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**Intro:** Welcome to the Let’s Talk Government Podcast that is provided for you by the Department of Government at Minnesota State University, Mankato located in Minnesota in the United States. I am your host Dr. Pat Nelson the chairperson of the Government Department. I want to thank you for joining us as we explore different topics about government. Some may be surprising to you and some may not, so please enjoy.

**Dr. Nelson:** Welcome to episode 14 of the Let's Talk Government podcast. This one is about outlaw citizenship post reality. Today I'm joined by Dr. Amelia Pridemore from the Minnesota State University, Mankato. Political science Department you may recognize her from earlier podcasts in especially our conversation on protests, riots and outlaw citizenship which is episode 2. So, we're going to build upon that. Thank you for joining me today Dr. Pridemore. So, let's start talking about your reaction to the capital riot. I know you do outlaw citizenship research. I know you were watching it. So, what was your reaction? What happened? What do you think?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: So overall my reaction is this. Was I horrified? Absolutely. Was I shocked? No, not at all. I hate to say that but no. Not at all. So just to revisit what outlaw citizenship is. So, outlaw citizenship is nontraditional citizen participation such as protests, online organizing. And these are done by people who do not believe that they will be heard otherwise. They do this as opposed to traditional means of participation like say voting or speaking at a government meeting. And one of the intents of outlaw citizenship is to work not with, but against government and to disrupt policies that the participants believe are unjust. And these can be for, as far as you know, have why they felt that they're not being heard. These can be for reasons both real and perceived alike. In a course when it comes to whether or not, something is believed to be unjust of course that's relative too. But one of the key things without law citizenship is that you should have seen it coming. That's my mantra. You should have seen it coming because the part of outlaw citizenship is that it is a built up. It stars with just some grievances that nobody's really acted on. And then people get a little more upset. And it builds, and it builds, and it builds, and finally usually one major event, such as a police shooting, for example is the straw that breaks the camel’s back. And that's when your outlaw citizenship group acts. As I explain to students, when I'm teaching an outlaw citizenship, I always say, “nobody's sitting at home minding their own business, watching Netflix, and decide to jump off the couch and set fires in the street. No this is this is a built up overtime.” But one thing that really struck me about the capital riot in terms of outlaw citizen ships build up. Yes, there was a buildup. As we've seen with other outlaw citizenship events. The thing was much if not most of everything that was the outlaw citizenship built up with the capital riot, was not rooted in reality. When you're talking about conspiracie, about the election being fraudulent, when it was not. When you're talking about people being aggrieved because there's a secret cabal of Satan worshipping child traffickers working in a pizza shop. That's, yes that's a grievance that leads to these events, but it is absolutely not reality.

**Dr. Nelson:** So, I'd like to come back to this concept of reality with just a second here. So, I wanted to build upon your reaction and talk about my reaction to the Capitol riots. I was surprised that it went as far as it did. Because if you look at the crowd that actually stormed the camp capital. If you think about what mainstream America looks like. That was it, right. We have mostly people that are white both male and female. That are you know not struggling. They're not deeply into poverty, but they're also not the wealthiest. So, they're right in that lower to middle last. They are the ones that we see the Trump signs out in their front yards. They have the thin blue line flags. We found that 10 to 15% of them have military experience. We see that there were current and former law enforcement officers as part of the crowd. So, I was actually very surprised that they seemed to cross that invisible line between civility to incivility, right. To acting out your grievances, doing your First Amendment, rights of speech, your right to public assembly, your right to having grievances, and then they crossed that line in two. No longer talking about your grievances, but now we're attacking people. We are physically attacking structures. We are physically attacking people. And that kind of takes me into a couple of definitions. I just want to provide and then we're going to go back to reality. So, I studied terrorism and political violence. And many people have heard the term, “oh this was a domestic terrorist event.” And they're going to use statues based on terrorism to charge a lot of these people. But there is a line between what is terrorism and what is political violence. And one of the bright things about that line is terrorism, the targets of terrorism are people that are not in government. They are concerned noncombatants or civilians. So, for example, when you hear about a suicide bomber walking into a market and blowing themselves up, there are terrorists because they are attacking people outside the government to try to get an ideological change. This is political violence because the people that stormed the capital were attacking a government institution or representatives of the government, and they were trying to get an ideological logical change done. So, it's a small line, but it's an important line because even though nobody ever gets elected to Congress with the assumption that they might be attacked in their office and physically harmed, you are still an entity of the government. Just like the police are the entity of a government on representative. So, this is political violence, but you're going to hear the term domestic terrorism. But let's go to reality. So, we look at this. You know, you think of the term outlaw citizenship. We think of the of the black lives matter. The protest after the police shootings you know. The protests after the Flint water scandal. That type of thing. But here we've got our mainstream elected president leading this. What does that say about their interpretation of reality? And their interpretated their actual grievances for this group of people.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: It's you know. it's something that I've racked my brain over so much, and its sort of like but again he kind of you have to look at the events before Trump was elected. And look at some of the supporters that launched him into the stratosphere particularly during the 2016 primary season. Look at the ones who supported Trump in the primaries versus say the ones who supported say Ted Cruz or Marco Rubio or Jeb Bush. A lot of the people who started launching Trump were already feeling extraordinarily on the outside when it came to the political sphere as it was. So, NBC did this huge study, both quantitative and qualitative, called the United States of Trump where they looked at these early voters. And what they often found was that the ones who started out one of the striking things was a lot of them had in the past if they even engaged in politics at all. They had turned towards and nontraditional, kind of fringe candidates before like Ross Perot in 1992. Guy made the ballot. Many years before the Trump became a thing. They supported candidates like Ron Paul, etc. So, a lot of the groundwork was already being laid. And then we had the Great Recession. And the thing about the about the Great Recession was that you had severe economic decay. So, a lot of these same Trump voters who were already kind of gravitating towards, you know, fringe candidates as it was. Where in a lot of economic distress and actually the in the recovery from the Great Recession. A lot of them were in groups that wound up being worse off than they were before the Great Recession. And another thing that happened right around the events of the Great Recession was the election of a black president. When you are talking about a lot of groups that have underlying racist tendencies that maybe just haven't acted on them yet. Well, a lot of times elevating a minority to the ultimate position of power is one of the greatest threats to what they feel is a stable society, right.

