

Cedar Middle School
Teacher discussion with students after January 6th event at the Capitol

T=Teacher
S=Student

T: So - Let's start. How many of you have seen what happened at the Capitol. We're not going to watch um the event but we are going to turn on the address that was given by President Trump yesterday evening and what he said about it then we will discuss it "K"? (Plays Trumps message about the heinous attack etc. Calm restored and get on with business of America etc.)

T: K -Questions:

S: Wasn't __The National Guard

T: Umm The channels of communication to call out the national guard in Washington DC are very complex and require a few different uhuh channels of communication. So in part yes. What else? Do you understand what this is such a big deal.

S: No

T: Not really? Kinda?

S: Not Really

T: Ok If we knew everything we wouldn't be in school

T: So basically this is such a big deal because something like this hasn't happened since the British. Right in the war of 1812. The war we're going to do in just a few weeks. No group has taken the capitol - until then - even during the Civil War. Right?

S: didn't someone steal like a podium

T: Yes. A Lectern. Yes. There is a guy that took a lectern and he was very happy about it have you seen his pictures? I've never seen a person smile so big. Like that piece of wood just fulfilled a need in his life.

S: Wasn't (?) worth like \$900,000?

T: Most of the stuff in the capitol is very very old. Uh Let's go here

S: So is this kind of like mm wouldn't this be just as bad as like tearing down the statues and stuff or is it like a lot worse?

T: Wells that's kind of like an opinion. Right? What is worse than something else. In terms of monetary value and damage this was way more costly. As for what's worse or not worse that's an opinion. And reminder Do I give you my opinion?

Students: no no no

(Interruption someone comes into room)

T: Does that answer your question.

S: This situation made me really mad. In my opinion the police did not handle this well at all. They were not putting that much effort into it like where was all the stuff they were doing when those protests were going on? Where was the stuff that happened there? There wasn't that much going on - like - The capitol there was like so much going on this was like literal riots. Like this is like the thing that happened

was terrible and like there wasn't anyone - like the police were hardly doing anything to stop it.

T: And - You guys are going to learn this as you educate growing and things happen when I was your age we had 9-11. This thing is you're guys' thing right? And you'll learn when big stuff like this happens the emotions are super intense. Some of the stuff is super hard to deal with. Right? Umm - you know They were literally cleaning blood off the floor of the capitol. That shouldn't be a thing most people would think right? So whatever you're feeling and dealing with that's ok. Whichever perspective you have it's ok. Feel what you've got to feel - you're allowed

S. I'm totally confused. Why did it even happen Why were people doing this why were people getting killed. *(Very low volume this is an approximation)*

T: OK. I'm going to give you a very very basic just kind of a summary of how got to where it got to . Is that what your asking so how it got to that? So - It began with a rally outside. President Trump addressed the crowd and Vice President Pence addressed the crowd and following their remarks the --- Thank you What do you call that large group of people? The Group - at that point - It's very unclear how much organization there was between when the President and Vice President were speaking and when they actually attacked the capitol. Um The capitol police have looked at a lot of social media and it seems that a lot of stuff was planned out on social media. So Somewhere between their remarks - sometime after their remarks the group kind of as a whole just marched right up the hill there and we call stormed the capitol um. Does that answer your question?

(Teacher then picks the next few questioners)

S: What would happen to the people that were there legally?

T: Um It depends. For People who went in but didn't touch or break or threaten anybody or anything - that's not illegal. People can be in the capitol. I've been in the capitol. Um - However - depending on what they did when they were there and the evidence and the - there are a lot of things that will come into play for what will happen to those people. Um In the statement released by the Capitol police they are using social media to find those people who were actually committing the crimes of breaking in and violence and all those things because many of them took "selfies" which ...laughter

Students commit on how dumb to take "selfies" while committing a crime. Like there was a grandma lady just walking she wasn't doing anything just walking. There was a grandma background was chaos - just chilling just happy to be there.

T: OK - Anyway there was a lot of photographic evidence taken inside of protestors involved - rioters might be a more appropriate perfect term, as we talked about that distinction between a protest and a riot right? Would you classify this a protest or a riot. Right.

Students answer - Riot

T Right that's what we said when it gets to destruction and violence that's when we move to riot from protest. When they were meeting outside peacefully was that . . .

Students indicate protest

Teacher: Right and once they decided to take that more violent route that's usually when we switch terminology right? Did I answer the question? Did I answer your question?

S: I just had another one. So wasn't there like fake Trump supporters there that were just like – I don't know what they're called but they were. . .

T: That is a claim that has been others that there were people there. If you remember the Black Lives Matter protests it was the same thing where there were people who did not agree that were there to make little of that. So it's really hard to stay that's really hard to say its hard validate or substantiate because unless you know that person personally can you really say who they do or don't support. You know Like if I was in one of those pictures could you tell by looking at me if I supported President Trump or President-elect Biden?

