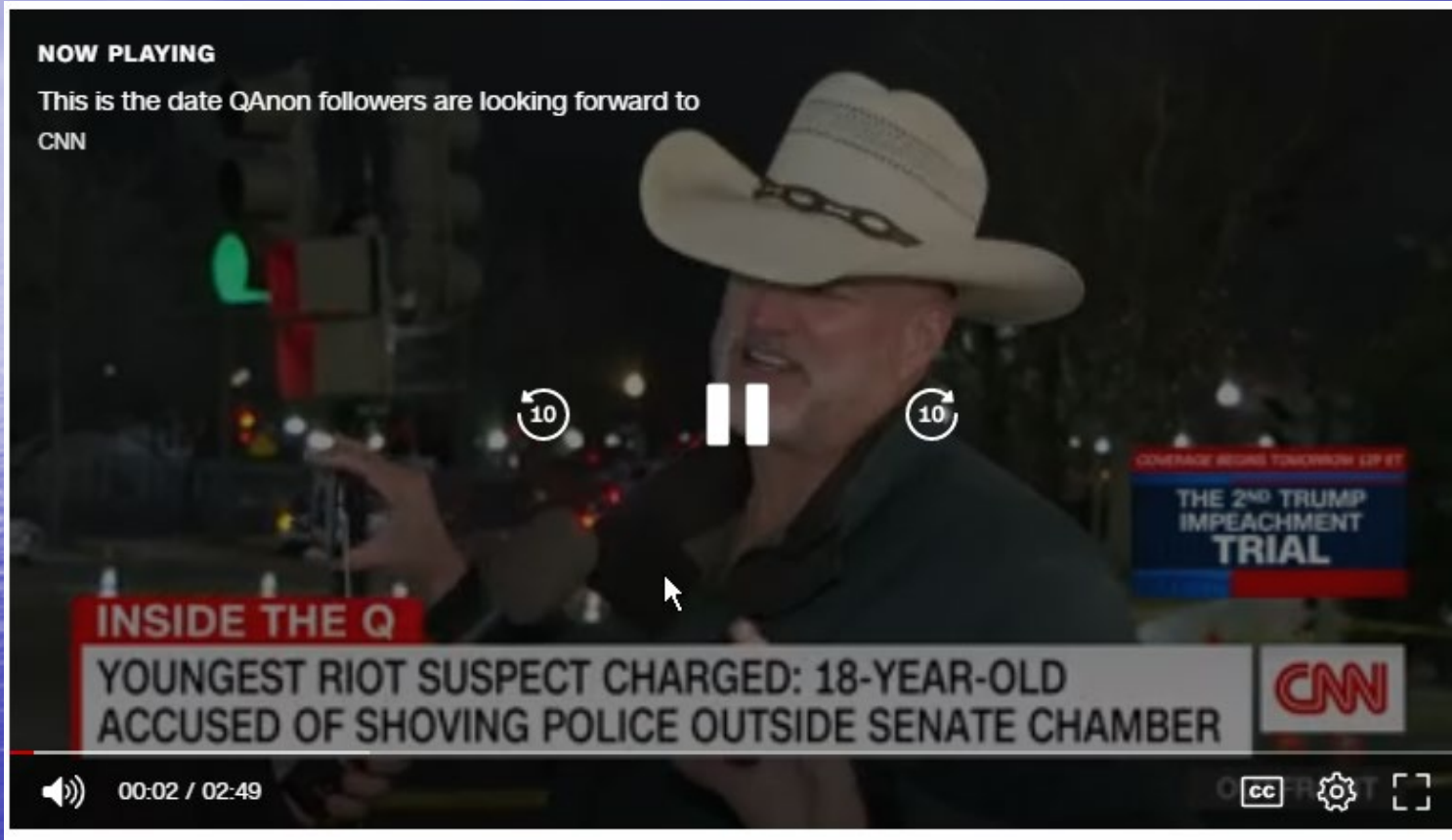


# Qanon: Part Four: March 4<sup>th</sup> and the Future

Brant Houston  
Knight Chair in Investigative Reporting  
University of Illinois  
[brant.houston@gmail.com](mailto:brant.houston@gmail.com)

# Qanon: March 4 Inauguration

**NOW PLAYING**  
This is the date QAnon followers are looking forward to  
CNN



INSIDE THE Q

YOUNGEST RIOT SUSPECT CHARGED: 18-YEAR-OLD ACCUSED OF SHOVING POLICE OUTSIDE SENATE CHAMBER

CNN

00:02 / 02:49

CC FR

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/media/2021/02/09/qanon-trump-impeachment-sworn-in-march-4-osullivan-dnt-ebob-vpx.cnn>

# Qanon: March 4 Inauguration

**L**aw enforcement in Washington D.C. said they are monitoring the potential threat of further violence as followers of the QAnon conspiracy theory eagerly await March 4.

