

TRUMP'S RACISM

A THREAT TO OUR CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

The Declaration of Independence states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Through these words the Government of the United States guarantees equality and the unalienable rights of all the people living in the United States. To these rights the Constitution adds justice, domestic tranquility, and the promotion of the general welfare of all. (*Preamble to the Constitution*). To deny these rights to anyone based upon race, color, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or any other principle of exclusion, whether claimed to be based upon custom, tradition, or the law, is a violation of the constitution. The history of the United States records the efforts of this country to achieve this constitutional democracy, but it is fraught with both successes and failures.

Today the United States is once again facing a most serious threat to the realization of one of the most fundamental objectives of our constitutional democracy, racial justice and equality. This threat is coming from the highest levels of our government through the racist agenda of the Trump administration. The president’s racism is actually rooted in his self-proclaimed nationalism. Trump admits that he is a nationalist in the sense that he wants to place the interests and values of this nation over all other interests and values. This is what he means by “America First.” However, in the 20th century nationalism became associated with the far-right, with fascism, with leaders like Mussolini and Hitler who had underlying racial agendas. In this sense nationalism includes the objective of maintaining the foundational racial character of a nation. When one applies this understanding of nationalism to the United States, it means maintaining and protecting the status and values of white people. Nationalism becomes translated into “white nationalism” and “white supremacy.” According to “white nationalism”

only Caucasians should be considered authentic members of the American nation. “White nationalism” believes that the national identity of the United States should be built around white ethnicity, and that white people should maintain both a demographic majority and political and economic dominance over the nation. Through his rhetoric, staffing, and policy choices Trump has supported and energized “white nationalism” in this sense.

Before and after his election, President Trump has encouraged racism and attempted to politically benefit from it. He has quietly accepted the support of racist groups like the white nationalists, white supremacists, and neo-Nazis. One of his first appointed advisors was Steve Bannon, as White House chief strategist, a leader of the “alt right” movement which is basically a “white supremacist,” anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant organization. David Duke, the former grand wizard of the KKK said that the reason “we” voted for President Trump was to take our country back. The president’s statements, his stereotyping of minorities, and his public policies have constantly stoked the fires of racism in the United States. His handling of the killing of George Floyd by four policemen in Minnesota demonstrates that he has little compassion for the plight of blacks in the United States. He has refused to admit that there is any systemic racism in the police departments and other institutions in the United States. In fact, he flat out denies the existence of any racism in the United States. The president blamed the protests and the violence that accompanied some of them on what will happen if Joe Biden is elected president. In doing so he totally failed to admit that the protests are taking place while he is president and that they are a direct response to his lack of empathy for the treatment of black people by the police.

His major response to the protests against the murder of George Floyd and racism in the United States was to threaten violence against the protesters. In a tweet on May 29, 2020, the

president called the protesters thugs and warned that, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.” On a June 1, 2020, conference call with the U.S. governors he said, “You have to dominate. If you don’t dominate – you’re wasting your time.” On that same day, he threatened to bring in the U.S. military against the anti-racist’s demonstrators. At the same time that he criticizes the violence of the Black Lives Matter protesters, he praises the violent counter-protests of his own supporters as they confront the peaceful protesters with guns. He called them good people and patriots. Trump suggested that some of the “white supremacists” and neo-Nazis at the Charlottesville rally in August, 2017, where a counter-protester was killed by a neo-Nazi, were “very fine people.” In June, 2020, he shared a video of some of his supporters shouting, “white power” and called them “great people.” On Wednesday, July 1, 2020, he called Black Lives Matter a symbol of hate.

More recently he has come out in support of the Confederate flag. The Confederate flag is a symbol of slavery and of those who rebelled against the U.S. Constitution in order to maintain the evil system of slavery. It symbolizes years of racial discrimination, Jim Crow laws, and segregation. Publicly glorifying the Confederate flag is an egregious form of disrespect to the American flag which symbolizes racial equality and justice, not slavery and racial discrimination. All our president can say is, “When people proudly have their Confederate flags, they’re not talking about racism.” “They love their flag, it represents the South, they like the South.” One might ask how does that explain its appearance in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan? In spite of all this racist propaganda, Trump and the Republicans claim that they are the heirs of the party of Abraham Lincoln. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lincoln freed the slaves and fought against its supporters who cloaked their cause in the Confederate flag.

Trump and his supporters are the party of Jefferson Davis, Strom Thurmond, and George Wallace, not Abraham Lincoln.

Trump's racism and "white nationalism" does not just find expression in discrimination against blacks; it is also at the root of all of his other policies. His immigration policies are rooted in racism. He has called Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists and told some black and brown women members of Congress that they should go back to the countries from which they came. He has shown a preference for immigrants from "white countries" over immigrants who are people of color. Immigrants have been placed in cages, children have been separated from their families, and refugees have been left stranded at the border. Even his economic policies have a racial undertone, rewarding the wealthy, a mostly white group, through huge tax cuts and deregulation while cutting off funding for the poor. In its 2020 budget the Trump administration has recommended cuts to food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance, and other welfare programs which offer support and help to the poor, many of whom are people of color. Trump's policies on the environment are equally rooted in his desire to protect the interests of the oil and coal industries owned and controlled by mostly whites. His policies on the environment during his tenure as president have been an unending series of executive orders cutting back environmental regulations on the fossil fuel industries, power plants, auto emissions, and businesses. In most cases those who suffer the most from the negative health effects of this pollution are people of color. If one looks closely it is easy to see the influence of white nationalist ideas in just about any part of the Trump administration policies, from health care to foreign affairs.

Since Trump became president in 2016, a racially overt version of nationalism has become more prevalent and influential in our society and Trump has supported it and encouraged

it among his supporters. In doing so, he is violating the basic principles stated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, which guarantee racial equality and racial justice for all. He is refusing to advance our heritage of equality, freedom and justice for all the people in order to further his own political self-interests. Trump's racism is a monumental threat to our constitutional democracy.