Students: no

T: I look like a person right - So that's really tricky um from a historical perspective the truth comes out. So I think with time we'll learn more and I think we'll get a better view and a better perspective and really be able to see truthfully what happened.

Teachers chooses next couple of students

S: So didn't four people die? (low volume)

T: Four people died on the day and then one officer passed away last night from his wounds. I only know the direct circumstances of two of the deaths and the officers. I know that the first person that was shot was one of that first group of people that stormed the capitol she was shot in the neck by an officer. And then another gentleman had a tazer and he had it in a pocket and he tazed himself and had a heart attack. So it went off in his pocket and tazed him which triggered a heart attack and he died. Those are the only two I know the actual circumstances.

S: That was one of my questions so I have another one. So when Trump is out of office will we still all him President Trump or will we just . . .

T: Generally that is the respected thing. We still refer to him as President. Once you're President always referred to as President. Like President Jimmy Carter he's the oldest living President we still call him President Carter. President Bush, President Obama, President Clinton. It's just kind of a term of respect. So traditionally . . .

S: So it's about the election. So with the fraud do you think that um likes it's going to encourage people in future elections to be able to like continue doing fraud?

T: It's hard to speculate on what's going to happen or how people are going to feel. I will say that Secretary of State appointed by President Trump referred to this election as the most secure in history. Um so take that into consideration. I think how people feel about things say things and what people do going forward is still very much up in the air.

S: Most of the people that actually stormed the capitol and damaged things would they get charged with treason?

T: Most likely not treason because like even though there was damage and violence it wasn't an act to bring down the government if that makes sense. Treason implies a very large scale and can usually only be applied to high-ranking officials. So to get

a charge or treason it is a very, very, very like very . . . I'm like trying to think of one I've seen and none are coming to mind. My guess would be most likely not.

S: If you tried to assassinate the president would you get a thing for treason?

T: Yes That is one. Hahaha

S: Why did they even storm the capitol in the first place? What was their reason

T: To stop congress from counting the electoral votes because congress was verifying the election results and counting the electoral ballots. So it was to stop that.

S: Wasn't there one guy who assassinated John F Kenned a President?

S: Lee Harvey Oswald and he was later shot (Unclear)

T: That is a conspiracy Theory. One day we'll have a day Conspiracy Theories. But that is not this day.

S: Did they get to the congress – the rioters?

T: Yeah there are lots of pictures of them on the floor of the house um and from you know peoples offices. There is one picture of a gentleman in Nancy Pelosi's office – the minority leader and he's got his feet up on her desk. And yes they definitely got in.

S: Like all the way in.

S: So was Congress Like were the people in Congress like in the building when this happened?

T: Yes. At first initially they were told to shelter in place, which for us that means like a lock down drill. Um and then once they got into the building they were evacuated. So yes does that answer your question?

S: Were any of the high- ranking officials injured during this?

T: No. Nothing – I think bumps and bruises you know. None of them were shot or broken bones or anything real bad – that I know of. Information is still coming out so as afar as I know at this moment – no.

S: They got out later that night anyway.

T: They did they were able after they evacuated and had gone through the capitol they were able to come back in and resume and then certify the election.

S: When they left did they take the electoral votes with them?

T: They did – So This is kind of one of my favorite things about the day like so this was a cool moment there were four women that were staffers at the capitol they just work at the capitol and they thought to grab the ballot boxes. Nobody told them – nobody was even thinking about it they got out and evacuated and they like oh the ballots and they were like we have them. So yeah there were four women who grabbed the ballot boxes. (*muffled comments*) like Mr. Rogers. Look for the helpers. There are always helpers. I think of them as like helpers.

S: Did they take some confidential information?

T: Confidential Information? That I don't know. I have not heard anything substantial about that yet. But I'm sure more information will come out. But as of right now I don't know. I'm sorry I have no information.

S: Back to the votes like um due t that it was a fake vote haven't there been proof that there was fraud with ballots thrown away.

T: So that happens in every election. That's way each state spends five weeks counting and recounting and validating votes there are always bad votes and there

is always fraud. It's been that way since George Washington, but that's why we have the processes in place that we do now. Um where people from both political parties present and the count is heavily monitored and everything is very very rigid and structured. Um and they do find ballots and throw them out and every state does.

S: I also heard in some states only Democrats were counting the votes, is that true?

T: No. There's not a . . .the thing is when you see the videos of where they're actually counting votes especially in this year they are very open people have tags on that say I'm a democrat, I'm a republican so anybody that's working that's counting votes has to identify their political affiliation so that they can make sure that there are registered republicans and registered democrats at the same time.

S: Have any of the world leaders talked about what happened?