Supporters of the radical movement, listed as an domestic terrorist threat by the FBI, believe that Donald Trump will once again be inaugurated as president next month.

There is no suggestion that the QAnon supporters are planning anything in particular, but both Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police Department are keen not to have a repeat of the deadly January 6 attack, which conspiracy theorists took part in.

<https://www.newsweek.com/qanon-donald-trump-reinstatement-march-4-dc-police-threats-1569534>

# March 4 and profits

U.S. POLITICS POLITICS NEWS

## Trump hotel in D.C. boosts price for March 4, the day when QAnon predicts the former president will return to office

By **DAVE GOLDINER**  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | FEB 08, 2021 AT 5:20 PM





# March 4

Their arcane reasoning ignores how their other predictions have failed to come true.

According to QAnon, Trump will become the 19th president on March 4 because of a theory, also believed by the so-called sovereign citizen movement, that a law was secretly passed in 1871 that turned the U.S. into a corporation. As a result of this, all other presidents after Ulysses S. Grant are illegitimate, the theory goes.

# March 4 - Podcaster



# The failed apocalypse

IDEAS, ARTS, AND CULTURE

## When the QAnon Apocalypse Doesn't Come

*The aftermath of failed end times.*

by **THOMAS LECAQUE** · OCTOBER 27, 2020 5:30 AM



Conspiracy theorist QAnon demonstrators protest during a rally to re-open California and against Stay-At-Home directives on May 1, 2020 in San Diego, California. - Rallies have been held at several state capitols across the country as protesters express their deep frustration with the stay-at-home orders that are meant to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. (Photo by Sandy Huffaker /

<https://thebulwark.com/when-the-qanon-apocalypse-doesnt-come/>



# The failed apocalypse

- The countdown is set, the events line up, the end times are near—you are all prepared for the apocalypse. And then you wait. And wait. And time passes, events go by, and the apocalypse doesn't come. The teachers disappear, the scriptures are pondered, and the surviving believers are forced to deal with the inevitable question: What now?.







# The failed apocalypse

- This scenario has play out countless times—so many apocalyptic movements have come and gone over the centuries, be it the White Lotus Rebellion or the First Crusade, the Millerites or the Branch Davidians, ISIS or Aum Shinrikyo, or, in the United States and particularly relevant to the upcoming election, QAnon

# Qanon: March 4 and Beyond

POLITICS





   


## Without Their 'Messiah,' QAnon Believers Confront A Post-Trump World

January 28, 2021 · 12:42 PM ET  
Heard on Fresh Air

DAVE DAVIES

FRESH AIR

 37-Minute Listen + PLAYLIST   



<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/28/961507953/without-their-messiah-qanon-believers-confront-a-post-trump-world>

# Qanon: March 4 and Beyond

"Researchers have been saying to me for weeks that ... the QAnon believers whose beliefs survive the inauguration of President Biden are likely to be more committed. They're likely to be more fervent and more conspiratorial," [Craig] Timberg [of the Washington Post] says. "There is a real danger that what we'll see is a somewhat smaller but maybe more fervent and maybe more hateful and maybe more stealthy remnant that remains a force in our political life for years to come — and maybe also engages in acts of violence."

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/28/961507953/without-their-messiah-qanon-believers-confront-a-post-trump-world>



# March 4 and Beyond

On what Q supporters think is next, now that Trump has left office

I would say they fall into two broad categories: There are those who believe that "the great storm" is still coming in some way, shape or form, even though President Biden is now in office. And I guess there's two iterations of this. One is President Trump is secretly in charge and controlling events from Mar-a-Lago. I guess the other is that there's a new date, March 4, which was the original inauguration date in this country, was done away with, I believe, in the '30s, and that when March 4 arrives, Donald Trump will swoop back in and say, "I've been president all along, I'm taking a second term," and then the mass arrests and the coming storm all happen then.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/28/961507953/without-their-messiah-qanon-believers-confront-a-post-trump-world>



# QAnon: March 4 and Beyond

So we'll have to see what happens to that group when that day comes and goes. But then there's an even more angry kind of dead-ender group that is feeling as though this central tenets of QAnon about pedophilia and Satan worshipping, etc., have been true all along, that Donald Trump was not maybe the messiah they thought he was, and that they're sort of like preparing for a longer struggle. Of all the groups, that one kind of scares me, because they're really doubling down on the most terrifying parts of these prophecies.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/28/961507953/without-their-messiah-qanon-believers-confront-a-post-trump-world>

# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

Three percenters

Oath Keepers

Proud Boys

# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

## Three percenters

A wing of the militia movement that arose as part of a resurgence of the militia movement in 2009. The term “Three Percenter” refers to the erroneous belief that only 3% of colonists fought against the British during the Revolutionary War—but achieved liberty for everybody. Three Percenters view themselves as modern day versions of those revolutionaries, fighting against a tyrannical U.S. government rather than the British.



# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

## Oath Keepers [Wikipedia]

An American far-right anti-government militia organization composed of current and former military, police, and first responders who pledge to fulfill the oath that all military and police take in order to "defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic." It encourages its members to not obey orders which they believe would violate the United States Constitution. The organization claims a membership of 35,000 as of 2016, though the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has estimated its membership at several thousand



# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

## Oath Keepers

Three Individuals Affiliated With the Oath Keepers Indicted in Federal Court for Conspiracy to Obstruct Congress on Jan. 6, 2021

Three individuals associated with the Oath Keepers, a paramilitary organization focused on recruitment of current and former military, law enforcement, and first responder personnel, were indicted today in federal court in the District of Columbia for conspiring to obstruct Congress, among other charges.

# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

## Oath Keepers

**MotherJones**

Smart, ...

POLITICS

ENVIRONMENT

CRIME AND JUSTICE

FOOD

MEDIA

INVESTIGATIONS

PHOTOS

POLITICS

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

### **Oath Keepers Who Guarded Roger Stone Stormed the Capitol**

*Members of a volunteer security detail for the Trump adviser were part of the attack, the Times reports.*

# QAnon and White Supremacist and Anti-Government Groups

## Proud Boys

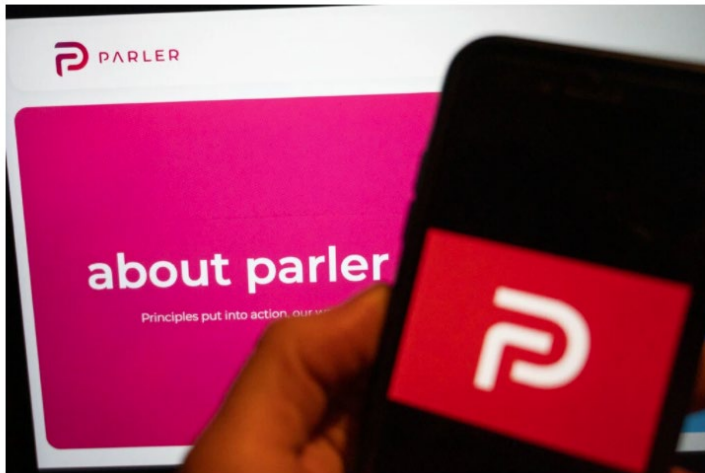
The Proud Boys' actions belie their disavowals of bigotry: Rank-and-file Proud Boys and leaders regularly spout white nationalist memes and maintain affiliations with known extremists. They are known for anti-Muslim and misogynistic rhetoric. Proud Boys have appeared alongside other hate groups at extremist gatherings such as the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Former Proud Boys member Jason Kessler helped organize that event, which brought together a broad coalition of extremists including Neo-Nazis, antisemites and militias.



# Parler comeback

## *Parler, a Social Network That Attracted Trump Fans, Returns Online*

After being cut off by Amazon and other tech giants, Parler worked for weeks to find a way to get back on the internet.



<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/15/technology/parler-back-online.html>



# Parler finds a platform

For weeks, it appeared the answer was no. But on Monday, for the first time since Jan. 10, typing [parler.com](https://parler.com) into a web browser returned a page to log into the social network — a move that had required weeks of work by the small company and that had led to the departure of its chief executive.

# Parler finds a platform

After many large web-hosting firms rejected Parler, the site came back online with the help of a small provider near Los Angeles called SkySilk. Kevin Matossian, SkySilk's chief executive, said in a statement that he was helping Parler to support free speech. For other services required to run a large website, Parler relied on help from a Russian firm that once worked for the Russian government and a Seattle firm that once supported a neo-Nazi site.

# Parler finds a platform

After Amazon booted Parler from its web-hosting service, Parler sued it, accusing it of antitrust violations and breaking its contract. A federal judge said last month that Amazon's contract allowed it to terminate service and declined to force the company to keep hosting Parler, as the start-up had requested.

Parler had more than 15 million users when it went offline and was one of the fastest growing apps in the United States. It is largely financed by Rebekah Mercer, one of the Republican Party's biggest benefactors.



# Parler finds a platform

John Matze, a software engineer who was Parler's co-founder and chief executive, said earlier this month that Ms. Mercer had effectively fired him over disagreements on how to run the site. Ms. Mercer hired Mark Meckler, a leading voice in the Tea Party movement, to replace Mr. Matze.

