

# The political strategy behind Trump's racist diatribe against Baltimore

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Donald Trump's racist diatribes against Democratic Congressman Elijah Cummings and the city of Baltimore mark a calculated escalation of his efforts to base his reelection campaign on the incitement of an openly fascist movement.

On Saturday, Trump tweeted that Cummings' district, which encompasses half of Baltimore City, is a "rat and rodent infested mess," a "disgusting & filthy place" and a "corrupt mess." He concluded, "No human being would want to live there."

On Sunday, Trump retweeted a statement from the fascist columnist of the UK *Sun* newspaper, Katie Hopkins, referring to Baltimore as a "sh\*thole," a reference to his previous statements denigrating African countries with the same insult. Hopkins is known for her vicious attacks on immigrants, including a statement in 2015 that "migrants are like cockroaches" and "are built to survive a nuclear bomb."

Trump's filthy rants follow his attacks on four Democratic congresswomen two weeks ago, during which he wrote that all four should "go back" to the "crime infested places from which they came." He declared that the congresswomen, all of whom are US citizens, "hate our Country" and support "terrorism." In April 2018, Trump denounced "sanctuary cities" in California for promoting a "ridiculous, crime infested & breeding concept."

Trump is not just talking. His latest statements take place as the administration is intensifying its attack on immigrants, threatening mass roundups throughout the country and confining thousands in concentration camps on the US-Mexico border.

Words have meaning and consequences. The denunciation of an American city and its citizens by a sitting president in such blatantly racist terms has no precedent in the history of the United States. Trump is

playing with fire, and he knows it. He and his advisers believe that his racist comments will not only encourage and rally his supporters on the far right. Trump also calculates that his blatant provocations will intensify an already unstable political environment, with an immense potential for violence, and create conditions that will enable him to invoke dictatorial powers to uphold "law and order."

The president also escalated his denunciation of socialist and "radical left" politics over the weekend. He tweeted Sunday morning that "Consideration is being given to declaring ANTIFA [antifascists], the gutless Radical Left Wack Jobs who go around hitting (only non-fighters) people over the heads with baseball bats, a major Organization of Terror (along with MS-13 & others). Would make it easier for police to do their job!" This means that the government is preparing direct measures to criminalize left-wing views.

Given the scale of the provocation, the response of the Democratic Party is a typically gutless combination of cowardice and evasion. While the Congressional testimony by former Special Counsel Robert Mueller last week was a debacle for the Democrats, this has not stopped them from intensifying their obsessive and neo-McCarthyite denunciations of "Russian meddling" and "foreign interference" in American politics.

The premise of the Democrats' narrative of a Russian plot is that the real threat to American democracy comes from the Kremlin, rather than the White House. Moreover, the Democrats' pretense of opposition to Trump is exposed by the fact that he can count in their support when he needs it.

The extent of agreement of all factions of the political establishment was expressed in the overwhelming passage last week by the House of Representatives of a budget bill backed by the Trump administration, which includes a record \$738 billion in military spending.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and one of the four Congresswomen targeted by Trump, voted for the bill.

At the same time, the campaign over “foreign interference” in US politics—of which no serious evidence has ever been presented—has been utilized to implement a regime of internet censorship and attacks on free speech. The Democrats have spearheaded the campaign against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for exposing the secrets of American imperialism while maintaining a complete silence on the fate of whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who remains in prison for refusing to testify against Assange.

The Democrats’ overriding concern is to block the development of any independent movement of the working class. The mass opposition to the Trump administration, expressed in the initial protests that erupted immediately after his inauguration, have been channeled behind the right-wing, militarist agenda of the Democratic Party.

As part of this effort, the Democrats, along with the organizations of the upper middle class that operate in and around the Democratic Party, work to cast all political issues in such a way as to magnify divisions along the lines of race, gender and sexual identity, not class. Through the relentless promotion of their own brand of racist and identity politics—according to which Trump is the spokesman of reactionary, white workers—the Democrats have provided Trump with the political framework for his fascist tirades.

To say who is “left” and who is “right” within the framework of the conflict within the state apparatus is politically meaningless. All factions want war, censorship, attacks on democratic rights, and the suppression of class struggle.

The Trump administration must be removed from office, but the question is how and by what methods. By now it should be clear that the policy of the Democrats has been aimed at keeping Trump in office. Even if they were to remove Trump through some sort of palace coup, it would leave the basic policy of the ruling class unaltered. The immediate consequence would be an escalation of war threats against Russia.

The urgent task of the working class is to break free of the political straitjacket of the two capitalist parties and intervene independently.

The fight against the Trump administration must be

developed as a mass movement from below. Opposition to the Trump administration’s fascist attack on immigrants and racist appeals must be connected to the great social questions that are motivating growing struggles of the working class internationally: the fight against inequality, attacks on jobs and wages, censorship, and war.

Any claim that such a perspective is unrealistic is refuted by developments in Puerto Rico, where mass protests forced the resignation of Governor Ricardo Rosselló. It is part of a growing wave of social unrest, including the yellow vest movement in France, the ongoing demonstrations in Hong Kong, and the mass protests in Algeria. While the eruption in Puerto Rico, independent of the establishment parties and trade unions, has succeeded in forcing out Rosselló, the social and political forces behind him—in Wall Street and in Washington—remain.

What the events in Puerto Rico demonstrate, however, is not only that a mass movement is possible, but it is the much more likely path of development.

The removal of governments will not come through the maneuvers in the political establishment but from the intervention of the working class. This requires new organizations of struggle. The Socialist Equality Party calls for the development of a network of popular workplace and neighborhood committees, independent of all political parties and trade unions, to link up every separate struggle in a common offensive against the capitalist ruling elite. This must be connected to a clear anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and socialist program.

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