T: oooh. That is a really great question. I'm trying to remember I read something last night. There have been some really great memes. We laughing at yesterday there were some really great ones – Canada

(muffled students)

T: I'm sorry I read something but it's gone I'm sorry I can't remember. I did read something last night but can't remember what it was or who said it and I don't want to say anything I'm not 100% sure of sure about so I'm not going to say anything. Sorry. I'll find it if I have time and remember. Let's be realistic

(small exchange about taco food)

T: What else? Nothing? Ok. Well after we receive more information and things progress you know feel free to ask. Right. You guys can always ask unless you asking my opinion in which case I will always very politely remind you I will not give you my opinion. K. But please feel free to ask. Inauguration day is the 20th That's a Wednesday about a week and a half from now so we will probably be watching that or at least going over it and what it means and how it works and all of that. Um

S: Do you think there will be more riots though?

T: Um Me just guessing Well I hope not. But the right to assemble and protest is one of our basic fundamental freedoms. So if there are I would hope they will stay peaceful because that is really a constitutional guaranteed right. I don't want anybody not to be able to exercise that right I just hope that everything stays peaceful. We're still in 2020 so who knows.

S: What about the statues that got torn down. Like –Would that be considered a riot or would that be a protest. It would be riot right?

T: Umm that's a good question.

S: Some of the statues they said are kind a racist but I don't know.

T: That's an interesting thought. I think that's up for personal interpretation a little bit I think you have to decide where you stand on that. You know right like if it – I'm not sure what statue you are talking about but if it's culturally offensive would we call that a riot or a protest or is that you know property destruction and criminal mischief. You know I mean there are interpretations there for sure. I think that is one you just have to kind of decide where you stand on that. So everybody's going to have a different lean on that.

S: Were there statues in the capitol that got torn down?

T: I think there were several were knocked over, but I don't think -- but -- In the capitol each state has a statue and as far as I know I do know a couple that got knocked over just from masses of people. I didn't see -- Like I said again information may come up I didn't see anything torn down of the statues or destroyed. As of right now I don't know.

S: There is one statue I'm confused about. They're trying to tear down Abraham Lincoln statue of now.

T: Who

S: Like They're trying to tear down Abraham Lincoln statue and that is one I don't understand.

T: The Lincoln memorial

S: No not going that far but statues of him all over the country,

T: I know nothing of it or this group or their reasons. I know nothing.

(students mumbling)

S: There is one where Abraham Lincoln putting his hand down on a slave like he's releasing him so now people are like he's forcing him to do something.

T: I don't know anything about that.

(Chooses students)

S: has anyone that participated been arrested?

T: Yes the day of there were 17 arrests. That number were to grow later into the night. (Unclear about capitol police continuing to use social media to track down)

As they continue their work the number of arrests will grow accordingly so yes.

Does that answer your question. (Comments on questions and how she gets to talking)

S: On to what he said about the Abraham Lincoln. There has been people who tried because Abraham Lincoln had slaves.

T: I don't think Abraham Lincoln was a slave owner

Another students says she didn't think he owned slaves but worked with people who had been slaves before

T: Yes he worked with Fredrick Douglas a bunch of other people but everything I've ever read I never read he owned slaves.

S: yeah my mom saw this thing where they were tearing down Abraham Lincoln statue because apparently something was racist.

T: Well Let me ask you guys a question and I want you to think about the answer and there is no right or wrong, but it is something definitely to think about. Are statues what define history? If there is not a statue

S: But

T: I just want you to think about it don't answer don't answer this is just for you to think about because it's an opinion. Don't bring out because you're going to keep those with you. But I want you to think about it right. Um. Hitler we all know who Hitler is right? Do you think there are any statues of Hitler?

(Students comment - no)

T: No there is none there is none OK. So does that mean we are erasing Hitler from history? Something to think about - Stop just think about it I love you're participating but just think about it right because this has been a really big topic. So whether you agree with removal of statues or disagree that's usually the main

argument that we're getting rid of history. But is History statues? Something to think about – Something to think about. Not saying there is a right or wrong. Just think.

(little conversation about snapping of fingers because one of the kids can snap fingers loudly.)

S: Do you what the most valuable thing was that was destroyed in the capitol?

T: I don't I haven't looked into that.

S: I think it was the thing that got stolen

T: The Lectern? It could be

S: Because that one was really old and made it valuable (too low to hear)

T: I don't think they've released whole here what was damaged but the glass was like original glass that was hand blown glass windows. The capitol is just old it is an antique It is like one of our foundational buildings so everything in it is going to be way more money just because it is the capitol. So I don't know I would be interested to find out though so if you hear anything let me know.

S: There were people breaking through the windows right?

T: yes there were

S: And there was like a cop (unclear)

T: Tear gas. And there is reports I have not had a chance to validate that a lot of the people storming the capitol having pepper spray with them but like I say I haven't really had a chance to substantiate that. I did see that in a couple of places but didn't really get a chance to dive into the sourcing. Yes that is a possibility. Anything else?