# Parler finds a platform

To stay online, Parler got help from DDoS-Guard, a Russian firm, which raised concerns among some internet researchers that the Russian government could surveil Parler users. Parler also partnered with Epik, a Seattle company, for its domain registration, a basic service of the internet. Epik has helped support other fringe sites that lost their support from other companies, including the Daily Stormer, a neo-Nazi site.

# Parler finds a platform

Ms. Mercer bankrolled the site. Other investors include Dan Bongino, a former Secret Service agent and Fox News pundit, and Jeffrey Wernick, an early adopter of Bitcoin who is now Parler's chief operating officer. Parler plans to eventually make money by selling ads, though that business was nascent when it shut down.



# Parler finds a platform

In the days after the riot, Facebook and Twitter removed Mr. Trump's account from their sites, causing millions more people concerned about what they saw as censorship to register accounts with Parler. It became the No. 1 app on Apple and Google's app stores. Then Apple and Google removed the app, and Amazon cut off its service.

# The Mercers

- Parler
- Cambridge Analytica
- Bannon
- Breitbart

# Funding from billionaires – The Mercers

**A**   Popular Latest *The Atlantic* My Account

MORE FROM THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION: THE FIRST 100 DAYS

The 18 Independent Agencies Trump Wants to Eliminate  
ELAINE GODFREY 

The Scandals of Donald Trump: Presidential Edition  
DAVID A. GRAHAM 

Has Trump Kept His Campaign Promises?  
DAVID A. GRAHAM 

Space: Trump's Least Controversial Frontier  
MARINA KOREN 

**POLITICS**

## What Does the Billionaire Family Backing Donald Trump Really Want?

The Mercers are enjoying more influence than ever with their candidate in the White House—but no one seems to know how they intend to use it.

ROSIE GRAY JANUARY 27, 2017



<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/no-one-knows-what-the-powerful-mercers-really-want/514529/>



# The Mercers

She owns a cookie store. He loves model trains. They both hate the Clintons. And beyond that, not much is clear about the motivations of the Mercer father-daughter duo of Republican megadonors who have become two of the most powerful people in the country over the last 18 months.

# The Mercers

No one seems to know what motivates the Mercers or what policies they want to see enacted, even people who have worked closely with them or for projects funded by them. While they've poured money into conservative causes, they've also invested in projects explicitly aimed at overturning the modern conservative movement, like Breitbart News, in which they reportedly invested \$10 million, and Trump himself. And the mystery of their ideological motivations is made all the more striking by their success in helping Trump reach the White House. A recent Wall Street Journal story on the Mercers concluded: "It isn't clear what specific policies or positions, if any, the Mercers are seeking for their support of Mr. Trump."

# The Mercers

That highlights a third apparent goal, which became clearer over the course of the campaign: dismantling the establishment.

The Mercers made two public statements over the course of the campaign.. The first came after Ted Cruz's dramatic speech to the Republican convention in which, amid booing, he refused to endorse Trump and told people to "vote your conscience."



# The Mercers

“Last summer and again this year, Senator Ted Cruz pledged to support the candidacy of the nominee of the Republican Party, whomever that nominee might be,” the Mercers said in a statement to The New York Times afterward. “We are profoundly disappointed that on Wednesday night he chose to disregard this pledge. The Democratic Party will soon choose as their nominee a candidate who would repeal both the First and Second Amendments of the Bill of Rights, a nominee who would remake the Supreme Court in her own image. We need ‘all hands on deck’ to ensure that Mr. Trump prevails. Unfortunately, Senator Cruz has chosen to remain in his bunk below, a decision both regrettable and revealing.”

# The Mercers

America is finally fed up and disgusted with its political elite. Trump is channeling this disgust, and those among the political elite who quake before the boombox of media blather do not appreciate the apocalyptic choice that America faces on Nov. 8."

The rare statement provided an unusual glimpse into the Mercers's views, reflecting a disdain for an elite political class of which they themselves are members.

# QAnon and Organic


FASTCOMPANY

ADVERTISEMENT

01-13-21 | WORLD CHANGING IDEAS

## There's a disturbing nexus of organic food and white supremacists

One of the Capitol rioters asked to be served only organic food in jail. It's not just a weird personal quirk.



<https://www.fastcompany.com/90593995/theres-a-disturbing-nexus-of-organic-food-and-white-supremacists>



# QAnon and organic

But Angeli's request for organic food is not just an example of the way our justice system treats people differently. It's also a window into a strange confluence of subcultures. While most people associate organic food and farmers markets with progressive politics and cosmopolitan values, they're also a draw for certain elements of neo-fascist culture.

# QAnon and organic and Nazis

Part of this connection between organic food and white supremacy dates back to Nazi Germany, where there was a strong ethos about the importance of nature, healthy eating, and natural foods. For modern white supremacists “purity is central,” says Pete Simi, an associate professor of sociology at Chapman University who has spent about 25 years studying right wing extremism and political violence.

