

Fear factor

Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 01.18.24

In George Orwell's "1984," Big Brother's fascist regime silenced opponents the old-fashioned way, with fear and violence. Likewise, Donald Trump instills fear and inspires violence to silence his opponents, whom he calls "vermin."

In 2016, Trump told supporters to "knock the crap out of" protesters...I'll pay for the legal fees." When demonstrators protested George Floyd's murder, Trump told Defense Secretary Mark Esper, "Can't you just shoot them?" On January 6, 2021, Trump urged the mob he summoned and knew was armed to march on the Capitol and "fight like hell." Trump told aides, "I don't [effing] care that they have weapons, they're not here to hurt ME."

Trump's proven ability to get followers to do violence has broken the GOP. Sarah Matthews, Trump's deputy press secretary, says Republicans won't criticize Trump because they and their families would "face death threats." Kim Ward, the Republican leader of Pennsylvania's state Senate, said if she criticized Trump, "I'd get my house bombed tonight."

Fear corrupted Trump's impeachment votes. Former Rep. Peter Meijer (R-MI) said a Republican colleague privately condemned Trump's Big Lie, but voted to overturn the election just hours after the assault: "My colleague feared for family members, and the danger the vote would put them in."

Rep. Jason Crow (D-CO) spoke with Republican colleagues who "broke down in tears — saying they're afraid for their lives if they vote for impeachment."

A Republican congressman told Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) that he didn't vote to impeach Trump for fear of putting his wife and children at risk. During Trump's trial a Senator in Republican leadership leaned toward convicting Trump. His colleagues urged him to reconsider. "You can't do that," Romney heard one say. "Think of your personal safety. Think of your children." The senator backed down.

A PRRI/Brookings poll reports that 41% of Trump supporters embrace political violence. Will non-MAGA Republicans repudiate them, or are they too paralyzed by fear?

Eileen Farrell
Sunset Beach