

The Mar-a-Lago search: An Afterword

By Frank G. Splitt
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Once you have the courts you can pretty much do whatever you want.
—Jason Stanley

The aim of both the *Daily Herald* Guest View, “The Mar-a-Lago search: Much ado about something,”¹ and this Afterword, is to not only stress the significance of the search and related events, but also to help serve as a countermeasure to comments and criticisms that are hypercritical of the search and anything related to it. Representative of such views have been *FoxNews* reports and *The Wall Street Journal's* editorials and op-eds.

Worse yet have been comments and criticisms by sycophantic Trump supporters in the U.S. Congress who seem willing to do or say just about anything to curry his favor so as to maintain their political power and prestige. Here, your attention is called to the revelatory September 6, 2022, *PBS Frontline Program* “Lies, Politics, and Democracy.”²

By far, most of these criticisms attempt to diminish the serious nature of the Mar-a-Lago search by framing it as a document storage issue—ignoring the fact that it was a means to expose potentially grave threats to America’s national security. The criticisms also provide good examples of both whataboutism and confirmation bias. Representative examples are ‘what about Hunter Biden?’ and *The Wall Street Journal* Editorial Board's bias to see injustice in the search affidavit—overlooking all evidence to the effect that the Mar-a-Lago search affidavit revealed something that could be new or nefarious in nature.

But beware of the dark side. Anger, fear, aggression...the dark side of the Force are they, easily they flow... If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you, it will.—Yoda

Trump’s congressional supporters have apparently gone over to the dark side—surrendering their ethical and moral principles, consumed by a cult-like embrace of Trump, the Big Lie, and his demagogic politics of anger, fear, and aggression.

For one who lived through the Great Depression and World War II, I am reminded of another demagogue who promised to make Germany great again. At the time, many of the German people said they did not like the man, but said they liked his policies.

Sadly, history seems to be repeating itself as there are a large number of citizens who favor charismatic autocratic leaders no matter how ruthless, immoral, or corrupt their personal behavior ... so long as their policies align with their own.

This Afterword was triggered by The Washington Post report that material on a foreign nation’s nuclear capabilities has been seized at Mar-a-Lago.²

The Post report prompted a question: Will this breaking news matter? As I wrote in the *Daily Herald* Guest View:

As a sign of our times, no one should be surprised if supporters of the former president still vote for him no matter how fair the DOJ's analysis of the retrieved documents and how damning the evidence resulting from the search of his Mar-a-Lago estate may be.

Writ large, the American people must be better than that — more discerning if you will. Their democracy depends on it.

It is my contention that no matter what comes of the Mar-a-Lago search, or the findings of the House January 6 Committee and the PBS Documentary, "Lies, Politics, and Democracy," supporters of former president Trump will act as if all of this is of no consequence. They will continue to stand by him—casting a blind eye to damning evidence.

These supporters may be white nationalists, anti-government entities such as the Proud Boys, QAnon, and the Oath Keepers, politically ambitious members of the U.S. Congress who seek power at any cost, or citizens aggrieved for one reason or another. All are tightly bound to Trump for their own personal reasons. Apparently, they do not discern or care about the existential threat he poses to America's democratic republic.

Good examples of people with a strongly held personal reason would be James Baker, a former U.S. Secretary of State under President H.W. Bush, and William Barr, Trump's U.S. Attorney General. When commenting on his 2016 vote for Trump, Baker said: "I'm a conservative, better to have a conservative in the oval office than a liberal, even if he's crazy." In a similar fashion, after bashing Trump, Barr said he would still vote for him in 2024 if he were the Republican candidate. The reason: He believes that the greatest threat to the country is the progressive agenda being pushed by the Democratic Party⁴—likely referring to the progressive agenda of woke extremists.⁵

Most Trump supporters seem to be confident in their positions based on the fact that the courts have been stacked in his favor. Witness the recent judgement, *Trump vs. The United States*, rendered by Trump appointed Judge Aileen Cannon of the Southern District Court of Florida. Her judgement to appoint a Special Master to review the retrieved documents and other unprecedented special treatments for the former president will cause a month's-long delay in the DOJ's investigative process.⁶ Adam Zito's insightful cartoon gets to the very heart of the Trump-appointed-judges situation.⁷



This outcome was much to the delight of Trump’s legal team whose total focus is to obfuscate issues surrounding the search so as to undermine a potential DOJ indictment of the former president. Their aim would be to complicate the investigation to the maximum extent possible—creating a legal maze—a well-honed tactic developed by Trump’s legal teams over some 3,500 of his lawsuits.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that on September 16 the DOJ asked a federal appeals court to allow prosecutors to resume examining the roughly 100 documents marked classified that were recovered in the search and to bar a Special Master from reviewing them.

The DOJ told the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals that a judge’s order temporarily stopping prosecutors from reviewing the documents marked classified “impedes the government’s efforts to protect the nation’s security” and hinders its ongoing investigation into the government records at the former president’s resort.

Prosecutors asked the appeals court to immediately lift the hold and let them resume their work. We will see what we will see, possibly elevation of the case to the U.S. Supreme Court that, with the addition of three Trump appointees, is now dominated by conservative judges.

Finally, with reference to the epigraph, it is telling that Yale Philosopher Jason Stanley is best known for his 2018 book *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*, (Random House, 2018). Also, to gain a better understanding of why people believe what they believe and vote as they do, see NOTE 8.

NOTES

1. Splitt, Frank G., "The Mar-a-Lago search: Much ado about something," *The Daily Herald*, Opinion, Aug. 29, 2022, <http://www.futurevectors.com/Odyssey/Splitt%20-%20DailyHerald.pdf>
2. Kirk, Michael, et al, "Lies, Politics, and Democracy," *PBS Frontline*, Sept. 6, 2022, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/lies-politics-and-democracy/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=streaming&utm_content=xxxx
3. Barrett, Devlin and Leonnig, Carol D., "Document on nukes seized at Mara-a-Lago," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 7, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/09/06/trump-nuclear-documents/>
2. Kirk, Michael, et al, "Lies, Politics, and Democracy," *PBS Frontline*, Sept. 6, 2022, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/lies-politics-and-democracy/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=streaming&utm_content=xxxx
4. Forgey, Quint, "Barr bashes Trump but says he'd still vote for him in 2024," *Politico*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/03/07/barr-trump-2024-00014597>
5. Splitt, Frank G., "Woke Extremism: Counterproductive to the goals it seeks," *The Daily Herald*, March 28, 2022, <https://www.dailyherald.com/discuss/20220328/guest-columnist-frank-splitt-woke-extremism-counter-productive-to-the-goals-it-promotes>
6. Richardson, Heather Cox, "Letters from an American, September 6, 2022," *Substack*, Sept.6, 2022, <https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/september-6-2022>
7. Adam Zito's cartoon was published on the Opinion page of the September 10, 2022 issue of *The Daily Herald*. It has been reproduced as a public service under the fair use doctrine for the non-profit purposes of comment, news reporting, and education.
8. Splitt, Frank G. "Confirmation Bias and Today's Politics," *FutureVector.com* , Jan. 10, 2021, *Reflections, 2016-2021*, PART 2, pages 19-24, <http://www.futurevectors.com/Odyssey/Splitt%20-%20Reflections.pdf>

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