

Trump Puts Ilhan Omar at Risk: “To Protect Ilhan Omar is to Protect Us All”

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... we're the party of love, we're the party of compassion, we're the party of inclusiveness. What we are fighting for is not for the few, but for the many. Every single one, just this week, when we've had the attack in California on a synagogue, it's the same person who's accused of attempting to bomb a mosque. So I can't ever speak of Islamophobia and fight for Muslims, if I am not willing to fight against anti-Semitism. We collectively must make sure that we are dismantling all systems of oppression. – Rep. Ilhan Omar, Minnesota Democrat, April 30, 2019

Of the 435 members of Congress elected in 2018, Ilhan Omar won her race with more votes than 428 of her colleagues of both parties won theirs. She is a black woman born in Somalia, an immigrant, a Muslim, intelligent and outspoken. From her first moment in Congress, right-wing bigots have targeted her with whatever smear seemed useful. The most effective has been the bogus claim that she's anti-Semitic, rooted in imaginary evidence. Democrats failed to understand the fraud and still haven't rallied around a party member whose life has been endangered by the occupant of the White House. Media reports routinely include comments referring to the accusations of anti-Semitism as if they were real, giving continuing credence to political lies. All in all, it is a massive cluster-fiasco of incompetence and bad faith from a huge portion of the supposed “leadership” class in the US.

On April 30, Black Lives Matter organized a rally on Capitol Hill calling for “Hands Off Ilhan Omar.” More than a hundred African American women leaders in and out of Congress gathered in Omar's support, issuing a call to Congress to censure President Trump for endangering the life of a sitting member of Congress. There is no doubt that a Trump tweet on April 12 constituted reckless endangerment with an incendiary but false incitement against Ilhan Omar. The tweet sparked a sharp increase in death threats against the congresswoman by tying her to the collapse of the twin towers on 9/11, with no basis in fact.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET!

– [Tweet from Pres. Trump](#), 6:35 p.m., April 12, 2019, [accompanying a 43-second fraudulent attack video](#) dishonestly suggesting that Rep. Ilhan Omar was somehow accountable for the attacks of 9/11, a fascistic meme of Islamophobic demagoguery of the first order.

The 43-second video is a polished production, with the same manipulative slickness as the Nazi propaganda films of Leni Riefenstahl. This was more than just another apparently casual tweet from the White House. This tweet required production and planning. It was apparently inspired by an April 9 tweet from Rep. Dan Crenshaw, Texas Republican, who

once called for toning down political rhetoric. Crenshaw supports Trump's border wall, denies climate change, opposes any ban on assault weapons, and voted against the election reform act of 2019. His tweet about Rep. Omar used an out-of-context quote to create [a political lie based on a racist trope](#):

First Member of Congress to ever describe terrorists who killed thousands of Americans on 9/11 as "some people who did something".

Unbelievable. <https://t.co/IKtoZWWmIT>

— Dan Crenshaw (@DanCrenshawTX) [April 9, 2019](#)

Omar's choice of words is similar to [President Bush's language](#) in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and both require context to determine meaning. Crenshaw's policing of right-wing political correctness had its own problems, since he forwarded, without qualification, a tweet that called CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, "a terrorist organization" – another lie.

[Piling on in the endless demonization](#) of Ilhan Omar, GOP chairwoman Ronna McDaniel called on Democrats to enforce dishonest Republican perceptions. Well, Democrats had done it before, right?

Ilhan Omar isn't just anti-Semitic – she's anti-American.

Nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives to Islamic terrorists on 9/11, yet Omar diminishes it as: "Some people did something."

Democrat leaders need to condemn her brazen display of disrespect. pic.twitter.com/k3meEbUOAK

— Ronna McDaniel (@GOPChairwoman) [April 9, 2019](#)

The next day, Omar responded to Crenshaw:

This is dangerous incitement, given the death threats I face. I hope leaders of both parties will join me in condemning it.

My love and commitment to our country and that of my colleagues should never be in question. We are ALL Americans! pic.twitter.com/foTZMpiZKv

— Ilhan Omar (@IlhanMN) [April 10, 2019](#)

Two days later, the president raised the ante with his unconscionable 9/11 Big Lie. For the Democrats, whether they liked it or not, this was a moment of truth.

Establishment Democrats have failed dismally to react responsibly to the dishonest attacks on Ilhan Omar, mustering neither courage nor coherence in the face the latest form of McCarthyite bullying over the past four months. The president's over-the-top tweet using

9/11 as a bludgeon gave Democrats another chance to behave honorably. Some of the presidential candidates did, but the first response appears to have come from New York Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. [The Twitter date stamps are mysterious. There are two sets, an hour apart. I have followed the same sequence for all the tweets, so while the exact time may be wrong, the interval seems correct.]

