



## The School Employee at the Capitol Last Week is Just the Tip of the Iceberg

By Educator Barnes – January 11, 2021

I'm a huge "Twilight Zone" fan. During the pandemic, my husband, sons, and I spent time together watching episodes on Netflix. We have always watched episodes during the annual Syfy channel "Twilight Zone" marathon on the first day of the year. There are two episodes, "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" and "The Shelter" which causes me not to be surprised when I learned that Christine M. Priola, a Cleveland Metropolitan School District

occupational therapist, was being accused of being the woman in a picture taken in the Capitol building during the riot last week.

In both "Twilight Zone" episodes, the neighbors next door took actions that jeopardized others and put people in danger. People who participated in the Capitol riot are not some fringe group living in obscurity in rural places. They are your neighbors, friends, family members, doctors, and educators. These people are people we know. The first step we all must take is to acknowledge that these people are around us and even in our schools.

Once we acknowledge this, we can take action. Taking action is not about shoving liberal viewpoints down anyone's throat. It is about ensuring that the people who work in our schools have all of our children's best interests at heart. Anti-bias training and cultural responsive curriculum and practices are only part of the equation. School employees should believe in equity and justice for all and should not be participating in actions to tear down democracy and put people's lives in danger.

Like it or not, school employees are role models. Our actions matter. Shortly after being accused of participating in the Capitol riot, Priola submitted her resignation after working for the district since 2010. In her resignation letter, she included three reasons for leaving the district:

1. I will not be taking the coronavirus vaccine in order to return to in-person learning.
2. I will be switching paths to expose the global evil of human trafficking and pedophilia, including in our government and children's services agencies.
3. I do not agree with my union dues which help fund people and groups that support the killing of unborn children.

However, Priola is not the only person who needs to resign. If school leaders are doing their due diligence, school employees who are setting a poor example for students, having low expectations for students of color, or refusing to grow as professionals should be coached out of the profession or terminated.

We can no longer allow these individuals to be comfortable in our schools. This work is not only on the school leaders; it involves everyone. Problematic employees should not have a person who allows them to operate in ways that are harmful to children. We also have to make sure these people aren't us. Just as love, justice, and equity can spread so can hatred and harm.

As Rod Serling stated in his closing remarks during "The Twilight Zone" episode, "I am the Night – Color Me Black," A sickness known as hate. Not a virus, not a microbe, not a germ—but a sickness nonetheless, highly contagious, deadly in its effects. Don't look for it in the Twilight Zone—look for it in a mirror. Look for it before the light goes out altogether."