**Dr. Nelson**: Right, so Dr. Pridemore, is there really any kind of theory or concepts in political science that would explain why powerful and rich people or powerful corporations did not just come out and say this is wrong there is no stealing the election? It's all been affirmed you need to stop this nonsense before the storming in the capital happened.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: So, one thing that I would refer to is Hannah Rant Mobbin capital. So, this is a theory that seeks to explain, quote unquote, “why normal people would be okay with this?” So essentially what a Rant says is that “two things have to be in place to hold up tyrant. And to prop up a tyrant. And put timber her into power.” And that is that is a group called the mob and a group called the capital. The mob is kind of self-explanatory. Basically, a really bunch of angry, bunch of fired up people, who will be receptive to the tyrant's message. And what our Rant argues is that the mob is often one with underlying feelings of racism. They will oftentimes just not act on it. But one thing that starts to kind of ratchet them up a little bit more is severe economic distress. As was the case in Germany pre-World War Two. And a lot of times what happens is a tyrant could come along at any other time when say economic conditions are okay and spew out things like “Mexicans are racist. And I could shoot somebody in the middle of 5th Ave.” And things said on Access Hollywood tape etc. Somebody could come around and say that. And people have said things like that well before Trump. But under other circumstances, seriously go away. Ew. I don't want anything to do with you. But if certain conditions are right, that message will have appeal. But that condition is not enough. So that's where capital comes in. You literally have to have money to be able to get your message out. To get you to make your mob a stronger mob and a bigger mob, right. Well, so what happened what has to happen there is you have to have a moneyed class according to a Rant. Who will say, “hey this tyrant if he comes into power, there's money to be made.” The thing about the capital crowd is maybe they believe in what the tyrant has to say. Maybe they don't care or perhaps they even disagree and find it repulsive. But their desire to make money is stronger than there I don't know if I want to touch this seriously. And they just kind of put their morals aside because they know that there's money to be made. For example, in selling T shirts with this person slogans on them. There will be add dollars bought if you're a media outlet that puts this guy on television or on your social media site. People who are part of this mob will buy your stuff, will advertise, will go to your website, etc. So, you have to have an angry mob who's fired up and the necessary conditions are right. You also have to have the capital crowd who sees a financial benefit to them even if they don't agree. And that desire for profit outweighs any kind of icky feelings that they may have about this. And that's how those two conditions are the two flags of the latter per say that make a tyrant rise.