# QAnon and organic farming

Organic farming is also tied into white supremacy because it's a predominantly white subculture that white supremacists can gain a foothold in and develop a presence without attracting much notice. In 2019, the New York Times reported that white supremacists were becoming a presence in farmers markets across the U.S. Activists protested, creating buttons that read "Don't Buy Veggies From Nazis." Nazism and organic farming has been seen in Sweden and present-day Germany, as well.



# QAnon and organic and eco-fascism

The connection with organic food can also tip into eco-fascism: concerns about purity and overpopulation that also blame certain racial groups for being a bigger threat to the environment than others. There's a long history of blending a strong environmental focus and concern for ecology with fascism, Simi says. Angeli has said himself in interviews that he's interested in "cleansed ecosystems" and has ranted against chemicals in our environment. But to Angeli and other "Nazi Hippies" like him, the current global solutions to these issues are part of the "evil new world order"

# QAnon and organic

“The issue about what we perceive as innocuous may be more important than it appears at first glance. When we really want to understand where this comes from, you have to understand the cultural underpinning. That means you have to take that culture seriously and look at the different aspects of that culture and how easy it can be in terms of blending into the mainstream,” Simi says. “That’s where we are at right now [with] this worldview. We’re not talking about a fringe, we’re talking about a much more broad-based world view that we’d like to admit.”

# Evangelical Christians

How QAnon uses religion to lure unsuspecting Christians

By Daniel Burke, CNN Religion Editor

(CNN)Parker Neff was scrolling through conservative posts on Facebook when he saw an unfamiliar hashtag: #WWG1WGA.

Recently retired after serving as a Southern Baptist pastor for more than 20 years, his time was free and curiosity piqued.

"I started looking into it online," Neff said. "Doing some research."

And with that, the 66-year-old retiree, and soon his wife, Sharon, fell down one of the internet's most dangerous rabbit holes.



# Evangelical Christians

It didn't take long for Neff to find the hashtag's meaning. "Where We Go One We Go All" is one of several mottoes of QAnon, a collective of online conspiracists.

The pastor and his wife, who live in Arcola, Mississippi, began watching the vast collection of QAnon videos posted online by "researchers" who decipher the cryptic messages of "Q," an anonymous online persona who claims to have access to classified military and intelligence operations.

# Evangelical Christians

- "Right now QAnon is still on the fringes of evangelicalism," said Ed Stetzer, an evangelical pastor and dean at Wheaton College in Illinois who wrote a recent column warning Christians about QAnon. "But we have a pretty big fringe.
- "Pastors need to be more aware of the danger and they need tools to address it," he told CNN. "People are being misled by social media."



# Evangelical Christians

- To cite a few examples:
- During services in July, Rock Urban Church in Grandville, Michigan, played a discredited video that supports QAnon conspiracy theories. "The country is being torn apart by the biggest political hoax and coordinated mass media disinformation campaign in living history — you may know it as COVID-19," the video says. The church did not answer requests for comment and has removed the video from its YouTube channel.
- Danny Silk, a leader at Bethel Church, a Pentecostal megachurch in Redding, California, has posted QAnon-related ideas and hashtags on his Instagram account. Silk did not respond to requests for comment.



# Evangelical Christians

MIT Technology Review Topics Magazine

---

Election 2020

---

## Evangelicals are looking for answers online. They're finding QAnon instead.

How the growing pro-Trump movement is preying on churchgoers to spread its conspiracy theories.

by **Abby Ohlheiser** August 26, 2020

---

**The first family to quit Pastor Clark Frailey's church during the pandemic did it** by text message. It felt to Frailey like a heartbreaking and incomplete way to end a years-long relationship. When a second young couple said they were doubting his leadership a week later, Frailey decided to risk seeing them in person, despite the threat of covid-19.

It was late May, and things were starting to reopen in Oklahoma, so Frailey and the couple met in a near-empty fast food restaurant to talk it over.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/08/26/1007611/how-qanon-is-targeting-evangelicals/>

# Evangelical Christians

- The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.” —Proverbs 18:10
- One Friday in mid-July, Twitter saw a strange new hashtag rise up out of nowhere: #Wayfair, the name of an online furniture company. It was trending because of a baseless conspiracy theory that listings for suspiciously high-priced cabinets were named after missing children. Perhaps, the theory went, this was a method human traffickers and child abusers used to secretly signal and sell victims to one another. This was debunked numerous times, but the meme quickly spread to Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. On each site, people moved by the very human impulse to care about vulnerable children began repeating what they saw to their friends and followers.



