

Trump's 'shithole' comment is his new rock bottom

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(CNN) — On Thursday, in a meeting with a senators and House members on immigration, [the President of the United States](#), asked this: "Why do we want all these people from 'shithole countries' coming here?"

Yes, he said "shithole countries" -- apparently in reference to the fact that immigrants from places like El Salvador, Haiti and Africa were being protected in a potential bipartisan deal to preserve the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and secure funding for border security.

What's even more appalling is that the White House didn't even try to deny that Trump used that slur, which was first reported in The Washington Post. In fact, in a lengthy statement from White House spokesman Raj Shah, the administration seemed to even defend the sentiment. "Certain Washington politicians choose to fight for foreign countries, but President Trump will always fight for the American people," said Shah.

But it gets even worse. Asked about the "shithole" comments, a White House official told CNN's Kaitlan Collins this:

"The President's 'shithole' remark is being received much differently inside of the White House than it is outside of it. Though this might enrage Washington, staffers predict the comment will resonate with his base, much like his attacks on NFL players who kneel during the National Anthem did not alienate it."

Stop. Read that again. Here's what it means: The President's voicing of a racist remark about the sorts of people whom we are letting into the country is actually a good thing because people who like Trump will agree with him.

Make no mistake: This is the lowest ebb of a presidency defined by a series of low ebbs and defining of the presidency downward. Yes, lower than Trump's comments about Mexico sending us "rapists" and "criminals." Lower than questioning Sen. John McCain's military service. Lower than his impugning of a judge because of his Mexican heritage. Lower than his questioning the motives of a Gold Star family. Lower than the 2,000 mistruths and outright falsehoods he has said since becoming President. Lower than his racially-tinged attacks on the anthem protests by NFL players. Lower even than his "both sides" argument in the wake of white supremacist violence against peaceful protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia.

This is not only a President of the United States voicing racist sentiment in front of a group of people. It is also doubling down on those sentiments -- proudly! -- because it might advance his political power among his base.

This is -- much like Charlottesville -- an abdication of the moral authority of the presidency, but it's more than that: It's saying, quite simply, that saying racist stuff is a-OK as long as it works politically.

There are things that are -- or should be -- beyond [politics](#). The most important of those things is the belief that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

It's right there in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. And, "we believe these truths to be self evident" because, well, they are. The progress to a more perfect union hasn't always honored this pledge as it should. But this is 2018. Can't we agree that discriminating against people based on what they look like -- or what country they might come from -- is wrong?

Apparently not, according to President Trump.

Let's not make any mistake here: What was being discussed in the meeting in which Trump called Haiti and El Salvador "shithole countries" was not illegal immigration. This was a proposal to end the visa lottery, which Trump has repeatedly falsely suggested leads to other countries gaming the system to send the US their worst people, and replace it with affording a group of countries Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Nor should we dismiss this sentiment as a one off by Trump. Remember this June 2016 meeting, first reported by The New York Times, in which Trump was [angrily decrying the fact that lots of immigrants from what he believed were less-desirable countries were still entering the country](#). The Times writes:

"Haiti had sent 15,000 people. They 'all have AIDS,' [Trump] grumbled, according to one person who attended the meeting and another person who was briefed about it by a different person who was there.

Forty thousand had come from Nigeria, Mr. Trump added. Once they had seen the United States, they would never 'go back to their huts' in Africa, recalled the two officials, who asked for anonymity to discuss a sensitive conversation in the Oval Office."

These sorts of noxious views are a feature not a glitch for Donald Trump. Everything in his history as a candidate and as President screams for that conclusion. For every "bill of love" pronouncement Trump makes, there are double-digit times in which he has said things -- publicly and privately -- that any reasonable person would describe as racially tinged at best and flat-out racist at worst.

Let me remind you in case you have forgotten: This is the President of the United States we are talking about. The President of ALL 300 million people -- not just the ones who voted for Trump and who might respond well to his "shithole" comments. The President of a country literally built on the idea of a melting pot of immigrants.

The discussion of whether this will resonate with Trump's base then is deeply cynical and totally misses the point. There need to be things that are right and things that are wrong, things that we can all agree we should do or not do. Whether or not these things have some political resonance with some group of people is immaterial.

We are talking about the President of the United States here! Not some fringe talk radio host? Not some blogger. The single most powerful person in the country. The symbol of the United States to the rest of the world.

Whether or not you voted for Trump, whether or not you still support him, whether or not you think this "shithole" comment will land well with his base, you need to acknowledge that voicing views like these is simply wrong. It is, quite literally, anti-American. Period. Full Stop.



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