

Loud, Raucous Crowd Gathers Outside Supreme Court, but MAGA Hard to Find

April 25, 2024 **by Dan McCue**



An anti-Trump protester confronts a costumed Trump supporter outside the U.S. Supreme Court building on Thursday. Though the protests were loud, the low overall turnout surprised many participants. (Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — They banged on pots. They banged on pans. They raised their voices and even jingled a few tambourines.

All in the hope of making their opinions plain to the nine justices assembled inside to hear the most consequential and final case of the current term — the one that will decide former President Donald Trump's bid for immunity from prosecution for his effort to overturn the election.

A large police presence was evident from a distance as one approached the Supreme Court building on First Street NE from a few blocks away.

Larger still was the media presence, with dozens of reporters, photographers and television network support people gathered on the sidewalk in front of the court and, in the case of the broadcasters, under a large stand of trees near the Senate side of the Capitol.

If the latter location seems strange, it actually was the perfect spot for television anchors — far enough from the din of the protesters to make themselves heard, but close enough to have the raised edifice of the court building as a backdrop.

What wasn't much in evidence — outside the courtroom, that is — was much support for Trump.

While the vocal and energetic anti-Trump contingent numbered in the high 40s — in itself not an extraordinary turnout, given the level of controversy Trump's legal woes have inspired — the boisterous members of MAGA on hand numbered only two.

Of these, the one who garnered the most attention was an older gentleman dressed in colonial garb who came to the protest with his own stage and brandishing a Gretsch Electromatic Jet electric guitar.

The other, a much younger fellow, seemed to have trouble staying on his pro-Trump message. In fact, in words and signage, he appeared to be much more interested in bantering about the “fake news” he said was routinely broadcast on CNN, and in praising Steve Doocy, co-anchor of “Fox & Friends” on the Fox News Channel.

As the older of the two men tried to get the crowd — many of whom were showing him their middle finger — to join him in singing “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” Lawrence Federman, a North Carolina resident held aloft a two-sided sign.

On one side, the sign depicted Justice Clarence Thomas tipping the scales of justice next to the words “Supreme Corruption.”

“Ginny [Mrs. Clarence Thomas] is Complicit and may be a criminal co-conspirator,” it said, before adding, “Thomas is breaking the law! Lock him up!”

It also included something of a footnote, which read, “We all know that’s not going to happen ... the court is bought and paid for by Trump & Assoc.”

Asked why he traveled all the way to Washington to protest outside Thursday’s hearing, Federman pointed to the words on his otherwise black t-shirt.

“Ethics matter,” it said.

“And ethics do matter. The rule of law matters,” the soft-spoken protester said. “You’ve got a Supreme Court justice in there, right now, sitting in judgment in this case, and he’s breaking the law. And nobody cares.

“Well, somebody cares. I’m here because I care,” he said.

In fact there is a law that states justices “shall recuse” themselves under certain circumstances. It’s the very same law that applies to lower court judges in the federal system.

However, its application to Supreme Court justices has been dicey over the past 248 years. To cite just one example, Chief Justice John Marshall — a legend in court circles — failed to recuse himself from the landmark case *Marbury v. Madison*,

despite the fact he had been deeply involved in the central matters in the case during his tenure as acting secretary of State.

Since then, the rules for recusal have been tightened, mostly through subsequent precedent, but it's still a touchy issue. If a lower court judge recuses themselves from a case in which their impartiality might be questioned, they can simply be replaced with another judge.

That can't happen on the Supreme Court. So if a justice recuses themselves, the argument goes, they won't be replaced and their absence will change the number and makeup of the court.

But Federman said **Ginni Thomas**' well-documented participation in the events of Jan. 6, 2021, make it fundamentally impossible for her husband to hear this case.

"If the court rules one way, it all gets swept under the rug, including Ginni Thomas' involvement in election interference, and if the court rules the other way ... well, then, the prosecutions and investigation will continue. So how can Justice Thomas claim the outcome of this case will not have a significant impact on his life?"

It should be noted that Virginia Thomas has not been charged with any crime in connection with her efforts to reverse the 2020 presidential election or her attendance at the rally Trump held on the White House ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021, shortly before the U.S. Capitol siege.

Federman said he began losing faith in the Supreme Court during the confirmation hearings for Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

"I watched those hearings ... and while I believe that he believes he wasn't guilty of assaulting anyone, I think there was enough

evidence to say that he was ... and his nomination should have been tossed out on the basis of that evidence,” he said.

“I mean, I just think we should be able to do better,” he added.

Federman said he believes it would be a tremendous blow to the country if the Supreme Court decides the case in favor of Trump.

“You might as well get him a crown and start kissing the ring, if that happens,” he said.

“It’s a sad time for the U.S., but then again, I also think it’s a good time,” he continued. “I think it’s good that Americans are actively thinking about these issues. I mean, 10 years ago, I couldn’t tell you the name of every justice on the court, but I can now.

“So is it bad? Yes, it’s bad. But it’s not all bad. There are still some good people out there. There are some good people out here today ... and no, there are no good people who attended Nazi rallies.”

The Well News also caught up with Steven Parlato, who has stood outside the Supreme Court building a dozen times in the past year carrying a large banner that both depicts Trump as a participant in a failed coup and as a “failed loser.”

“I feel that this is the last chance for the Roberts court to correct the record that they are not merely a pro-Republican or pro-Trump court,” Parlato began.

“They could have heard these arguments months ago and lifted the stay preventing at least one of Trump’s trials from going forward, and they would have removed the stain that is about to be affixed to this court forever,” he said.

Parlato went on to say that he finds it disturbing that there's still any question in how the court might rule.

"I have a feeling that the only thing that might explain how we got to this point is whatever happened during deliberations in the *Colorado* case," he said, referring to the court's decision earlier this year to block states from removing Trump from primary election ballots on the basis of his being an alleged insurrectionist.

"I think in that case, the court shamefully avoided making a decision by just sort of circling around and killing it," Parlato said. "That makes it seem like a deal was made, and that somehow, the three liberal justices got snookered."

Asked what he believes will happen if the court, in his view, decides the case the wrong way, Parlato motioned to the sign he was holding.

"I've got another one of these — you might have seen it — it's got Trump's profile on it, made out of snakes, and it said, 'Your vote is the only antidote.' I'm afraid that's still the case," he said.

Several steps away from Parlato, a woman named Ellen, who preferred not to give her last name, said she showed up in front of the Supreme Court building on Thursday morning driven by the belief the issue being considered is critically important.

"I mean, if he is immunized ... then we have no democracy anymore," she said. "It's as simple as that."

Later, she added, "I've lived here in D.C. since the early 1990s, and I've seen protests and so on, and what happened on Jan. 6 was not normal. He incited what happened across the street at the Capitol, there's no question about that."

Standing alongside Ellen was Nan Raphael, also of Washington.

“What I believe is that the Supreme Court hearing this case today is proof that they purposefully delayed deciding this case so that the election interference trial won’t happen,” Raphael said.

“I mean, fair enough if they would rather have people decide the outcome of the election in November, but this ... I don’t understand,” she continued.

“I mean, there’s a lot I don’t understand. Like how can people vote for a criminal who may even be beholden to [Russian President Vladimir] Putin in some way? Personally, I think Donald Trump should be stripped of his passport and given a one-way ticket to Russia.”

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(Photos by Dan McCue)