Members of Congress have a duty to respond to the President's explicit attack today. [@IlhanMN](#)'s life is in danger. For our colleagues to be silent is to be complicit in the outright, dangerous targeting of a member of Congress.

We must speak out.

"First they came..." pic.twitter.com/ygOX1vhE9j

— Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@AOC) [April 12, 2019](#)

The first Democratic presidential candidate to respond was Bernie Sanders, with prompt and unambiguous support:

Ilhan Omar is a leader with strength and courage. She won't back down to Trump's racism and hate, and neither will we. The disgusting and dangerous attacks against her must end.

— Bernie Sanders (@BernieSanders) [April 13, 2019](#)

A few minutes later, Elizabeth Warren issued an even stronger condemnation, with a direct rebuke to the president and a direct challenge to her fellow elected officials:

The President is inciting violence against a sitting Congresswoman—and an entire group of Americans based on their religion. It's disgusting. It's shameful. And any elected leader who refuses to condemn it shares responsibility for it.

— Elizabeth Warren (@ewarren) [April 13, 2019](#)

As the evening wore on, [Gov. Jay Inslee tweeted](#) that Trump was jeopardizing Omar and all Muslims. Former congressman [Beto O'Rourke tweeted](#) that Trump's action was "incitement to violence" without mentioning Omar. [Mayor Pete Buttigieg's tweet](#) accused Trump of using 9/11 "to incite his base against a member of Congress, as if for sport," without mentioning Omar. [Senator Amy Klobuchar's tweet](#) tried to have it both ways, referring to an arrest for a threat on Omar's life but noting that she had disagreed with Omar before. And that was reportedly [all the significant Democratic response](#) to a president deliberately putting a congresswoman in the cross-hairs. The next day's responses were generally weaker or absent. There was no word of note from Speaker Nancy Pelosi or the rest of the House "leadership."

Since April 13, there has been no effort to censure the president for reckless endangerment of a Congress member's life. The president [committed this crime in plain sight](#) and House Democrats do nothing. By doing nothing, House Democrats signal that as far as they're

concerned, Ilhan Omar is fair game. Most of the presidential candidates are no better. This is shameful. My guess is that most Trump supporters look at Democrats with greater scorn than ever for their unwillingness to defend one of their own. As far as Ilhan Omar is concerned, most Democrats have acted and continue to act without principle, without courage, without integrity. This doesn't seem like a really great way to win an election in 2020. Standing up to bigots should be one of the easier things to do politically. If Democrats can't do that, what can they do?

It looks like the Democratic establishment has been doing things the Washington way for so long they can't see themselves clearly in the mirror anymore. No matter who Ilhan Omar truly is, no one has a right to lynch her, and those who stand by and watch the lynching happen are just despicable. Here's the way Ilhan Omar described herself to her supporters on April 30:

Here's the thing that really offends a lot of people and the reason that we are here. I was born—I was born as a very liberated human being, to a country that was colonized, that recognized that they can colonize the land but they can't colonize your mind, to people who recognized that all of us deserve dignity and that no human being was ever, ever going to tell you that you are less than them. Thirteen people organized for our independence in Somalia. So I was born in that breath of recognizing that they might be more powerful than you are, that they might have more technology than you have, they might think that they are wiser than you, they might control all of the institutions, but you control your mind, and that is what sets you free.

... the thing that upsets the occupant of the White House, his goons in the Republican Party, many of our colleagues in the Democratic Party, is that—is that they can't stand—they cannot stand that a refugee, a black woman, an immigrant, a Muslim, shows up in Congress thinking she's equal to them. But I say to them, "How else did you expect me to show up?"

... So, I know my place in this society. All of you know your place in this society. And it's one that is equal to every single person that walks in it.

Protecting Ilhan Omar should be a reflexive no brainer. Protecting Ilhan Omar is so obviously the right thing to do, it should come easily to anyone of conscience. This is not rocket science. This is not morally ambiguous. The Democratic Party doesn't seem to have a clue that it is in the midst of an existential litmus test. Does the Democratic Party actually stand for anything anymore? There's still time to figure it out, if they start soon. A good starting place would be to stop going for the bait of trolling Republican bigots. Is it some perverse political calculation that brings on timidity, silence, cowardice, a betrayal of the best American values to appease the values of the worst Americans? If the Democratic Party lacks the strength to defend and protect Ilhan Omar just because she's human, then all the talk of American values and freedoms and principles and "the soul of the nation" is just more political garbage.

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