

Hypocritical outrage from media, politicians after latest racist outburst by Iowa Congressman Steve King

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14 January 2019

Iowa Representative Steve King, one of the most rabid purveyors of anti-immigrant racism in the US Congress, evoked indignant denunciations from the media and politicians from both the Democratic Party and his own Republican Party last week when he complained in an interview with the *New York Times*: “White nationalist, white supremacist, Western civilization—how did that language become offensive?”

The outrage from King’s congressional colleagues rings hollow given the congressman’s long record of such remarks and their own readiness to tolerate them. In a 2012 interview, King compared immigrants to dogs and suggested that the US admit only the “pick of the litter.”

In 2010, he declared on the floor of the House of Representatives that he could detect “illegal” immigrants by their footwear and his own “sixth sense.”

Last year, King backed a neo-Nazi candidate, Faith Goldy, for Toronto’s mayor. According to *Right Wing Watch*, Goldy is an openly racist white supremacist who has at times recited the “Fourteen Words” credo of groups seeking to “preserve the white race.” Goldy previously recommended a book that called for the elimination of Jews and suggested that homosexuality was a cause of the Holocaust.

Two months prior to that, King visited Austria and gave an extensive interview to a far-right publication in which he spelled out his fascistic outlook. King discussed his belief in the superiority of European culture, warned of falling fertility rates in the West, and spoke at length about his belief that Europe and the United States are threatened by Muslim and Latino immigration.

“If we don’t defend Western civilization, then we will become subjugated by the people who are the enemies of faith, the enemies of justice,” he said.

On Saturday, the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Karen Bass (Democrat from California), released a statement demanding that the Republican Party remove King from his committee assignments. However, the statement stopped short of calling for his expulsion from the House of Representatives.

Iowa Republican Senator Joni Ernst declared her disapproval in a tweet. “I condemn Rep. Steve King’s comments on white supremacy; they are offensive and racist—and not representative of our state of Iowa,” she wrote. However, she did not call for any specific measures to be taken against him.

Few, if any, of those who denounced King made the connection between his racist statement and the attempts of the Trump administration to whip up anti-immigrant hysteria or Trump’s praise for neo-Nazis who marched last year in Charlottesville, Virginia, one of whom drove into a crowd of anti-fascist demonstrators and killed 32-year-old Heather Heyer.

The Republican Party’s long-standing connection to racist and white segregationist forces constitutes one of the most carefully suppressed dirty secrets in Washington. These ties go back to Nixon’s “Southern Strategy,” employed in the 1968 presidential election to win over elements in the South alienated by the national Democratic Party’s civil rights reforms on the basis of a thinly veiled appeal to racism.

Ronald Reagan worked to solidify Republican inroads in the South and establish Republican dominance in the former Jim Crow states. In August 1980, during his presidential campaign against Jimmy

Carter of Georgia, Reagan gave a speech proclaiming his support for “states’ rights” a few miles from Philadelphia, Mississippi, where in 1964 the KKK and local police murdered three civil rights workers.

In the 1998-1999 impeachment drive against Bill Clinton, the Democrats refused to expose to the public the active role of segregationist forces in Arkansas and other states in the right-wing conspiracy to bring down a twice-elected president on the basis of a sex scandal.

During Clinton’s impeachment trial in the Senate, the ties of Republican Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi to the Council of Conservative Citizens, successor to the segregationist White Citizens Council, were exposed in the press. The Republican right rallied behind Lott, and the media and Democratic Party obediently dropped the subject. Three years later, Lott was forced to resign as Republican Senate leader after he publicly praised Strom Thurmond, the South Carolina senator who ran as the candidate of the State’s Rights Party on a segregationist program in 1948.

During his 2000 bid for the Republican presidential nomination, George W. Bush made a speech at the campus of Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist college that prohibited interracial dating and regarded Catholics as Satan-worshippers. He also declined to voice any opposition to the display of the Confederate flag at the South Carolina state capitol, saying it was purely a state matter.

Democratic administrations from Clinton to Obama have played their own parts in whipping up anti-immigrant and chauvinist sentiment by promoting trade war, militarist policies and the fear-mongering central to the so-called “war on terror,” thereby creating fertile soil for the growth of far-right forces.

The stage-managed furor surrounding Rep. King within the media and political establishment is utterly hypocritical. As far as the politicians condemning King are concerned, his real crime is not holding racist and fascist views, but articulating them too openly.



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