

US media downplays links between congressional Republicans and fascists - Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott praised white supremacist group

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Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, who will play a major role in the upcoming Senate trial of President Clinton, has close and longstanding ties to a white supremacist organization that has denounced Clinton in strident and racist terms, according to reports which surfaced last week.

In an article by reporter Thomas Edsall, published December 16, the *Washington Post* reported that Lott addressed a meeting of the Council of Conservative Citizens in 1992, praising it for standing 'for the right principles and the right philosophy.' The group is the direct organizational successor of the Citizens Councils which organized segregationist forces in the 1950s and 1960s, serving as a more respectable, upper-middle-class ally of the Ku Klux Klan.

The CCC came to public attention a week earlier, after attorney Alan Dershowitz, an anti-impeachment witness before the House Judiciary Committee, revealed that one of the committee's members, Congressman Bob Barr, addressed the white racist group this past summer. The Georgia Republican has been the most rabid partisan of impeachment in the House.

Barr represents the suburban Atlanta district where the modern Ku Klux Klan was founded. He claimed to be unaware of the CCC's racist views prior to giving the keynote address to its convention, and cited Lott's association with the group as proof of its bona fides.

The views of the CCC are well known in Republican right-wing circles. A spokesman for the Conservative Political Action Conference, David Keene, said the CCC had been barred from its annual gatherings in

Washington 'because they are racists.'

The spring 1992 newsletter of the organization, *Citizen Informer*, carries a photograph of Lott addressing the group's meeting in Greenwood, Mississippi, asking for its support and praising its activities. Lott also appeared at political rallies sponsored by the CCC in 1991 and 1995, along with other Mississippi politicians, both Democratic and Republican.

A 1997 issue of the *Citizen Informer* shows a smiling Trent Lott meeting in his Washington office with CCC President Tom Dover, CEO Gordon Lee Baum and national officer William D. Lord Jr. Baum and Lord both have records in racist politics going back decades, with Lord serving as a regional organizer for the Citizens Council and Baum serving as the group's Midwest director.

To this day the CCC's newsletter continues to reprint Trent Lott's column, without objection from the senator, side-by-side with editorials denouncing interracial marriage as a genocidal attack on the white race, attacking welfare programs as a conspiracy to enrich the Jews, and opposing immigration as a threat to the 'European derived descendants of the founders of the American nation.'

Significantly, given Lott's role in the Senate trial of Clinton, his allies in the Council of Conservative Citizens have attacked Clinton over the Monica Lewinsky affair in language which combines racism and pornography, suggesting (in one of the few passages which can be reprinted) that Clinton's extramarital affair is 'a result of his inner black culture.'

Call him an Oreo turned inside out.'

Despite the importance of these connections between leading Republicans and fascist elements, there has been virtually no reporting of these revelations in the American press. While the *Washington Post* ran four articles or comments on the subject during impeachment week, the issue has been ignored by the major television networks, the *New York Times* and most other publications.

The resignation of Robert Livingston as the House Speaker-designate provides further evidence of the decisive role of the extreme right among the congressional Republicans. Despite his decision to bar a vote on censuring Clinton, compelling an up-or-down vote on impeachment, Livingston was under suspicion from the far right, which considered him insufficiently zealous on issues such as abortion and too inclined to compromise with the Democrats.

When Livingston publicly admitted past marital infidelities on the eve of the impeachment vote, after learning that *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt was about to publish a report to that effect, a group of Republican congressmen with close links to the Christian right moved against him. These included Steve Largent of Oklahoma and Donald Manzullo of Illinois. Some of the right-wingers let it be known they would oppose his election as Speaker in January, and Livingston decided to step down and resign from Congress.

Dennis Hastert of Illinois, handpicked by Republican whip Tom DeLay to replace Livingston as the next Speaker of the House, is known as an evangelical Christian who has close ties to the Christian right.

Livingston's successor in his suburban New Orleans congressional seat could be former KKK leader David Duke, who announced his candidacy within hours of Livingston's resignation. Duke once held a seat in the state legislature in the same area, and carried the district in his unsuccessful 1990 race as the Republican candidate for the US Senate.

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