**Dr. Nelson**: So, then kind of what we're seeing now. After the storming the capital, is that capital is starting to diminish. So, you have corporations pulling back from campaign contributions, disassociating themselves from different parts of this. You have individuals doing that as well. So, if you weaken that capital leg, even though you might still have that mob portion or outlaw citizens are ones that want to change things. And you have your tyrant which is your person power with a loudspeaker type of thing. If that capital goes away, you're weakening the whole structure then. That's interesting.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: Right, and from all indications right now. Like at this moment. It seems like the capital crowd peeling back whether it be campaign contributions, social media platforms. Which made a ton of money with inflammatory content, driving people to the site and more eyes on a site means greater add revenue. You have these social media sites saying, “Okay. Yeah, that's enough. Let's close this guy's Twitter account. Let's pull this Q stuff off our site, etc.” Even though kind of took a while for them to reach that point.

**Dr. Nelson**: Well, they were waiting. They were weighing the benefits of having it on there versus the cost. And when it when it no longer became profitable then they're just like oh look we're being socially responsible and taking this down. Right?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: Right. Sort of like sort of like Amazon with taking down parlor. But the thing that is going to be something to watch is that so just as the case with say newspapers and television outlets. Where buyouts have become the rule and not the exception. Right? Sometimes just one tech company will own multiple social media platforms. For example, Facebook owning not only Facebook. But also owning Instagram, and other platforms. Well, the thing about the Internet is okay. So, for example when Amazon dropped parlor, well you know, with the being the Internet, you know. You just gotta find somebody else who's willing to put your stuff out there. And if they drop you, well it's infinite. As to you know who can eventually start hosting this material. So, the Internet is the platforms audience will not be as strong at first. When say you get taken off the Twitter and you have to go to some kind of obscure platform of some kind or move from Facebook to more obscure platform of some kind. But the thing is with the Internet you can still manage to find another platform. Alex Jones, who was taken off of most major social media places. Well guess what Alex Jones is still online. Parlor is back online. That's a scary thing to keep in mind is you know. There's still going to be space for these would be wanna be tyrants to be able to spread their message and for the mobs to gather. It's just a question of will enough of the Capitol crowd put the brakes on it to where it just remains some kind of fringe website that your crazy uncle in the basement visits on the weekends. And you know is not a big thing or will enough of the Capitol crowd say, “you know what I can make some money off of this. Even though it's crazy.”

**Dr. Nelson**: So, I would imagine most people. Well first of all, I know you're using crazy just kind of figure interpreter, but the people that participated in the storming the Capitol probably would not consider themselves out last. Right? They would think that they're fighting for law and order. They are fighting for the stability of our country. That they're trying to save us from ourselves. So first, they probably don't think themselves outlaws. And second, I'm going to ask you, what do you think the pandemic has done to contribute to this? The isolation. The lockdown.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: Well, I mean just the isolation in the lockdowns alone. You're in your chamber by yourself with nothing but your social media in front of you. And maybe your spouse and children and pets, but you know a lot of people have stayed glued to phones. And sometimes the content that they've been glued to has been rather inflammatory. Also, when it comes to a crisis, there's a certain draw to dangerous conspiracy theory content that you wouldn't have in a non-crisis situation. What happens is that a lot of times people are drawn to conspiracy theories. Because even if something is just okay. I know I'm throwing the term out again. Even if something is just absolutely insane or absurd, it's not as scary as reality. And when reality becomes scary, a lot of times when you offer an explanation as to what's going on, even if that explanation is absolutely be insane and there's just no way it could ever happen and makes absolutely no sense, it's an explanation. And a lot of times when you have something as severe as a global pandemic, economic distress that's absolutely off the charts. Being stuck in your house all the time. You know there's a greater draw to material like that.

**Dr. Nelson**: Especially when you have a president who has a very loud and visible platform saying, “you know when we have this great fraud going on” and I'm going to paraphrase a couple of quotes here, “when you catch somebody in a fraud, you're allowed to go by very different rules. So, then we fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not gonna have a country anymore.” So, if you have somebody who is worried about the political system in the country. Who thinks that there probably was a great deal of fraud? And is worried that they're going to be marginalized and now disenfranchised. When they hear that powerful voice saying we can break the rules. We have different rules because we have to save our country. And if you don't fight, you're not going to your country anymore. That just ramps up that thought process. Very interesting. Alright, so we talked about her reactions and what we think. So, let's look towards the future. What do you think, using your magic crystal ball moving forward the future? What do you think is going to keep happening here?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: One thing that I would say on the political spectrum as far as traditional participation goes if we could even imagine that ever happening ever again. Be very vigilant and keep a very close eye on the 2022 elections. Because you know, going back to Obama's win in 2008 and the Great Recession. The 2010 elections, that was that's when the Tea Party really rose to prominence. And even you know 20 years, literally 10 years before this happened, we had this extraordinarily heated political rhetoric and extraordinarily heated political rallies. Where for instance people were shouting things like “we've got to grab our bayonets.” Right, you know and some of these people wound up winning political office. Again, one of those other things that leads to why didn't we see this coming, right? Well, okay. A lot of times what happens is when we have social progress, one way or another, you know. Whether we go back to the old days or we progress a lot. And we say elect our first black female vice president, right. A lot of times those on the opposite end say, “Oh no, you don't” and what things pull back into their direction. So, looking at the example of 2010 after Obama's historic. When and after a lot of social change during the Obama years happened. When we look at the 2010 rise of the Tea Party the 2010. I hate to say this, but all signs point to it. That's going to be probably nothing compared to what we will see in the lead up to and during the 2022 elections.

