

## This Is Not Normal

From [Mara Gay on Deadline: White House](#), January 20, 2025, starting at 1:09:58 (transcription lightly edited):

I just want to pull back for a moment and talk a little bit about what we saw today and the performance of it, because there's a lot to unpack there. I was jotting some notes earlier and then again just listening to all of you and trying to take in how tragic this moment is.

Essentially what we saw today was the peaceful transfer of power to someone who doesn't believe in democracy or the rule of law.

We saw the promise of a return to greatness for America from a president who has weakened our bonds of affection and actually weakens the country in a plethora of ways.

We saw his rhetorical embrace of Martin Luther King, Jr., this on MLK, Jr. Day, of all days, by someone whose movement is almost wholly dedicated to the destruction of everything that Martin Luther King, Jr. stood for and his legacy, and all of this unfolded as we listened to *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, which actually is a song written by an abolitionist that was a battle cry for Union soldiers in the Civil War.

I wanted to bring that together just to take a moment to recognize that I think Donald Trump has today shown us the challenge to Americans and American society who wants a very different and democratic vision. What does the opposition look like and sound like and do in a country where Donald Trump and his movement are determined to culturally appropriate the very thing they are trying to destroy. I think that challenge has been put to the rest of American society today. This is day one of, "What does the rest of America do with that?"

We've got to be a lot less reactive and a lot more strategic in thinking about how to build coalitions. And I don't have any answers beyond that. I just want to talk about how disturbing that was. I also think we saw some important reflections. Michelle Obama's decision not to go was a sense of "Hey, something is not normal here." When you looked out at the sea of faces and you saw almost all only white Americans, that wasn't quite normal either. So, right around the edges you can tell that something was not quite right and that's where we need to begin.

I think a lot of us have drawn a lot of comfort as institutionalists over the years in these really important traditions, and they are important. I'm happy it was peaceful. That is something to celebrate. But what do you do when that has resulted in the election and transfer of power to someone who wants to burn the thing to the ground?

The other thing that is very clear just from talking to some of the Americans in my life who are not involved in politics or journalism is the millions of Americans who did not vote for

Donald Trump expect the people who they did vote for, especially those who are still in office, to fight. And I mean that obviously democratically, peacefully, to fight, to be an opposition party. This is not a time for go along, get along, And I think the less they see Democrats and others willing to do that, the more despair they themselves are in.

Mara Gay is right. This is not normal. And her question is exactly right: "What does the rest of America do with that?"