

Trump continues racist diatribes

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Donald Trump doubled down on his racist diatribes against the city of Baltimore with a barrage of tweets directed against MSNBC commenter and Democratic Party activist Al Sharpton.

Responding to a tweet Sharpton sent about his arrival to Baltimore for the previously scheduled Black Economic Agenda conference, Trump denounced Sharpton as a “con man” and “troublemaker” who “hates [w]hites and [c]ops.”

Pointing to his long association with Sharpton in Democratic Party circles in New York City (Trump was a long-time supporter of the Democratic Party, and even invited Bill and Hillary Clinton to his wedding), Trump declared, “Al Sharpton would always ask me to go to his events. He would say, ‘it’s a personal favor to me.’ Seldom, but sometimes, I would go. It was fine. He came to my office in [Trump Tower] during the presidential campaign to apologize for the way he was talking about me. Just a conman at work!”

In singling out Sharpton for attack, Trump is going after low-hanging fruit. Sharpton is a long-time Democratic Party hack and former police informant with a lengthy political association with Trump himself from the 1990s and early 2000s. He discredited himself four-and-a-half years ago when he inserted himself into the protests against police violence. Sharpton denounced protesters in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 for failing to vote for the Democrats in local elections and called for unity with the police.

Trump launched his tirade against Baltimore, which he described as a “disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess” that “no human being” would ever want to live in, after Representative Elijah Cummings made certain criticisms about the horrific conditions in the administration’s immigrant detention camps. He continued his attacks on the Baltimore congressman, combining it with anti-communist incitement and attacks on the press: “If the Democrats are going to

defend the Radical Left ‘Squad’ [the four Democratic congresswomen targeted by Trump for special abuse] and King Elijah’s Baltimore Fail, it will be a long road to 2020. The good news for the Dems is that they have the Fake News Media in their pocket!”

Trump is operating with a definite political strategy. His social media broadsides against socialism, immigrants and impoverished majority-black urban areas are aimed at inciting violence from his right-wing base (who will no doubt respond in particular to Trump’s claim that Sharpton “hates whites and cops”). He is adding fuel to an already explosive political environment in order to legitimize dictatorial methods. This political logic has already been demonstrated by his threat to have Antifa declared a terrorist organization, effectively making it illegal.

The use of such abusive and crude language against political opponents has no precedent in the history of the American presidency. Such rhetoric will undoubtedly find an audience among layers willing to employ violence within the right-wing milieu that Trump has drawn around himself. This was exposed by the recent mass shooting in Gilroy, California, where gunman Santino Legan praised *Might Is Right*, a 19th century tract popular among neo-Nazis and white supremacists.

This danger was touched on in an MSNBC interview with Karine Jean-Pierre, chief public affairs officer for the liberal Democratic activist group MoveOn.org. “I don’t know where Donald Trump wants to take this, but wherever it is, it’s going to be dangerous,” she said. “It could lead to some sort of horrible civil war. He is testing us. He’s testing the democracy. He’s shredding the Constitution.”

One possible reason for Trump’s decision to single out Baltimore for his racist diatribes is the fact that the House Republican Conference is planning to hold its annual retreat next month in downtown Baltimore. If

Trump's tweets provoke angry protests against the gathering, he could use this to justify a police state crackdown. The city was already occupied by heavily armed National Guard troops in response to mass protests against the police murder of Freddie Gray in 2015.

Trump is able to take the political initiative because of the fecklessness of the Democratic Party, which has responded to Trump's right-wing incitement by voting for everything he demands. Their support last week for Trump's budget bill, which passed in spite of Republican opposition, demonstrates that Trump is now effectively running the country in a de-facto coalition with the Democratic Party. In spite of his anti-communist diatribes against the four "democratic socialist" congresswomen, they played a key role in bringing funding for Trump's immigration policies to a vote in the House of Representatives. Two of them, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, both members of the Democratic Socialists of America, voted for his war budget.



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