

Trump Town Hall triumph

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By Terry A. Hurlbut

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On Wednesday night (May 10), Donald J. Trump took part in CNN’s Town Hall event in New Hampshire. The motives of CNN’s current CEO, Chris Licht, are as clear as mud by now. Regardless of that, Trump triumphed over CNN and all his detractors, and has virtually assured himself of the nomination. But at least one commentator is very much afraid he lent himself to a dangerous distraction.

CNN set Trump up

Did CNN’s Chris Licht expect to use the Trump Town Hall to recast his network as a neutral, thoughtful observer? Some observers suspect so. But he ruined any chance of that by assigning Kaitlan Collins to moderate. This morning-show hostess is the very definition of Dr. Steve Turley’s favorite term: “left-wing activist disguised as a journalist.” She so angered then-President Trump that the White House Press Office banned her from a subsequent press conference. Outgoing White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany had her number during the transition, and said so. One assigns such a person as “moderator” only if one wants sparks to fly. And sparks flew – setting such a fire that CNN wound up cutting their broadcast five minutes short. (More below.)

On the night in question, she wore a white pantsuit – a sartorial stunt that every Democratic woman in Congress routinely pulled during Trump’s State of the Union addresses. She might have gone into the event with an overconfidence borne of Mr. Licht’s expressed plans for her. (He had planned to offer her a 9:00 p.m. slot, no matter what happened at Town Hall, according to *The New York Post* and *Mediaite*.)

She also came prepared to assert several narratives that grew in the aftermath of the January 6 Event. But she was *not* prepared to have people correct her, both during and after the Town Hall event.

Collins tries to play “gotcha.”

Collins concentrated on six topics she thought would embarrass Trump:

1. Why did Trump take documents from the White House and repeatedly ignore subpoenas to return them?
2. What has he to say for himself now that a New York jury has held him liable for sexual battery and defamation of one E. Jean Carroll?
3. How will he ensure victory for Ukraine in their war with Russia? Or does he plan to hand over Ukraine to Russia?
4. Why did he build not more than fifty-five miles of wall along the U.S.-Mexican border?
5. Would he, or would he not, accept the outcome of another election, no matter how it ran? Obviously this question concerned the Election of 2020, which Trump has never truly conceded.
6. Why did he take three hours to tell the January 6 rioters to go home?

Every one of those questions is loaded. Worse, the premises for most of the questions are false.

Of classified documents and inappropriateness allegations

Trump pointed out, as to the Mar-a-Lago raid, that neither Joe Biden nor Barack Obama suffered raids on their homes. (They, too, stand accused of taking documents home – and Biden’s case goes back to his Senate days.) Collins retorted that the former president had taken documents he had no right to take. He asked politely for permission to speak. She gave it, but couldn’t resist taking snide digs at him while giving it. That provoked perhaps his one show of any kind of weakness: he called her “a nasty person.”

He went on to contest her claim that he had no right to the documents, saying the Presidential Records Act gives him that right. Furthermore, he says, criminal penalties do not apply to their retention, even if they remained classified. *CNAV* has been over this before – but of course cannot expect a leftist outlet ever to concede those points.

Concerning the case of *Carroll v. Trump*, that is now on appeal in the Second Federal Judicial Circuit. No one has stated the specific grounds for the appeal. But in answer to Collins, Trump pointed out many embarrassing things about Carroll that the judge wouldn’t admit into evidence. Among them: she called her black husband an ape, and keeps a cat named after a woman’s private part. But mainly he disavows any prior knowledge of her – much less that he actually accosted her in a fitting room of a top-brand New York department store!

Of Ukraine, the Mexican border, and the Election of 2020

Concerning Ukraine, he refused to set military victory for Ukraine as a victory condition. He said he would strive to stop the killing in that part of the world. To that end, he suggested that he could end the conflict in 24 hours, by negotiating with Putin and Zelensky. Apparently he did not see fit to mention the biological weapons development facilities in Ukraine. (The ones with American funding, and American direction, and American staffs.) But for her part, Collins never mention the Nord Stream sabotage.