S: Do you know how many people stormed the capitol?

T: I don't. That's a question that came up earlier and that's a really hard to know exactly because it happened so fast and the group that was there for the protest was huge and like did all that group get to the capitol. There's still a lot that we don't know yet and it's one of those things – I haven't seen anything solid.

S: I know you probably can't answer this question but were the protesters or rioters were they all from around DC. Or did they come into D.C?

T: Your right I can't answer that. I have not information on that. Might Guessing and assumptions probably the east coast like a few states away. Guessing that is a guess.

S: *Really low volume. Something about interview with people that went to the protest*

T: yes so yeah

S: Were there any photos or paintings taken?

T: Not that I know of. I know one painting was damaged. I saw something released today that human fecal matter was smeared on a wall.

Comments of eew etc.

T: I want to steer us toward the in his speech where he said now is the time for healing and reconciliation. Um Do you guys think that's possible.

S: What does reconciliation mean?

T: Like putting it behind you and moving forward coming together with the other side. Just like getting over it and moving on.

S: Like resilience.

T: yes like resilience - Yes this happened but can we as Americans regardless of who you voted for quit hating the other side that didn't vote for your person and

move forward as Americans – not democrats not republicans – Americans. Do you think that's possible?

S: I think it's possible but not for a while because I think that the civil unrest is going to happen for a while considering how much the two sides just –

T: How divided they are. Anyone else have a thought?

S: Are people still there?

T: as in D.C.

S: yeah

T: as in protesting?

S: yeah

T: I have no idea I don't think so - I think it's been pretty much cleared out since it turned to a riot. I think at that point it was everybody out. I haven't honestly looked.

S: Was there anyone that – like were there Antifa members there?

T: That's a tough question it's like when I asked you if you looked at me would you know who I voted for you know you can't tell by looking at people what their political affiliations are. Um There's also been a lot of debate about Antifa actually being a group rather than just an idea. It's short for Antifacist. And there's been a lot of debate that it's not a group a people like they don't have a leader for Antifa. There's been debate to the contrary too. That a very hard question to answer with evidence so it's hard to say you know. So I can't answer that I'm sorry.

S: Do you know how long they were planning this?

T: How long to storm? Well I don't if they had a plan for how long they were going to be there.

S: I think originally it was going to be a day event.

T: A lot of people who were there walked around and then left when they felt like it. So as long as they wanted

S: No when they planned on social media

T: No I don't know that Oh I'm sorry I misunderstood your original question. My bad

S: I think people have talked about when the electoral college was to be verified so it's been talked about since then (muffled) I think it's been talked about since then so this isn't something that's just spur of the moment.

T: Yes the protest was definitely planned. The debate was whether they planned to storm the capitol. The protest was definitely planned they had space set up but where it kind of took a turn was where it was (muffled)

T: When I decided to have this conversation today I knew very well this may be the whole talk period and I'm very fine with it.

(Talk among students)

T: Any other questions or thoughts about moving forward? No?

S: I think one day when Biden swears he's going to be President do you think there's going to be another riot or protest?

T: I don't know. Like I'll say the same thing I said before like if people protest because it is their right I hope it stays peaceful that's about the only --- I once again guessing I would imagine there will be people there to protest because I mean even like I went to D.C. in 2019 right when nothing was happening in the spring of 2019

so we were still a year ahead of COVID and elections and everything that came in 2020 and there were people protesting in front of the White House like on a Tuesday because they just didn't like the President you know. I think it's always going to be a thing in front of the White House anyway because that's just what they do.

S: I seriously hope there will be no riots I'm not talking about protest but no riots because that can cause a lot of people to get hurt.

T: I think we can all agree riots

S: Some people are bad actors.

S: Like burning down a car is a bad idea.

T: Property destruction is illegal.

S: Have they already started to clean up the capitol fixing it up and stuff?

T: yeah yeah. Some of the pictures like when I said they were cleaning up blood in the capitol just seeing that was pretty like - yeah they are cleaning it up. As far as I know congress is still meeting and everything's continuing It think there is increased security I think D.C. police have joined jurisdiction with Capitol police so they're kind of working together I don't think the national guard is there but I could be wrong.

S: Doesn't the president still live in the White House

T: yes

S: is he going to continue living in there?

T: Until the 20th. Usually there is sometime before the 20th He said peaceful transition. Usually there's sometime before they 20th they'll move out and get all their stuff. It's a transition they don't really tell us the exact date because of security but nothing's official until the 20th.

S: So was his room raided or anything

T: They didn't get in the White House they were at the Capitol building which is like two blocks three blocks up the hill.

S: Where does the other President go?

T: He sill lives at his house?

S: Wouldn't that be dangerous

T: He has increased security. Like The Department of Homeland Security protects the President Elect just like they do the President.