I Had No Reason To Be Over Optimistic

Well, now, then. A couple days back I tossed up my first post in months, brimming with ideas for the i2b joint in the coming year.

I'm still on for the commitments to the blog and to you, my fearless readers. But let's go ahead and say that title, the opening line from The Who's song *1921*, and my uncharacteristic stab at the putative power of positive thinking, may have been less than apropos. We likely would have been better served by a different line from that ditty. Like the one I copped for today's missive.

Yesterday's attempted rebellion against the United States government accomplished something that the legendary traitor Robert E. Lee failed to do 160 years ago: The flag of the Confederacy flew in the United States Capitol. This is no small thing. The spirit of the Confederacy suffuses the MAGA movement, leavened with a soupcon of undiluted Nazism. (Granted, Hitler's world view was directly inspired by the dictates of Old South White Supremacy, so maybe it's just a case of over-egging the pudding.)

6MWE = Six Million Wasn't Enough

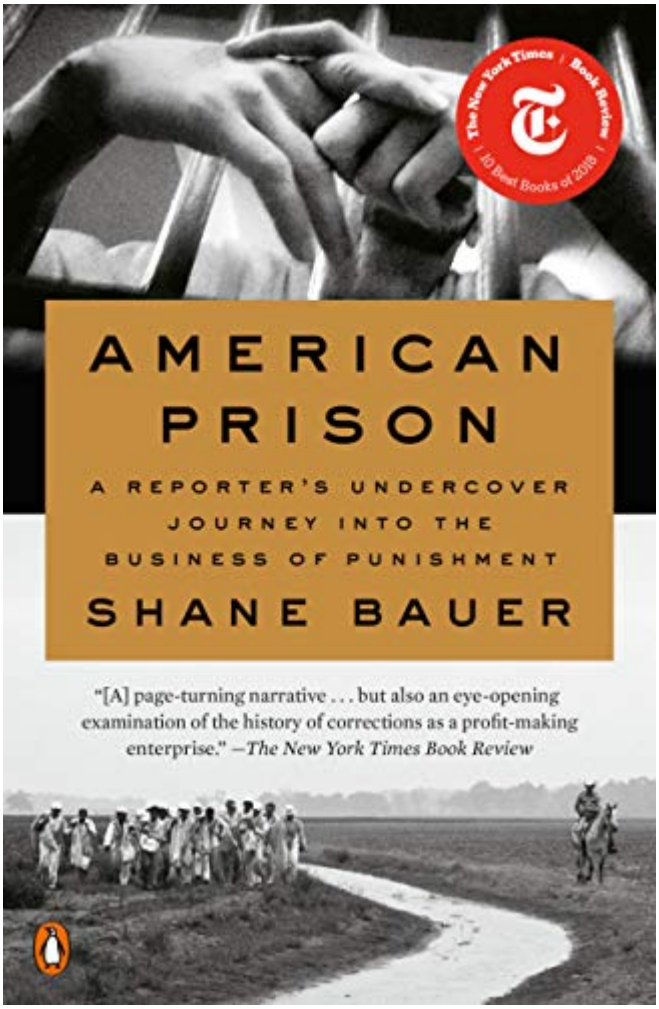
Seven months ago I forecast something along these lines. As expected, the attack on the seat of American government was abetted via complicity within the military and law enforcement community. I'm not sure I agree that the viral video that "proves" the cops threw the gates open is necessarily what the legions of re-tweeters suggest, but there is no question the overall resistance to incursion was awfully damned casual.