Concerning the border wall, this tweet makes unclear where Collins got her 55-mile figure. Perhaps she means *primary* wall in places where no barriers previously existed. This tweet shows that Trump in fact completed 458 miles of primary and secondary wall.

Kaitlan Collins flat out lied while fact checking Trump on Multiple occasions..

Here is # 1.

Collins Claimed Trump only built 55 miles of Border wall.

FALSE

Here are the real numbers from Customs and Border Patrol.
pic.twitter.com/sFvNODoTbk

— The American Tribune (@TAmTrib) May 11, 2023

Of course, that was before Joe Biden took office and ordered all wall contractors to down tools and go home.

Concerning the election, and the conduct of Officers of Election that night, their exchange turned into “He said, she said.” So that particular discussion solved nothing. But Trump did mention 51 intelligence agents signing off on a letter saying the Hunter Biden laptop was Russian disinformation. He did not mention the Twitter Files documentation of the suppression of that story. But of course two journalists, once loyal soldiers of the left, have documented that suppression.

Trump scores his greatest triumph

But in refuting Collins’ claims about the January 6 event, Trump scored his greatest triumph. Collins asked him why it took him three hours to tell January 6 “rioters” to go home. Said Trump: “I don’t believe it did. Oh, let me pull it out ... I have to pull it out ... “ *And then he reached under his blazer and pulled out hardcopy screencaps of his final Twitter tweets.*

Trump just pulls out receipts to disprove Kaitlin Collins' claims on the CNN town hall... and the crowd cheers!

This is NOT going the way CNN wanted it to. pic.twitter.com/7byCeFkCHr

— Tim Young (@TimRunsHisMouth) [May 11, 2023](#)

For the record, here they are:

<https://t.co/izItBeFE6G>

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 6, 2021](#)

Please support our Capitol Police and Law Enforcement. They are truly on the side of our Country. Stay peaceful!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 6, 2021](#)

I am asking for everyone at the U.S. Capitol to remain peaceful. No violence! Remember, WE are the Party of Law & Order – respect the Law and our great men and women in Blue. Thank you!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 6, 2021](#)

pic.twitter.com/csX07ZVWGe

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 8, 2021](#)

The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 8, 2021](#)

To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 8, 2021](#)

The timestamps on the tweets from January 6, belie Collins completely. For everyone's information, the incursion into the Capitol happened between 1:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. So if Trump sent out a tweet at 2:38 advising people to stay peaceful – it didn't take three hours. However, Trump did mention one tweet that Twitter took down. CNAV cannot verify that independently.

But Trump said one more thing that Collins must have found breathtakingly brazen – from her point of view. He said he would pardon most (but not all) of those convicted in the January 6 event or now languishing in jail awaiting trial. He did allow that some people let matters get out of control, so not everyone would be eligible for a pardon. But then he mentioned the Antifa and BLM riots in the 2020 “Summer of Love.” Those events had far greater damage and far more casualties than the January 6 event.

This juncture was probably when CNN cut the broadcast short.

Note: The CNN Town Hall was a 90 minute broadcast, though the network expected the actual event to go as long as 75 minutes. They stopped less than 70 minutes in. In other words, they could have gone longer if they wanted—which is usually what executives do with big ratings draws

— Dylan Byers (@DylanByers) May 11, 2023

Other support for Trump

CNN convened a six-member after-action panel – including Rep. Byron Donalds (R-Fla.). Daniels stood alone against the other six – and refuted their statements, point by point.

What @kaitlancollins just said is a LIE.

Christopher Miller said UNDER OATH that President Trump did approve the national guard, and the DC Mayor refused the order.

I'll have more to say after the Town Hall on CNN.