# Evangelical Christians

- For evangelicals, the Wayfair rumors exploded into a major online freakout. Howerton, the family therapist, was alarmed when she saw her friends posting about it, including members of the megachurch she used to attend. She'd used her platform for years to raise awareness about child trafficking, but with just a little rudimentary research, she quickly learned that the claims weren't true. And then she spotted where they had originated. "I went down a lot of rabbit holes," she says. "Then I got the QAnon connection."
- "It was Wayfair that really opened my eyes to which of my friends were really following the QAnon stuff. And it was a lot," she says.



# Evangelical Christians

- Child abuse and human trafficking are, of course, real and terrible phenomena, and they are familiar topics in many evangelical churches. "Saving" children, whether by adoption, anti-trafficking activism, or opposition to abortion, drives a great deal of evangelical activism. It's not uncommon for a church to partner for fundraising or support with a religious or secular nonprofit that helps trafficking victims.
- Carter, of the Gospel Coalition, says this well-meaning drive to help is also easily exploited. Among evangelicals, feelings about human trafficking are often so intense that people are only interested in hearing, and sharing, stories about how inhumane and widespread it is. In Carter's experience, his audience is particularly hostile to being told that a trafficking story being shared isn't true. "If it's a problem, it has to be a huge problem. If you try to put it into context, it's seen as downplaying the problem," he says.

# Evangelical Christians

- Howerton believes it's no accident that QAnon has taken hold among evangelicals now: they are facing tremendous cognitive dissonance. "I was raised evangelical Christian Republican. There is nothing that makes sense for Trump with any of the values that I was raised with," she says. "There's a part of me that thinks that this is a very elaborate false narrative to explain their continued loyalty to Trump."



# Evangelical Christians

- Pastor John MacArthur of California, an influential evangelical who is battling county officials over the right to continue indoor services at his Grace Community Church, espoused a theme popular in QAnon circles when he misinterpreted CDC data and informed his congregation that "there is no pandemic." MacArthur declined CNN's request for comment.
- There's even a movement, led by the Indiana-based Omega Kingdom Ministry, to merge QAnon and Christianity -- with texts from both the Bible and Q read at church services.



# Qanon: Pivot Point

JEN GOLBECK

IDEAS 02.06.2021 09:00 AM

## Sad QAnon Followers Are at a Precarious Pivot Point

Disillusioned after Biden was sworn in, conspiracy theorists could now be swayed back to reality by conservatives and family members—or toward darker fringes.



<https://bit.ly/2ZrRgYx>

# Qanon: Pivot Point

While many are abandoning Q, they are not necessarily abandoning Trump. He could offer them a lifeline that doesn't include the baby-eating cabal but that does pull them deeper into a cult-of-personality-style political movement. Thanks largely to his social media deplatforming, Trump has been relatively silent since the insurrection. If he decides to reactivate and marshal his supporters, this may be an attractive path for the former QAnon adherents.

<https://bit.ly/2ZrRgYx>

# Qanon: Pivot Point

We already see white supremacy groups intentionally working to recruit disillusioned QAnon followers in their online spaces, offering a humiliation-free path of acceptance and radicalization. Some followers are also shifting to the belief system of groups like the Sovereign Citizens Movement, whose ideas had crept into the QAnon mythology. There is now a great risk for QAnon followers to become more extreme by devoting their energies and time to these more extreme groups.

<https://bit.ly/2ZrRgYx>



# Qanon: Pivot Point

But there is also an opportunity to bring them onto a path leading back to facts and reality. Research shows that merely insulting or humiliating cult members is unlikely to lead to defection. Leading followers from QAnon requires an off-ramp from QAnon, and Trump, that preserves their dignity and offers purpose that will fulfill some of the emotional and psychological needs that the QAnon community was formerly satisfying.

<https://bit.ly/2ZrRgYx>

# Qanon: Pivot Point

Friends and family members may offer another path, helping followers turn away from the conspiracy theory and back toward "normal" life. Advice about helping family members who are leaving cults may apply here as well. Family members should offer many small doses of evidence that can help sow doubt or disillusionment with Q. A dramatic intervention, however, is unlikely to be effective, since it often leads to entrenching beliefs. Avoid arguments, judgment, criticism, or humiliation. Share testimonials from people who have abandoned Q. Emphasize that the followers were lied to and that they are victims of those lies—the sense of victimhood is already prevalent among Q followers. This process of de-cultification requires patience and suppressing justified anger, recriminations, and frustration. It also may not work, but it is grounded in the best professional advice on bringing people back out of a cult.