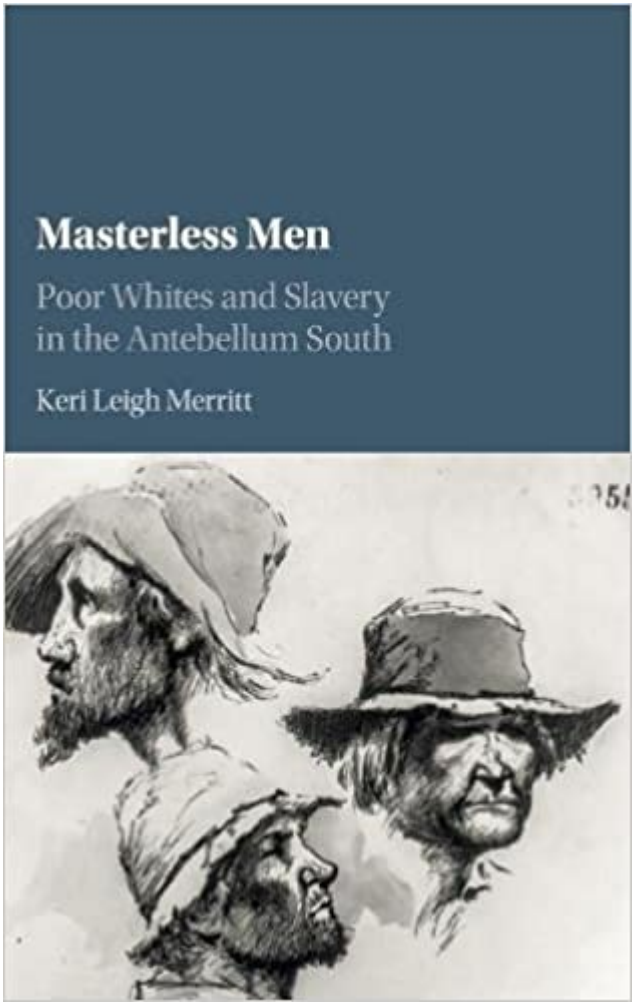
Either way, the photos of cops taking selfies with the rioters, the pitifully low number of arrests, and the video of the cops leading protesters gently out by the hand demonstrates a hard and disturbing truth: We need to be extremely wary of the idea that LEO and military personnel are

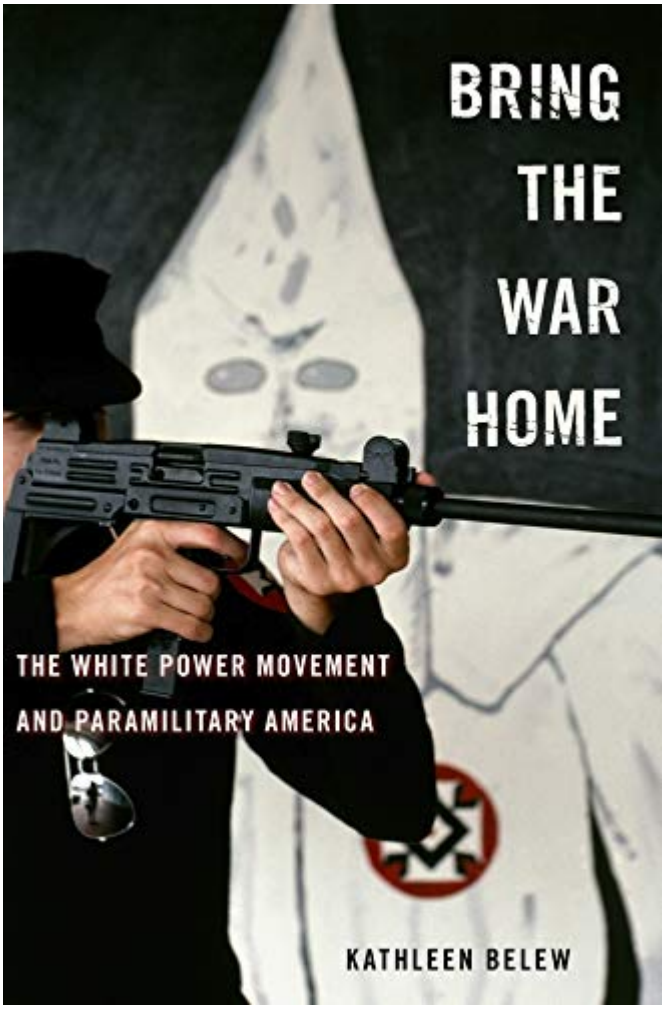
defenders of a broad swath of the American public. The demonstrations of excessive force at the BLM and related protests over the past year provide a stark contrast with the gentle treatment the 99.99% white mob enjoyed yesterday. If it had been a bunch of Dirty Hippies and Those People™ storming the Capitol steps, the place would have been hip deep in blood.

I've never been comfortable with the All Cops Are Bastards formulation (hashtag #ACAB). It is a tad too easy, too facile. The poverty of nuance is on par with some of the worst shorthand about liberals, feminists, and so on. But I'm damned if every day does not deliver some piece of news that gives the meme more heft and veracity.

