January 7, 2021

Dear Members of the Yale Community,

Today in the United States Capitol, as senators and representatives were carrying out the constitutional process of certifying the winner of the presidential election, a mob used violence and menace to disrupt this most basic functioning of our democracy. The acts of the rioters were disgraceful; they demonstrated a fundamental disrespect for, and attempted subversion of, a cherished American institution. They put lawmakers, staffers, and many others in danger.

My feelings of shock and distress over today’s spectacle on Capitol Hill align with those of Yale College alumnus George W. Bush, ’68. Earlier today, he stated, “I am appalled by the reckless behavior of some political leaders since the election and by the lack of respect shown today for our institutions, our traditions, and our law enforcement.” He went on to warn, “Insurrection could do grave damage to our Nation and reputation. In the United States of America, it is the fundamental responsibility of every patriotic citizen to support the rule of law.”

As I write this evening, I am reassured to know that our lawmakers have resumed their work: I trust they are determined not to be further deterred. Their resolve calls for the same from the citizens they represent. Now more than ever, we must commit ourselves to placing the Constitution and the preservation of our cherished democratic traditions above partisan preference and political advantage.

My grandparents immigrated to this country to seek a better life for themselves and their families. That the United States aspired to be a nation “of laws and not of men” was not simply important to them: it was a promise met with a sense of profound duty. And so it has been for generations of Americans. The violence we saw today on Capitol Hill underscores for me that our democracy must enjoy complete and uncompromised protection.

During this troubling time, I am reminded of the generations of Yale students, staff, faculty, and alumni who have served this nation and our world with courage and fidelity. I am confident that, as they have done for over 300 years, members of the Yale community will continue to bring light and truth to a world in such great need of both.

I wish you all peace in the days ahead.
Sincerely,

Peter Salovey,
President
Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology

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