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BY CHARLOTTE DENNETT  
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## *The Origins of Trump's Attempted Coup*

*A Conversation with Buzzflash founder Mark Karlin*

As the DC drama heats up over the level of Trump's involvement in the January 6 insurrection, it is imperative to pay attention to the Investigative journalists who have been tracking and revealing Republican skullduggery long before the Age of Trump, going as far back to the Clinton and George W. Bush era. Only by this way, are we able to fully comprehend the sheer sweep and determination of the right-wing of the Republican Party as it set on a course to gain and maintain power by any means. Players like Newt Gingrich and Roger Stone emerge as long-term culprits in this endeavor, and one person who has been steadfast in chronicling their antics is Mark Karlin. In 2000, he founded *Buzzflash* as "the aggressive progressive" website dedicated to "exposing the hypocrisy of the Republicans and the frequent timidity of the Democrats."

Karlin recently published [a provocative article](#) on January 19<sup>th</sup> entitled "Trump Didn't Just Incite Sedition on January 6. He Aided and Abetted Ongoing Insurrection." He acknowledged waiting for the FBI to connect all the dots, but avowed "there is enough evidence in plain sight (much of the Internet evidence is now deleted, but progressive hackers have retrieved much of the incriminating chatter) to indicate Trump could be found guilty of conspiracy to launch a coup attempt whose objective was the seditious breaching of the US Capitol and the overturning of the Electoral College ballot count on the 6th."

Like Karlin, I am a firm believer in using chronologies as an investigative tool, so I found his damning "evidence through timeline" to be an important framework for building a sound case against Trump for acts of treason. By the time the impeachment trial begins on February 6, there *should* be enough incriminating evidence (with new additions every day) to convince the necessary 17 Senators to vote to convict.

But there can be no underestimating Republican resolve to prevent this from happening. In an interview I did with Karlin on January 26th, some interesting historical insights emerged that

reveal that Trump's supporters are not going to give in easily, because rigidly pro-corporate conservatives in the Grand Old Party have been planning for an anti-Democrat regime change for a long time. As the founder of *BuzzFlash* put it bluntly, "The Republicans only care about raw power. They define success as winning" — and the assault on Congress shows just how close they got to achieving their goal, very much in line with the notion that "you can't show weakness." In short, they're not likely to give up now.

I began the interview (which ended up being more like a conversation, a sharing of stories) by asking Karlin what drives him, and what triggered his long crusade in exposing Republican chicanery.

### **Clinton's impeachment**

What galvanized him, he said, was watching the antics of Independent Counsel Roger Starr during the 1990s as he relentlessly pursued Bill Clinton in order to get the Democratic president impeached. Both parties would subsequently allow the independent counsel statute to expire in 1999, but when it was in force, it gave Starr enormous power. He could not be fired, and he reported his findings to a Republican-dominated three judge panel for a decision in the DC Court of Appeals. What became obvious to Karlin was the sheer ruthlessness of Starr and his Republican allies, along with the growing realization that "the Democrats didn't know how to fight." He watched Starr "launch an investigation in search of a crime," and (while everyone most remembers Clinton's dalliance with Monica Lewinsky in the Oval Office) the best crime Starr could come up with was Clinton lying about the affair, i.e. he committed perjury. At least that got Clinton impeached in the House — albeit acquitted by the Senate

Newt Gingrich, who served as House Minority Whip from 1989 to 1995 and in 1995 became Speaker of the House, was emerging at this time as a heavyweight right-wing conservative. Karlin would later see Trump as the "apotheosis of Gingrich", drawing a straight line from Gingrich to Tom DeLay of Texas (House Majority Whip, 1993 -2003; House Majority Leader, 2003-2005) and eventually to the extreme right-wing Senator from Missouri, Joshua Hawley (2019-present) and the vociferous, Democrat-bashing Congressman from Ohio, Rep. Jim Jordan (2007-present), who is a leader of the House "Freedom Caucus."

Newt Gingrich! That triggered an aha moment in me, for I knew that Newt Gingrich's rise to power was funded by a think-tank founded by former Delaware Governor Pierre S. ("Pete") du Pont. This is a little-known fact but is fully documented in Gerard Colby's twice-suppressed but recently updated book, *DuPont Dynasty: Behind the Nylon Curtain* (Full disclosure: Colby is my husband of 42 years). Du Pont, running for President in 1988, asked Gingrich to head the Government for the People Action Committee (GOPAC) that du Pont had founded that year to train rising young stars in the Republican party. Gingrich and GOPAC helped bring about the 1994 Republican victories in the House, with Gingrich's *Contract with America* serving as their ideological guidepost. While his connection to du

Pont is seldom mentioned, Gingrich is widely believed to be most responsible for sowing discord in Washington, carving up America into red states and blue states, and turning “[partisan battles into bloodsport](#)” while “paving the way for Trump’s rise.”

I mentioned in the interview that the du Pont family was known for supporting right-wing causes (not the least of which was planning to fund an armed march on Washington in 1934 to overthrow the “communist” government of President Roosevelt — modelled after Mussolini’s 1923 march on Rome which brought the fascists to power —until the Marine Corp’s General Smedley Butler exposed the plan.) Perhaps the du Ponts , I ventured, were still funneling a lot of money into far-right Republican causes and candidates.

The problem today, Karlin responded, is that it’s difficult to track the financing of the Republicans’ right wing movement due to “Dark Money.”( Post-interview, I subsequently checked out the [GOPAC website](#), which acknowledges’ Pete du Pont’s role and indicates that “GOPAC is the Republican Party’s premier center for *educating* and *electing* a new generation of Republican leaders.” (Emphasis added; no mention of “*financing*.”))