None of this should come as any surprise. Policing in the U.S. has long been a fundamental extension of White Supremacy, a tool for keeping Black folk in their place and exploitable as a bloc of cheap labor. (Two excellent treatments of the origins of policing and imprisonment in the U.S. are Shane Bauer's *American Prison* and Keri Leigh Merritt's *Masterless Men*.)


The New York Times Book Review
10 Best Books of 2018
AMERICAN PRISON
A REPORTER'S UNDERCOVER JOURNEY INTO THE BUSINESS OF PUNISHMENT
SHANE BAUER
"[A] page-turning narrative . . . but also an eye-opening examination of the history of corrections as a profit-making enterprise." —The New York Times Book Review


Masterless Men
Poor Whites and Slavery
in the Antebellum South
Keri Leigh Merritt

- 

Further, a revanchist/falangist presence has been long evident in U.S. military organization. Kathleen Belew's deeply researched *Bringing the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* describes in particular detail the modern roots of extremist fascism embedded in the armed services, from the foot soldiers to the upper brass. Guys like Timothy McVeigh and Mike Flynn.

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We keep hearing lots of “This is not who we are” nonsense about this insurrection. Tis a fine hope, indeed, but this is exactly who and what America is, and the people who think that’s just fine will go to extraordinary lengths to keep it that way. It beggars the imagination for most people not inside the fever swamp itself just how deep their belief in their entitlement runs, and the degree to which any deviation from that imagined social order fuels a misguided and destructive sense of victimhood.

It is time to work the imagination just a little harder.

In less than two weeks, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will take their oaths of office. At that point, the legitimately elected government of the United States will be controlled by a slim majority of the Democratic Party (though in the Senate, the votes needed for the Dems to take a bare one seat advantage was 40 million more than those cast for Republicans). Sadly, along with their "this is not who we are" wishful thinking, there is a tendency for Democrats to urge a look-forward-not-back attitude toward Republican malfeasance.

Beginning with the Nixon pardon, through the Reagan/Bush Raj, and on through the depredations of Bush/Cheney, Democrats have been reluctant to push for accountability, never mind actual justice. Many of the malefactors of the Trump crime syndicate cut their teeth in the scandals of the Reagan-Bush-Bush administrations. The failure to prosecute their misdeeds are fundamental to understanding the Trumpian impulse to bluff their way through the most obvious corruptions. There has never been a price to pay. In the absence of any shame, our vaunted institutional norms are not worth the paper they were never printed on. When dealing with people whose definition of right action is nothing more than "whatever the fuck we wanna do", better that we not rely on these folks to do the right thing of their own accord.

There can be little debate that the members of the mob are fundamentally deranged and delusional about the basic facts of the world at hand. Nothing about their sense of grievance justifies their actions. No evidence in the real world supports their beliefs – stolen election, Soros illuminati, secret pedo cabals, antifa conspiracies – any more than the birth certificate thumpers had a legitimate claim on the nativity of Obama. What they all have in common is deep gullibility and a sense of a victimhood that leaves them at the mercy of hucksters like Trump, Limbaugh, Hannity, and so on. But even though the rabble here is largely composed of

semi-sentient fantasts – and there is a good case to be made that they are pitiable victims of an especially greedy long con – there is no reason to let them evade the consequences of their stupidity. Less than a day after the dirty deed, we are hearing calls to allow enflamed passions to subside, turn the other cheek, let bygones go unprosecuted. These people have grievances, we hear, and we should respect their need to have time to heal &c.

Fuck that noise.

Despite the almost comical bravado on display, despite their blatant publicization of their felonious deeds…

“May it please the jury to consider this photograph, helpfully provided by the defendant himself…”

…be prepared for the howls about government overreach when even the slightest law enforcement tends their way. Already, several people have been sacked from their jobs for their participation, and rightly so. Yet there are cries of First Amendment violations from wannabe constitooshunal scholarz with all the sophistication of the grade school bully who steals your lunch money and snarls “It’s a free country, man” when you protest. A movement is underway to make a martyr of

the dim bulb who went and got herself shot breaking through a Capitol window, her only claim to merit arising from demonstrating that reflexively yammering “thank you for your service” to every rando who ever wore a uniform is the height of unthinking patriot posturing.

These Karens and Kevins are unaccustomed to having their actions scrutinized, and will certainly demand to speak to the manager about this outrage. I mean, it’s not like they did something awful, like smashing a window at a Target store, or god forbid, something even worse.

Like these hooligans.

Savages. How dare they?