight has rightfully been on GOP lawmakers such as Senators Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz for their role in parroting disinformation and encouraging pro-Trump extremists' "activism."

But they weren't the only ones. Who else has been stoking the same violent outrage for their own political gain? Leaders of the anti-choice movement. Anti-choice extremists were [openly complicit](#) in Trump's efforts to desecrate democracy, and regularly play an important role in the disinformation networks that led to this moment. And this isn't new for them -- when it comes to inciting right-wing violence, the anti-choice movement [wrote the playbook](#).

### **Anti-Choice Leaders Promote and Join "Stop the Steal"**

Prior to the "Save America" rally that evolved into the violent attack on the Capitol [at Trump's direction](#), anti-choice [leaders](#) and [news outlets amplified conspiracy theories](#) and disinformation about how the 2020 election was "stolen" from Trump. Abortion care providers from across the country watched footage of the attack on the Capitol in horror as [they recognized anti-choice clinic protesters](#) who regularly harass their patients and providers among those in the mob. Examples include:

- **Abby Johnson**, anti-choice leader and a speaker at the [2020 Republican National Convention](#), [proudly photographed herself](#) in the front row of the January 6 rally, one of several so-called "Stop the Steal" events [she participated in and promoted](#).
- **Elijah Schaffer**, one of the insurrectionists [who broke into Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office](#), was [reposting anti-choice disinformation](#) just days before the riots.
- **Taylor Hansen**, the founder of "Baby Lives Matter" and a well-known [clinic protester](#), [also participated](#) in the insurrection.
- **Derrick Evans**, who [livestreamed](#) the violence at the capitol, has a history of harassing clinic workers, leading to [death threats](#) against at least one clinic worker and a [restraining order](#) being filed against him.

## Deep Ties Between the Anti-Choice Movement and White Supremacy

In the wake of the insurrection, anti-choice leaders have both attempted to [distance themselves](#) from the violence and [provide cover for the pro-Trump extremists](#) they welcome to their movement, by promoting [conspiracy theories](#). Many anti-choice leaders have also [falsely equated the violent insurrection](#) at the Capitol with largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests in an attempt to normalize the unprecedented actions that occurred. Several are [promoting the idea](#) that [abortion care is to blame](#) for the violence our country witnessed at the Capitol and [defending Trump's and the insurrectionists' actions as justified](#).

Less than 24 hours after the attack, anti-choice activists [reverted to falsely classifying](#) President-Elect Joe Biden as an “abortion radical,” demonstrating a commitment to raise temperatures in a precarious moment. With 77% of Americans supporting legal abortion care, manipulation, lies, fear, and anger are the fuel they need to sustain their unpopular agenda. **For decades, this movement has avoided accountability for the [violent](#) and [unlawful](#) actions of those acting in their name, just as people fear the insurrectionists and those who incited them might in this moment.**

What occurred at the Capitol this week is no new monster—it builds directly on the many, [many instances](#) of anti-choice violence inspired by carefully crafted anti-choice disinformation and rhetoric. [The intricate connections](#) between their own movement and this week's insurrection makes it exceedingly clear that today's anti-choice movement and the Republican party's far-right, white supremacist fringes are one and the same.

## The Experts at Inciting Right-Wing Violence

The vast overlap between the anti-choice movement and the white supremacist mob who attacked Congress may shock some, but it is [well documented](#). Anti-choice groups have spent decades honing their messaging to trigger outrage among their base, fan the flames of extremism, and incite violence. From falsely equating abortion with “genocide” to demonizing doctors who provide abortion care, anti-choice groups pave the way for extremists to justify violence against advocates for reproductive freedom all the time.

And words matter—between 1993 and 2016, [anti-choice extremists committed 11 murders and 26 attempted murders](#) in pursuit of their agenda. Not even the COVID-19 pandemic could halt anti-choice clinic protests; instead, extremists (often unmasked and not socially distant) have [continued to harass patients](#) and even [storm and invade clinics](#). For decades, abortion care providers have been targets of assault, bombing, arson, kidnapping, stalking, vandalism, and death threats. Rather than disavow these heinous efforts, mainstream anti-choice groups have continued promoting the rhetoric and disinformation that inspired them. Extremist groups like Operation Rescue that have been [directly implicated in violence against abortion providers](#) continue to operate without criticism from the wider movement.

## For more information:

- On the history of white supremacy and anti-choice movement, see [The Lie That Binds](#) book, published 2020 by Strong Arm Press.
- On the role of the anti-choice movement in fomenting right-wing violence, see [The Lie That Binds podcast Episode 5: The Foot Soldiers](#).