REMINDER 📌 <https://t.co/sWitSXLfQ0>

— Congressman Byron Donalds (@RepDonaldsPress) May 11, 2023

I am so impressed by Congressman @ByronDonalds. I mean, how good is he?!?
Brilliant! <https://t.co/fNOHiARXhs>

— Jason Miller (@JasonMillerinDC) May 11, 2023

The same network that claimed Trump was a Russian spy is the same network that said tonight that Trump wants to "hand over Ukraine to Russia."

This is irresponsible, and I'm glad I could correct the record.
pic.twitter.com/UpVis0hJdE

— Byron Donalds (@ByronDonalds) May 11, 2023

I strongly encourage everyone to watch this masterclass of Congressman Byron Donalds taking on an entire CNN panel of fake news hacks.

Byron Donalds would make a great Presidential candidate one day.

pic.twitter.com/8YeLvQjKqe

— Brigitte Gabriel (@ACTBrigitte) [May 11, 2023](#)

Notice that Van Jones complained that Trump “threw Ukraine under the bus,” though he didn’t say how. Collins had asked Trump whether he would continue the flow of American weapons and ammunition to Ukraine.

After that, CNN convened a voters’ panel of Trump supporters and undecided voters. To CNN’s obvious chagrin, the voters rounded on CNN. Among other things, they told CNN to get off the Election of 2020. In short, they blamed CNN, not Trump, for keeping that issue current.

Before the night was over, Chris Licht made a seemingly forced statement of support for Collins. Obviously Licht was trying to put the best face on events. Dylan Byers copied it:

“... to arm voters with crucial information about his positions as he enters the 2024 election as the Republican frontrunner. That is CNN’s role and responsibility: to get answers and hold the powerful to account.”

— Dylan Byers (@DylanByers) [May 11, 2023](#)

Brian Stelter copied it next morning:

“You do not have to like the former president’s answers, but you can’t say that we didn’t get them,” Licht tells staffers, many of whom are angry about the town hall. “Kaitlan pressed him again and again and made news. Made a LOT of news.” And “that is our job.”

— Brian Stelter (@brianstelter) [May 11, 2023](#)

Other commentators weighed in yesterday morning, clearly believing that Trump cleaned CNN’s clocks.

WATCH: Jake Tapper holds back tears as he complains about Donald Trump destroying CNN on Live TV pic.twitter.com/PhMk1Soyed

— Benny Johnson (@bennyjohnson) [May 11, 2023](#)

Couldn't watch Trump's townhall as it was on too late for me, but based on the reaction from left-wing media peeps, it seems this backfired bigly for CNN
pic.twitter.com/pIVWaBpQER

— Tom Elliott (@tomselliott) [May 11, 2023](#)

CNN reporter left STUNNED after Trump takes out receipts to FACTCHECK her LIVE on CNN: “Let me pull it out” 🤯

pic.twitter.com/M20xVmXAst

— Benny Johnson (@bennyjohnson) [May 11, 2023](#)

Donald Trump when asked what the first thing he would do to bring down rising costs: “Drill baby, Drill.” pic.twitter.com/90BRmTbDwm

— Benny Johnson (@bennyjohnson) [May 11, 2023](#)

This was an exchange! [@realDonaldTrump](#) said E. Jean Carroll, the woman a New York judge ruled he sexually abused decades ago called her African-American husband an 'ape' but the judge did not allow him to put that in. WATCH
pic.twitter.com/abTh13GJ4j

— Simon Ateba (@simonateba) [May 11, 2023](#)

President Trump on the Ukraine War: "I don't think in terms of winning and losing. I think in terms of getting it settled so we stop killing all these people."
pic.twitter.com/5S304y71rF

— MAGA War Room (@MAGAIncWarRoom) [May 11, 2023](#)

Trump gives most honest, important answer on ENDING Ukraine war, CNN hack TRIGGERED when he refuses to take bait:

“I want everybody to stop dying. Russians and Ukrainians... and I'll have that done in 24 hours.”

pic.twitter.com/44FEth326z

— Benny Johnson (@bennyjohnson) [May 11, 2023](#)

Florida congressman Byron Donalds rips the panel of trained script readers called CNN cohosts about Kaitlin Collins unfair questioning of President Trump and explains the purpose of Town Halls pic.twitter.com/iwNDeINh1R

— • MISCHIEF™ • (@4Mischief) [May 11, 2023](#)

This CNN town hall event is a stand up comedy show.

