

# Trump's White House cage match: A fascistic exercise in sadism

Barry Grey  
15 June 2026

On Sunday, the South Lawn of the White House hosted a spectacle unprecedented in the history of the American republic. UFC Freedom 250, a mixed martial arts cage match produced by Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), was staged as a centerpiece of the Trump administration's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The event was timed to coincide with Trump's 80th birthday.

Construction crews erected a massive arched lighting grid—dubbed “The Claw” by the UFC—that dwarfs the White House itself. Some 4,000 invited people attended the event in person, while tens of thousands more stood in the Ellipse and watched on giant screens as fighters pummeled one another inside a steel cage. The blood sport, recalling the gladiatorial contests of antiquity, with the White House substituting for the Roman Colosseum, was livestreamed by Paramount+, now owned by Trump's allies in the multi-billionaire Ellison family. The president mimicked the role of Roman emperor, looking on from a seat of honor.

The Marine Band played, amidst a military flyover and a fireworks display.

Thirty years ago, the late senator from Arizona, John McCain, a Republican, condemned mixed martial arts as “human cockfighting” and sought to ban UFC. Last Thursday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio compared the White House UFC spectacle to the first moon landing. Hailing UFC, he stated, “The American spirit is reflected in this American company.”

The bloody spectacle unfolded before Trump, who viewed the event with the same satisfaction that Caligula might have observed a gladiatorial combat. The loser in the main event, Ilia Topuria, was seriously battered. By the end of the fourth round, both eyes were severely swollen, his vision appeared impaired, and his

face was bloodied. His corner stopped the fight rather than allow him to enter the fifth round. He was taken directly from the octagon to a Washington hospital for imaging and observation. Topuria's eye looked as though he might have sustained an orbital fracture, but no definitive hospital diagnosis had been publicly released as of Monday morning, June 15.

The winner, Justin Gaethje, also absorbed substantial punishment, especially during the first two rounds: Topuria landed several heavy punches, attacked the body and came close to finishing him.

As one fight would not have been sufficient to sate Trump's appetite for blood and gore, there were six other bouts, all of which ended by knockout or technical knockout.

Another fighter, Alex Pereira absorbed the most prolonged head punishment apart from Topuria. Cyril Gane dropped him early in the second round and then landed repeated uppercuts, hammerfists and other heavy punches while Pereira struggled to defend himself. The referee eventually stopped the barrage. This was unquestionably a significant concussive event.

That this cage match was presented under the banner of “Freedom 250”—as part of the semiquincentennial of the Declaration of Independence—is an obscenity of the first order. The substitution of a cage match for a commemoration of democratic principles is a blunt expression of what the Trump administration represents.

There was a “bread and circuses” element to the White House UFC event, which is the culmination of a relationship between Donald Trump and UFC President Dana White that stretches back to the early 2000s, when Trump, then a casino operator, allowed White to host UFC events at his now-defunct Taj Mahal Resort in Atlantic City. White repaid the favor by speaking at

the 2016 and 2024 Republican National Conventions and by cultivating a base of support for Trump among UFC's audience.

The Democratic Party's response to the White House cage match was entirely characteristic. The Democrats and their allied organizations—No Kings and the Committee for the First Amendment—staged a counter-programming event: “Rise Up, Sing Out: A Concert for the First Amendment” at Town Hall in New York City, featuring Jane Fonda, Julia Roberts, Bette Midler and former MSNBC host Joy Reid. Tickets retailed for over \$330, which gives on an idea of the affluent constituency to which such events are directed.

The No Kings concert invoked an “inclusive” patriotism and framed the struggle against Trump in racial and identitarian terms—“white supremacy” rather than capitalism. There was virtually no mention of the war in Iran, the police-state operations of ICE or the reality of oligarchic rule. The purpose was to channel popular outrage safely back into the Democratic Party and toward the 2026 midterm elections.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**