**Dr. Nelson**: It is interesting you bring that up because that kind of falls in line with the censorship of Arizona governor Doug Ducey. Former senator Jeff flake and Cindy McCain in Arizona that were just censored by their Republican Party during their annual meeting for not supporting the former president's narrative. So, you have that foundation already being built, and we're two years away from the election. So that's very interesting.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: Oh yeah. And already there's the promises from Trump himself, as well as some others too. You know launch primary challengers to some of these Republicans in office like Liz Cheney for example. John Thune in South Dakota, who basically didn't support the whole voter fraud quote unquote issue. And thought, “yeah maybe it's not a good idea for the president United States to inside a riot. I'm going to vote to impeach.” When the groundwork is already being zone the seeds are being planted. And yeah, the Arizona example doctor Nelson that you've given is an excellent one. I'm not saying. I hate to say you know, when it comes to the violence that we saw at the Capitol, I'm the type I never want to see this happen. I don't but honestly just like we saw we should have seen it coming with the capital. I fear that you know 2022 is going to be like 2010 on steroids.

**Dr. Nelson**: Well and I see coming up to see even in this next year as we kind of go back to the outlaw citizenship idea is we have some events here that could definitely trigger off some violence. I mean we've got the impeachment of Trump going to trial in the Senate. We've got the trials in Minneapolis for the officers that were involved in the George Floyd incident. So those are two big powder kegs we already see coming up in the spring that could actually take multiple groups of outlaw citizenship that have competing ideology and putting him in the same space and see what happens with that. And then you also have your government. I mean what space do you protect first. And we've seen some disparity in protecting spaces and protecting people and protecting their rights. It really will be an interesting spring to watch. It will be.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: Yeah, and I was just reading report actually this morning about particularly in the West Coast like around Portland. The rise of violent far left groups. Namely anarchists. A lot of people like to throw around antifa a lot. But no, it's mainly been some anarchists, who were who were often clashing with some groups like the proud boys for example. So, there's a lot of distress happening on the left too. That we're going to have to watch as well. Especially if these two groups literally find themselves in this in the same space.

**Dr. Nelson**: Right and then we still have the pandemic. And if we start getting disparity in vaccine distribution and vaccine coverage and health care. I mean that'll just explode another group. So, it'll be very interesting I'm sure we'll be talking about this again. Thank you very much. Any closing thoughts or we are pretty good.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore**: The thing that I would like to end on some sort of message of hope. I think the one thing that we can do to kind of maybe put the brakes on a lot of this crazy is mentally put the brakes on ourselves. When we see something that just seems absolutely absurd as we're scrolling through our Facebook feed, don't immediately get angry and say, “Oh no. This is outrageous. Let me share it with my 5000 friends,” think about it. Maybe is this true? And there's a lot of sites out there that are literally devoted to fact checking like snopes for example. PolitiFact a lot of sites like the Washington Post with their Pinocchio ratings. Right? Sometimes it just takes a Google search to be able to see if it's right. So sometimes we can put the brakes on a lot of these things before they happen by mentally putting on the brakes ourselves. A lot of times the answers are our questions. And when I mean the answers or questions is literally just asking questions. Should I do this? Is it true? Should I believe this? Should I act on this? Stop and ask some questions because a lot of times when you put on the brakes you wind up not crashing your car.

**Dr. Nelson**: Well, and sometimes just scroll on by. You know. If something is working you up, just keep going. You don't have to comment on everything. Have some empathy. Understand people might have a different point of view. So well thank you Dr. Pridemore. I appreciate you taking time out to talk with me about this again. I guess I had loved having this conversation with you because we look at this from so many different points of view and I appreciate your expertise.

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