CNN looks terrible. pic.twitter.com/yjUZv8s2V4

— Collin Rugg (@CollinRugg) [May 11, 2023](#)

Trump absolutely crushed that town hall. See prior tweet in thread. That was NOT the bar he even needed to meet. He hit a much higher one, despite the predictable gotcha attempts.

The potential goal worth the risk laid out in the prior tweet was met.

I'm honestly stunned.

— Rich Baris "The People's Pundit" (@Peoples_Pundit) [May 11, 2023](#)

Bitter reaction from the left

Reaction from the left was bitter and often scathing. *The New York Times* [heaped scorn](#) on Trump and his voters, trying to suggest they sealed Biden's win. Basically the *Times* made the same pitch it made during four years of Trump. But recall that this is the same paper that carried Walter Duranty's whitewash of Stalin's Ukraine famine. True to that form, the *Times* played to their own base – which is the die-hard Democrat base. (And remember: Shane Goldmacher and Maggie Haberman, authors of this piece, are not lawyers – and it shows.)

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) [reacted in anger](#) at CNN, for letting the event get out of control, from her POV.

This falls squarely on CNN. Everyone here saw exactly what was going to happen. Instead they put a sexual abuse victim in harm's way for views. This was a choice to platform lies about the election & Jan 6th w/ no plan but to have their moderator interrupted without consequence.

— Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@AOC) [May 11, 2023](#)

She did not exactly make clear what she expected Kaitlan Collins to do.

In reply, one user reminded her that even the FBI fell short of calling the January 6 event an insurrection.

1. FBI said J6 was not an insurrection. 2. “Sexual abuse victim”? Even the highly partisan NYC jury couldn’t hold Trump liable for rape. [#TruthWins](#)

— God bless the USA! 🇺🇸🙏 (@re88465915) [May 11, 2023](#)

J. D. Rucker, author of “America First Report” on Substack, [criticized](#) Trump for saying “stupid people” were destroying America. No, says Rucker, they’re not stupid – they are “cunning, manipulative, and possibly even demonic.” He seemed to lament that the Town Hall took place at all, in light of the Title 42 lapse and the heightened crisis at the southern border.

Analysis

Obviously Donald Trump did himself very proud that night. Kaitlan Collins is not ready for prime time – and what Chris Licht is thinking, or *whether* he’s thinking, is unclear. The white pantsuit, evocative of Nancy Pelosi tearing up the State of the Union address, was a disastrous mistake. She turned in the worst possible performance, and obviously didn’t prepare to deal with a man like Trump. The CNN panels were worse. *One* man took on six egotistical “journalists” and knocked them off unassisted. And a panel of ordinary folks blamed CNN for something for which CNN wanted to blame Trump.

But J. D. Rucker could be correct, that this town hall was a distraction. Those disastrous performances were such obvious self-parody that CNN could indeed have scripted them in advance.

Rucker didn’t say what Trump should have done instead. But one wonders whether Trump would have done better to visit the Texas-Mexican border, with those Texas National Guardsmen deploying as if to repel an invasion. Much depends on what Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas really intends, and whether he’s serious. The former President could also have made considerably hay of piles of wall material discarded on the ground.

So far, Trump comes out of this event a virtual shoo-in for the nomination. His reelection will be another matter. The shameless manipulation of the news we see in the Twitter Files cannot happen this time. Whether other things that happened, like the Georgia Suitcase Scandal, can happen again, is another matter.