

Please Don't Tell Me Trump's Speech to Congress Was Racist

During the Republican primaries, when I was most critical of candidate Donald Trump, I still didn't believe he was a racist (in general) or an anti-Semite (in particular), yet charges of racism and even anti-Semitism persist against him to this day. After his speech last night, it seems to me that only his most cynical critics can lodge such charges against him. Will you really say that his address to Congress was racist?

Let's start with black Americans.

He began his speech by saying, "Tonight, as we mark the conclusion of our celebration of Black History Month, we are reminded of our nation's path toward civil rights and the work that still remains."

Was he seeking to get a message across? Quite obviously, he was.

Several minutes later (but still early in his speech), he said, "We've financed and built one global project after another, but ignored the fates of our children in the inner cities of Chicago, Baltimore, Detroit—and so many other places throughout our land."

It is no secret that a disproportionately high percentage of black Americans live in these inner cities, and so here too, he appeared to be sending a message, including this line, a few minutes later, as well: "And our neglected inner cities will see a rebirth of hope, safety, and opportunity."

And since black Americans suffer disproportionately from poverty and joblessness, were these lines directed their way as well? "Ninety-four million Americans are out of the labor force." And, "Over 43 million people are now living in

poverty, and over 43 million Americans are on food stamps.”

More overtly, he singled out a black American woman, Denisha Merriweather, as an example of the merit of private schools, calling her a “remarkable woman,” noting that she was the first in her family to graduate from college (soon to get her master’s degree), and stating, “We want all children to be able to break the cycle of poverty just like Denisha.”

Even the reference that followed to breaking the cycle of violence, using Chicago as an example, probably spoke to black Americans as well. In fact, his first example of an American killed by an illegal immigrant was a 17-year-old black man, Jamiel Shaw, Jr., “an incredible young man, with unlimited potential who was getting ready to go to college where he would have excelled as a great quarterback. But he never got the chance. His father, who is in the audience tonight, has become a good friend of mine.” (Note also that Trump honored Susan Oliver, a black woman, whose husband Danny, a white man, was a policeman killed by an illegal immigrant.)

Of course, the critics blast Trump as being a hypocritical opportunist, using these individuals to advance his own cause. But for anyone listening with an open heart and mind, the overall impression would be clear: President Trump is reaching out to the African-American community and saying, “We are in this together, and I want to help.”

As for the Jewish people, also in his very first lines, Trump referenced “Recent threats targeting Jewish Community Centers and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries,” while later stating, “I have also imposed new sanctions on entities and individuals who support Iran’s ballistic missile program, and reaffirmed our unbreakable alliance with the State of Israel.”

Could you imagine an anti-Semite speaking in these ways, mentioning the vandalism of the Jewish cemeteries in his first paragraph, and in the context of civil rights at that?

He also referenced at the outset “last week’s shooting in Kansas City,” where a gunman who allegedly yelled “get out my country” before killing one Indian man and wounded another, also wounding a white American who tried to stop him.

In other words, nationalism for Trump does not mean war on immigrants.

As for the immigrants whom he is deporting, Trump said, “We are removing gang members, drug dealers and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our citizens. Bad ones are going out as I speak tonight and as I have promised.”

Do even the most “progressive” Democrats really want to keep such dangerous people in our country, especially when they are here illegally? And can the president really be accused of being anti-immigrant or, more broadly, anti-Hispanic for saying that such criminals should be deported? For that matter, was President Obama an anti-Hispanic, anti-immigrant racist when he deported 43,000 illegals in 2015?

As for Islam, Trump could not have been more specific, saying, “We are also taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism,” then proclaiming, “As promised, I directed the Department of Defense to develop a plan to demolish and destroy ISIS—a network of lawless savages that have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men, women and children of all faiths and beliefs. We will work with our allies, including our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet.”

Here he made clear that radical Muslim terrorists are “lawless savages” (rather than model Muslims) who “have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men, women and children of all faiths and beliefs,” significantly putting Muslims at the top of this list.

In other words, even though Christians in Islamic lands suffer most acutely at the hands of radical Muslims, while Christians

in other countries are often targeted by radical Muslims, the greatest number of casualties of radical Muslims are themselves Muslims. That's why the president pledged to work with "our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet."

Can you genuinely say that Trump is anti-Muslim (rather than anti-radical Muslim) based on these carefully delivered words?

He even reached out to women, stating, "With the help of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, we have formed a council with our neighbors in Canada to help ensure that women entrepreneurs have access to the networks, markets and capital they need to start a business and live out their financial dreams." (I'm not saying this removes charges of misogyny or undoes his past, inexcusable comments; I'm simply noting the statement and its purpose.)

Of course, critics like the extreme-left, Islamic congressman Keith Ellison will disparage Trump's speech, claiming that Trump will say whatever he needs to say to sway public opinion but will not act accordingly. (Notably Ellison, along with DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz "reportedly remained 'firmly seated' while the widow of a slain Navy SEAL received a two-minute standing ovation, according to the Independent Journal Review's Benny Johnson.") And, obviously, this was just a speech.

But a speech is designed to accomplish certain goals and to send a certain message, and as far as a speech goes, the goals were clear and the message was clear.

Perhaps some of you who remain implacably opposed to the president will find room for at least a little hope?

Perhaps some of you who have accused him of racism (and worse) might be willing to take a second look, give him some benefit of the doubt and see if his actions match his words?

Personally, I think it's the least you can do.

For supporters of the president, his speech lived up to your expectations and proved that Donald Trump can truly act presidentially.

In the words of John Podhoretz, "In the first 38 days of his presidency, Donald Trump seemed to struggle to find his footing. On his 39th, he found it unexpectedly in a strong, direct and—surprise of surprises—beautifully modulated and spectacularly delivered address before Congress." {eoa}