<https://bit.ly/2ZrRgYx>

# Qanon ex-follower



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msyp\\_dmsZRI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msyp_dmsZRI)



# Reporting on QAnon

The screenshot shows the Poynter.org website interface. At the top, there are several banners: "Journalism jobs posted daily." with a woman's photo, "The Media Job Board" logo, and "Poynter. E&P America's Newspapers" logo. Below these is a green bar for "COVID-19: Poynter Resources" and a black bar with links to "The Craig Newmark Center", "IFCN", "MediaWise", "NewsU", and "PolitiFact". The main header features the "Poynter." logo in green, a search box, and the date "February 17, 2021". A navigation bar includes "NEWS", "TRAINING", "ETHICS & LEADERSHIP", "FACT-CHECKING", "MEDIA LITERACY", and "EVENTS". A "Reporting & Editing" category tag is visible. The main article title is "Embedded within a mass delusion: The challenge of reporting on QAnon" with a sub-headline: "Online harassment, Telegram channels and difficult conversations — what it's like for the journalists covering a viral conspiracy theory." Below the text is a photograph of the US Capitol building with an American flag in the foreground. To the right of the photo is a dark box with the text "Start your day informed and".

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2021/embedded-within-a-mass-delusion-the-challenge-of-reporting-on-qanon/>

# Reporting on QAnon

BBC reporter Marianna Spring was sitting outside enjoying a pint with one of her friends last summer when she got hit by her first QAnon pile-on.

Messages and threats flooded Spring's phone, accusing her of eating babies and of being a Satanic pedophile. Spring, a specialist reporter covering disinformation and social media, stayed up until 3 a.m. that night, blocking accounts until the deluge of harassment slowed. When she woke up, more messages awaited her.

"I think it was then that I really realized what QAnon is, the scale of this movement, the cult-like nature of it, and how it was beginning to become a bit of a big deal here in the U.K.," Spring said.

# Reporting on QAnon

Though QAnon has only recently started making national headlines daily, some reporters have been monitoring the movement for years.

CNN reporter Donie O'Sullivan is one of them. During the conspiracy theory's early days, he kept tabs on it but didn't do much reporting out of concern that CNN's global platform would spread the theory.

"Where is the tipping point of yes, there is something happening on the internet, and yes, some people are engaging, but by us covering it, are we unintentionally giving it more oxygen?" O'Sullivan said.



# Reporting on QAnon

Brandy Zadrozny, an investigative reporter at NBC News, faced a similar dilemma. She first heard about QAnon from her reporting partner Ben Collins in November 2017 but didn't publish her first article on it until 2018.

The appearance of QAnon supporters at Trump rallies in 2018 made Zadrozny realize that QAnon was not just another conspiracy theory, but something that needed coverage.

# Reporting on QAnon

To track all these conversations, some journalists monitor the social media sites and internet forums where QAnon theories are spread and shared. Daily Beast politics reporter Will Sommer, for example, keeps a list of 30 to 40 right-wing blogs, forums and other websites that he searches through once a day. He also regularly skims a list of Telegram groups.

“You’re like a big whale, and you just swallow as much as you can, and you have to filter it out through your baleen,” said Sommer, who is working on a book about QAnon. “You want to spot the trends, and you want to spot things that are being repeated over and over. And so, in that case, I have to just consume huge amounts of it to spot these connections.”



# Reporting on QAnon

“Now, it’s harder. Now, we’re talking about Discord chats. Now we’re talking about audio chat rooms. Now, we’re talking about Telegram channels,” Zadrozny said. “So it’s just being extremely online, having a billion tabs and following these people as they are moved into more niche platforms.”

To ensure that they are accurately identifying major trends, some reporters check their findings with researchers who spend more time in QAnon spaces.

They also rely on former QAnon believers for tips and track the posts of QAnon influencers, who help set certain talking points. Those talking points are “extremely well organized,” said O’Sullivan. He said it is fairly easy to identify the conspiracy theory of the day because it will spread across QAnon spaces.



# Reporting on QAnon

- Spending a lot of time reporting on QAnon and absorbing outlandish conspiracy theories can take its toll, Dickson said. Journalists risk becoming desensitized to the theories. She pointed to the recent news about Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) as an example. Though many were surprised to hear that Greene thinks “Jewish space lasers” caused wildfires in California, the news did not shock Dickson as that theory is in line with what many QAnon followers believe.

# Reporting on QAnon

When they're identifying stories, many reporters avoid treating the movement as a spectacle and repeating the latest bizarre conspiracy theory. They instead try to identify tangible impacts, which helps them avoid amplifying smaller theories.

"Instead of just noting that QAnon believers are believing in X thing and have pinned all their hopes on this date, I'll try to find something about how QAnon believers are advocating for violence or if they're organizing on a specific platform and causing problems," said Ali Breland, a disinformation reporter for Mother Jones. "They're things that can ideally, hopefully be resolved if there's attention to them or things that are useful information for people."



# Reporting on QAnon

- “A big message in the QAnon community is basically the idea of why are you giving so much attention if it’s not real?” Zadrozny said. “Because if not, if it wasn’t right, then why would the media care about a stupid conspiracy theory? It’s this sort of circular logic.”
- Dickson said she avoids naming QAnon influencers, many of whom have profited from the movement, so as not to unwittingly lead more people to them. She also tries not to interview active followers as she does not find them helpful.



