

Trump pushes racist attack on immigrants, Muslims

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As the 2016 US presidential campaign enters a new stage, the final month before the initial caucus and primary contests, billionaire Donald Trump, the Republican frontrunner, released his first television ad on Monday.

The 30-second spot, which is to begin appearing this week on local television stations in Iowa and New Hampshire, recycles Trump's most notoriously racist attacks on immigrants and Muslims.

The ad smears both immigrants and Muslims by linking them to the attack last month in San Bernardino, California, where two gunmen, husband and wife, opened fire on a workplace meeting, killing 14 people.

The faces of the two attackers, Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik, are flashed on the screen immediately after the announcer repeats Trump's call for "a temporary shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."

Adding militarism to racism, the announcer then declares, "He'll quickly cut the head off ISIS and take their oil."

This is followed by film of immigrants apparently storming a border fence, while the announcer invokes Trump's notion of "building a wall on our southern border that Mexico will pay for."

In keeping with the gross dishonesty and cynicism of the Trump campaign, the scene is not even filmed on the US-Mexico border, but rather shows African immigrants seeking to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in Morocco.

In an interview with the *Washington Post* on Sunday, Trump claimed he would spend at least \$2 million a week running the ad on television stations in Iowa, where the first Republican caucus will take place February 1, and in New Hampshire, where the first

primary election is February 9.

If actually carried out, this would be the first significant outlay by the Trump campaign, which has up to now been sustained by saturation media coverage and the candidate's first-place ranking in opinion polls (derived at least in part from his celebrity and the media attention).

Trump underscored the central focus of his campaign, on anti-immigrant racism, telling the *Post* he hoped the new television ads would reach voters concerned that the United States has become "a dumping ground."

A remarkable aspect of the campaign for the Republican presidential nomination is that there has been little criticism of Trump, the apparent frontrunner, from most of his rivals, and almost no effort to rebut his brazen appeals to racism and anti-Muslims bigotry.

There was an initial flurry of statements rejecting his call to bar Muslims from entering the United States, largely tied to foreign policy concerns about offending US allies like the Persian Gulf monarchies.

Since then, however, both congressional Republican leaders and rivals for the presidential nomination have stopped talking about Trump's call for flagrantly unconstitutional attacks on democratic rights. Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have largely downplayed the issue as well.

In speeches, rallies and advertisements, candidates like Jeb Bush, Chris Christie, John Kasich and Marco Rubio, supposedly vying for support from the Republican Party establishment and moderately conservative voters, have targeted each other and avoided any comment on Trump's increasingly provocative statements.

Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, perhaps the most right-wing of the Republican candidates, has explicitly

disavowed any criticism of Trump, repeatedly praising him while offering himself as a less eccentric but equally reactionary alternative.

Cruz leads in polls in Iowa, in large part because the Republican caucuses have been dominated by Christian fundamentalist groups, most of which are supporting Cruz or retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson. Trump is currently polling in second place in Iowa, and he admitted last week that he could well lose the state. He is ahead in polls of the somewhat broader Republican electorate expected in the New Hampshire primary a week later, and in the third contest in South Carolina February 20.

Trump's choice of Mexican immigrants and Muslims as the targets of his first television advertising only underscores the fascistic character of his campaign, which has vaulted him to the front rank of Republican candidates. The billionaire denounced Mexican immigrants as rapists and murderers when he first announced his candidacy last June. He took up the cudgel against Muslims after the November 13 terrorist attack in Paris, and made his now-notorious pledge to halt the entry of all Muslims into the United States after the December 2 attack in San Bernardino. These were not verbal "gaffes," but deliberate racist provocations aimed at encouraging a pogrom-like hysteria.

This right-wing anti-immigrant campaign is facilitated by the Obama administration and the Democratic Party. This week the Department of Homeland Security launched a new series of raids targeting Central American immigrants, aimed at rounding up and deporting women and children who have fled gang violence and savage repression by US-backed regimes in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

Trump applauded the raids, tweeting, "Does everyone see that the Democrats and President Obama are now, because of me, starting to deport people who are here illegally. Politics!" He also cited the new DHS actions at his campaign rallies, declaring, "It's about time."



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