

Trump bizarrely accuses television talk show host Joe Scarborough of 2001 murder

By David Walsh
28 May 2020

In a series of comments over the past several weeks on his Twitter account, President Donald Trump has accused a former Republican congressman from Florida and morning talk show host, Joe Scarborough, of possibly playing a role in the murder of a former staffer.

The unhinged tweets concern the July 2001 death of Lori Klausutis, 28, who fainted due to an undiagnosed heart condition and struck her head, according to the coroner. The death occurred in then-Rep. Scarborough's Fort Walton Beach, Florida, office. The Congressman was in Washington at the time.

On May 4, Trump suggested on Twitter that the media "should open up a long overdue Florida Cold Case against Psycho Joe Scarborough." Trump tweeted on May 12, "When will they open a Cold Case on the Psycho Joe Scarborough matter in Florida. Did he get away with murder? Some people think so. Why did he leave Congress so quietly and quickly? Isn't it obvious? What's happening now? A total nut job!"

Trump returned to the issue on May 23, tweeting, "A blow to her head? Body found under his desk? Left Congress suddenly? Big topic of discussion in Florida ... and, he's a Nut Job (with bad ratings). Keep digging, use forensic geniuses!"

He made similar stupid and scurrilous comments on May 24 and May 26.

Trump appears to be making an effort to whip up his base of support with these outlandish claims and divert attention from the horrible reality that 100,000 men and women have now died in the US from COVID-19, tens of thousands of them the result of his administration's neglect and indifference.

Scarborough was first elected from the Florida Panhandle to the House in the so-called Republican Revolution of 1994 and earned a reputation as a serious

reactionary. After being re-elected in 1996, 1998 and 2000, Scarborough announced in May 2001 he would be resigning from Congress in September of that year.

Various conspiracy theories in regard to Klausutis's death were floated by those who disliked Scarborough and his politics, including filmmaker Michael Moore and *Daily Kos* founder Markos Moulitsas. (Moore reportedly registered the domain name JoeScarboroughKilledHisIntern.com.) The reckless claim that Scarborough was engaged in an illicit relationship with Klausutis and perhaps murdered her to keep it quiet appears to have no factual basis, and was fueled in part by Scarborough's abrupt departure from Congress.

The circulation of such gossip by "left" forces only testifies to their intellectual and moral bankruptcy. Incapable of appealing to the working class on the basis of a coherent, socialist program, elements like Moore and others, in the name of a "more practical" means of ridding themselves of opponents, opt for scandal-mongering and similar methods. This encourages the most backward social layers and conceptions and, as the current controversy indicates, only assists ultra-right trash in the long run.

Since leaving Congress, Scarborough has made his name as a media figure, first on *Scarborough Country* on MSNBC, launched in 2003, and then, beginning in 2007, on *Morning Joe*, which he presently co-hosts, on the same cable television channel. His wife and co-host is Mika Brzezinski, the daughter of Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to President Jimmy Carter and prominent Cold War strategist.

In August 2016, in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post*, Scarborough argued that the Republican Party should "dump Donald Trump" as its presidential candidate. Scarborough suggested that

some of Trump's more incendiary comments about Hillary Clinton had crossed a "bloody line" and had "left the Republican Party few options but to act decisively and get this political train wreck off the tracks before something terrible happens."

Scarborough left the Republican Party in July 2017 to become an independent. In November 2017, Trump began attacking Scarborough and Brzezinski and first raised the Klausutis issue. Following NBC's *Today* show host Matt Lauer's dismissal in the #MeToo witch-hunt, Trump asked rhetorically whether the network would now "terminate low ratings Joe Scarborough based on the 'unsolved mystery' that took place in Florida years ago? Investigate!"

Scarborough and Brzezinski have been critical of Trump's handling of the coronavirus crisis. On March 9, for instance, on his television program, Scarborough commented that it was "sick, actually, very sick" that Trump was blaming the media for concerns about the coronavirus. Scarborough concluded, "The way the Trump administration has handled this has been disastrous."

On April 20, Scarborough asserted that Trump needed to stop doing his daily press briefings "not only for the safety and the health of the American people, but also for his own political fortunes, because every night he goes out and damages himself." Brzezinski added, "You see him get angry if anyone brings up facts that get in the way of him looking good." She added that Trump behaves "like a child" and "it's not good for him to show that to the American people."

The accumulated effect of such criticisms, under the present volatile conditions, apparently set off the new wave of psychopathic tweets and Trump's decision to resurrect the Klausutis issue.

Klausutis's widower, T. J. Klausutis, has protested against Trump's allegations. In a May 21 letter to Twitter president Jack Dorsey, Klausutis explained: "Nearly 19 years ago, my wife, who had an undiagnosed heart condition, fell and hit her head on her desk at work. She was found dead the next morning. ... Her passing is the single most painful thing that I have ever had to deal with in my 52 years and continues to haunt her parents and sister."

Klausutis took note of the "constant barrage of falsehoods, half-truths, innuendo and conspiracy theories since the day she died." Conspiracy theorists,

"including most recently the President of the United States, continue to spread their bile and misinformation on your platform disparaging the memory of my wife and our marriage." Trump, Klausutis pointed out, had recently "tweeted to his nearly 80 million followers alluding to the repeatedly debunked falsehood that my wife was murdered by her boss, former U.S. Rep. Joe Scarborough. The son of the president followed and more directly attacked my wife by tweeting to his followers as the means of spreading this vicious lie." He asked that Twitter delete Trump's comments.

Twitter has declined to remove the offending tweets. "We are deeply sorry about the pain these statements, and the attention they are drawing, are causing the family," Twitter told CNN Business. "We've been working to expand existing product features and policies so we can more effectively address things like this going forward, and we hope to have those changes in place shortly." Twitter did not indicate which "product features and policies" they had in mind, raising the possibility of further censorship, which would not, of course, be directed against Trump.

The *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post* and the *Washington Examiner*, all right-wing Trump allies, have criticized the president's disoriented actions, presumably nervous about their impact on the broader public. The *Journal* termed Trump's accusations against Scarborough "ugly even for him" and suggested he was "debasing his office, and he's hurting the country in doing so." Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming, daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, told reporters, "I would urge him to stop it," referring to Trump's tweeting about the Klausutis case. So far, Trump has shown no inclination to "stop it."

The entire business is another sign of the descent of the crisis-racked American ruling elite as a whole into chaos and filth.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>