# Reporting on QAnon

Naturally, any reporting on a conspiracy theory must also be accompanied by rigorous fact-checking. O'Sullivan breaks down what is false at the beginning and the end of an interview. Similarly, Greenspan debunks every conspiracy theory she references in a story.

As time passes, some QAnon believers will likely ditch the conspiracy theory. Inauguration Day brought a moment of clarity for some as the promised "storm" — when Trump was supposed to declare martial law and round up and execute Democrats — never came.

# Reporting on QAnon

These shifts raise questions on how best to report on former believers, and it's an issue Greenspan has been thinking about lately.

"There's a fine line you have to tread between humanizing and empathizing with these people who have been manipulated basically by a cult in a way, versus like, OK, but these are also people who have supported something that accuses innocent people of being a pedophile," Greenspan said.



# Reporting on QAnon

Several journalists said they hope their reporting on QAnon will make people take it seriously. In their interviews with people who have lost loved ones to the conspiracy theory, reporters get a “front row seat” — as Cook puts it — to the wreckage QAnon can cause families. The problem is so widespread that grieving family members have created online support groups.



# Reporting on QAnon

“When I talk to people who have close people in their lives who have become really, really, really invested and devoted in QAnon, they’re describing pain at losing a person. These conversations are generally about grief,”  
said MIT Technology Review senior editor Abby Ohlheiser.  
“I never get used to those conversations. Those are always hard every time.”

# Continuing coverage - Daily Beast

## ARTICLES

### QAnon Rep. Replaces Trump as Fundraisers' New Outrage Fuel

"Emotion opens emails," said Jared Leopold, a longtime Democratic strategist.

Published Feb. 10, 2021 SAM BRODEY



### QAnon Is Now Invading Jeff Bezos' Video Game App

Nearly every social-media platform has cast QAnon supporters out, but some started to rebuild on Twitch.

Published Feb. 10, 2021 WILL SOMMER



### Is Country Music Turning on Racism and QAnon?

Morgan Wallen was deplatformed after a racist outburst. T.J. Osborne came out. And JP Harris has penned an anti-QAnon tune. Country music may be changing its tune, y'all.

Published Feb. 05, 2021 TARPLEY HITT



### Colbert Demolishes Marjorie Taylor Greene's QAnon Excuses

"This is the modern GOP," the "Late Show" host said. "They want credit for recognizing reality."

Published Feb. 05, 2021 MATT WILSTEIN



<https://www.thedailybeast.com/search?q=qanon>

# Continuing coverage - Politico

POLITICO



## QANON

News, Analysis and Opinion from POLITICO



**CONGRESS**  
**Inside Republicans' plans for a House takeover**

By ALLY MUTNICK and MELANIE ZANONA | 02/10/2021 05:01 AM EST | Updated 02/10/2021 09:20 AM EST



**CONGRESS**  
**Rep. Greene revels in committee removal but says she's 'sorry' for conspiratorial rhetoric**

By QUINT FORGEY | 02/05/2021 12:11 PM EST



**INSURRECTION FALLOUT**  
**'QAnon shaman,' charged in Capitol riot, changes jails due to food**

By JOSH GERSTEIN | 02/04/2021 11:41 PM EST



<https://www.politico.com/tag/qanon>



# Continuing coverage - The Conversation

🏠 Edition: **United States** ▾ Donate Get newsletter


## THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair

COVID-19 Arts + Culture Economy + Business Education Environment + Energy Ethics + Re

### Articles on QAnon

Displaying 1 - 20 of 38 articles



February 15, 2021

#### How the U.S. can move beyond mass protests in the aftermath of Donald Trump

Ron Stagg, Ryerson University

<https://theconversation.com/us/topics/qanon-60031>

# QAA Podcast

**QAA Podcast**    
 7,804 Tweets



  [Follow](#)

**QAA Podcast**    
 @QanonAnonymous

The QAnon Anonymous Podcast. Hosted by [@JulianFeeld](#) [@Travis\\_View](#) [@RealRockatansky](#) / UK Corr. [@AnnieKNK](#) / Canadian Corr. [@LivPosting](#)

📍 Home of the Deep Dish [qanonanonymous.com](#) 📅 Joined August 2018

703 Following 74.6K Followers

 Followed by Malcolm Nance, agustin armendariz, and 6 others you follow

[Tweets](#) [Tweets & replies](#) [Media](#) [Likes](#)

 Pinned Tweet

 **QAA Podcast**  @QanonAnonymous · Jan 13 ...

We are critical of the QAnon movement and have covered it for several years. We are not promoters of the conspiracy theory.

 186  199  3.9K 