What is known, Karlin said, is that multi- millionaire and recently-resigned Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, has been heavily involved in financing right wing Republicans along with the Republican Attorneys General Committee. “These are just examples of how the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling created ‘a cascade of money going to the Republicans’ to carry out their primary goals,” namely tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy and getting their nominees, groomed by the ultra-conservative Federalist Society, on the federal bench.

“If you look beyond social issues,” he added, “you will see that the conservative Justices on the Supreme Court are all pro-corporate. I have read John Roberts decisions and he has never voted against corporations.”

And let’s face it: an essential element missing from the mainstream media’s depiction of today’s battle between Republicans (determined to protect Trump) and Democrats (hell bent on impeaching him, but possibly equivocating on his conviction) is the role corporations have played in influencing both parties. As the [BuzzFlash website](#) notes, the online magazine came into being in order to counter the corporate bias of the mainstream media and the tirades of Fox news and right wing radio, especially after “watching the calculated, partisan pursuit of Bill Clinton by *Ken Starr and his staff, which included Brent Kavanaugh*. However, we never lost sight that the Democrats — while preferable to the Republicans — generally failed to show the strength necessary to ensure social justice and attack the systemic problems of race, gender and economic inequality.”

### **The 2000 election and ascendancy of Bush**

The immediate impetus for launching *Buzzflash*, Karlin explained, was the 2000 election that pitted Democrat Vice President Al Gore against Texas Republican Governor George W. Bush. At the time, “no one was listening to Greg Palast,” the investigative journalist who

revealed how Florida's secretary of state, Katherine Harris, along with Florida Governor (and George's brother) Jeb Bush, were able to scrub some 70,000 African-American votes from the rolls. *BuzzFlash* published his findings when the mainstream media –and some progressive media — would not.

Now we were in small-world territory, as I had recently interviewed Palast for *Counterpunch* twice about his long history of investigating Republican voter theft.

This got us to recalling another memorable event from the 2000 election: the assault by a loud group of irate, door-pounding Republicans on the Dade County office of election supervisors. This bullying succeeded in stopping a hand recount of Florida's votes and threw the election results into the hands of the Republican-dominated US Supreme Court, which voted 5-4 to install George W. Bush as president. This assault on democracy was later nicknamed "The Brooks Brothers Riot," because the demonstrators were drawn from the ranks of the Republican party elite, a bunch of preppy-looking out-of-staters sporting suits and ties. It has become newly relevant to this month's right-wing protests in DC, although today's more scruffy-looking protesters reportedly caused Trump to have a fit after he initially cheered them on. Karlin pointed me to an article in the [Times of Israel](#) entitled "Trump Was Angry over Capital Mob only Because They Looked 'Cheap and Poor.'" Revealed a source, "Even at one of the worst moments in American history, he was thinking about his image. He didn't grasp the scale of the disaster."

Karlin further revealed that it was Roger Stone, Trump's loyal and recently-pardoned goon, who was responsible for organizing the Brook Brother's Riot. And who helped fly the bros in to Dade County, but none other than Tom DeLay.

Roger Stone would go on to advise Trump on the "Stop the Steal" campaign. In other words, Karlin observes, the insurrection at the Capitol "is a product of a wide conspiracy involving many people including some members of Congress, maybe two Senators, former Trump Campaign staffers and many organizations."

He adds that Republican Senators Ted Cruz and Joshua Hawley defiantly argue that by supporting the Trump lie that the election was stolen (thus precipitating the insurrection), they are simply representing the interests of their constituents — people who *believe* it was stolen. And it is precisely this allusion to – and/or fear of — Trump's base that is keeping other Republicans from breaking ranks and supporting Trump's removal from office.

Still, now-Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell is "in a pickle," Karlin observes, "because Trump has threatened to bring a well-financed primary challenging anyone who will vote to convict him. At the same time, McConnell is faced with the fear that major contributors won't support senators who oppose the notion that Biden's election was fairly won."

In the end, Karlin believes it will be "entirely up to Mitch McConnell whether 17 Republicans will vote in favor of convicting Trump and preventing him from running for the

presidency again.” The Democrats’ strategy in the second trial is to get a decision made on principle, namely “you have a president committing deadly treason and invading a co-equal branch of government,” therefore disqualifying him from future office.

What worries Karlin is that Republican senators are “normalizing treason and domestic terrorism” while “progressives still have a hard time realizing that Trump is normalizing highly aberrant behavior.”

Five of Trump’s lawyers resigned because they would not repeat the lie that the election was stolen. His new lawyers will apparently accede to Trump’s wishes, using election fraud as a defense. Whatever the outcome of the trial, it will have become clear to *most* Americans that, as Karlin puts it, “The only way The Republicans have the presidency is through chicanery or gaming the electoral system.”

Lest we forget, as I pointed out in my book, *The People v Bush: One Lawyer’s Campaign to Bring the President to Justice*, published in 2010, “Many Americans consider it common knowledge that we have just lived through eight years of a rogue presidency. The question is: *Have we set the stage for another rogue presidency in the future?* ...Many Americans, pressed by hard times, are forgetting that an epidemic of lawlessness during the Bush era was a major cause of their misery. The Republican right wing is inflaming discontent. Dark times could happen again, and they could be worse.”

Once again, the survival of what little democracy we have left is being put to the test.

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