

OPINION

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Rude Theatrics Targeting Black Reporters

Trump's racism by omission

BY CALEB GAYLE

April Ryan, White House correspondent for American Urban Radio Networks, and other journalists of color have not been favorites of President Donald Trump. From telling Ryan to set up a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus when she asked if he planned to meet with black members of Congress to calling her a loser, President Trump has displayed his contempt for Ryan.



In his post-midterm press conference, Ryan became the target of Trump's ire yet again. But this time what the President did was show more than displeasure with black female reporters — his theatrics overshadowed a key issue that Ryan was trying to address: voter suppression. While his rage, his diminishing of the credibility of these black, award-winning journalists, and his stupidity in calling their questions “racist” minimized what was actually happening: Trump was committing racism by omission.

Ryan's question was simple, “Mr. President, what about voter suppression?” She stood up after Trump acknowledged her question but was promptly told “sit down.” While pundits opined about Trump's mistreatment of black women journalists, many missed that Trump refused to answer the question about voter suppression, which is poisoning our democracy and disproportionately disenfranchising commu-

nities of color.

The reality is that suppressing votes has become a hallmark of most of the Republican electoral strategy. Their politicians refuse to engage with communities of color, and instead embark on strategies to diminish our power at the voting booth. We can all see it. But the President uses his bully pulpit to create distractions that shield scrutiny of this undemocratic tactic. Moreover, it allows him to avoid questions about the strategy that he has happily endorsed and enacted with the Republican Party.

As a reminder, Republicans have not been particularly shy about their voter

in the past few elections. In the run-up to the midterms, some 32 counties in Florida violated the law by not providing bilingual ballot assistance.

More egregiously, states like Kansas use the Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck (Crosscheck) to identify duplicative voter registrants across numerous combined voter rolls and subsequently purge those duplicates. Expanded under Kris Kobach — the outgoing Republican Secretary of State and failed gubernatorial candidate — Crosscheck, which had an error rate of 99.5 percent, uses a loose name matching that disproportionately targets

tionately affect black voters, limited access to offices to issue IDs in black areas, and more. Clarity around where to vote, how to vote, and eligibility to vote become even more significant when these impediments make voting disproportionately harder for black people. According to a study by the Public Religion Research Institute, “black (nine percent) and Hispanic (nine percent) Americans are three times more likely than white Americans (three percent)” to report complications with voting for them or someone in their household because of identification issues. In the same report, “black (15 percent) and Hispanic (14 percent) Americans were roughly three times more likely” to have trouble locating their correct polling place than white Americans (five percent).

As president of the United States, Trump had an opportunity to explain his views on voter suppression when Ryan asked her question. Because of his inconsistent application of the truth, one can expect the truth would be stretched or he would offer up unverifiable facts. Instead he exhibited the Trump brand of racism — racism by omission, refusing to acknowledge that voter suppression exists and is spreading across the land in states predominantly controlled by Republicans.

Voter suppression is a weighty issue, especially for African Americans, whose ancestors marched, protested and died for the right to vote. For President Trump, to simply dismiss voting suppression by assailing Ryan is a racist slight to all people of color, and our forefathers.

Caleb Gayle is the Emerging Voices Fellow at Demos, a national public policy and advocacy organization.

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suppression efforts. For example, Ben Nadler of the Associated Press broke news in October that in Georgia, approximately 53,000 voter registration applications were sitting on hold at the office of Brian Kemp, Georgia's Secretary of State and Republican nominee for governor. Nadler's team at the AP identified that most of these applications were those of black voters.

Voter purges are supposed to be used to eliminate people who become ineligible to vote usually because they move or because of a death or incarceration. But in some states like Ohio, voter purges have wrongfully removed people who have not voted

voters of color for purging. According to a study by the Brennan Center for Justice, “African-American, Asian-American, and Latino voters are much more likely than Caucasians to have one of the most common 100 last names in the United States.” According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 16.3 percent of Hispanic people and 13 percent of black people have one of the 10 most common surnames, compared to 4.5 percent of white people. An ongoing lawsuit on this is underway and being pursued by the advocacy group Demos.

And in states like Alabama, voters are up against photo ID laws, which dispro-

Making It My Business to Support Immigrants

Sown fears and racism breaks my heart

BY DREYA MOORE

Two years ago, I left a corporate job as a chemist and bought an artists' studio and gallery.



I'd just become a mother, and my corporate job was taking me away for some of my daughter's most important milestones. I was meeting with clients when she rolled over for the first time, crawled for the first time, and said her first words. This broke my heart.

The studio, which I co-own with my mother in Lancaster, Penn., has meant more time with family and the chance to be more involved with art — my own and

others'.

We've also made our studio a place for cultivating community. Here, we celebrate all the people who make up Lancaster. One of our exhibits shared #BlackGirlMagic, and another featured Latinx artists. In July, we held an exhibit called “Hex,” highlighting Amish artists. We want to make sure everyone's art is seen, and everyone feels welcome.

Our studio has also begun offering free art classes. Money shouldn't be an obstacle for people engaging with art, just like it shouldn't be an obstacle to education, food, or health care.

Knowing how important community has been to my business, my heart breaks when I see how much fear and racism is being sown by politicians who want to shrink our sense of community in-

stead of enriching it.

The news is flooded with stories about this, but a lot of it's happening behind the scenes. For example, the Trump administration is rewriting the rules to make it harder for people to become citizens. One idea they're proposing is a new wealth test for people seeking a green card, one of the first steps toward citizenship.

That test has an income threshold of almost \$63,000 a year for a family of four — a test that about a third of the U.S. population would fail. Are we all supposed to think we're not good enough to be U.S. citizens?

This test puts huge power in the hands of government officials to reject people for a green card, when already too many people are denied any chance to move toward citizenship.

This flies in the face of what we, the people, want. Poll after

poll shows that big majorities favor people being able to get citizenship and live with their families.

Making it worse, the administration say it's also going to count Medicaid and food stamps against people in the immigration process. Most people who are applying for their green cards aren't eligible for these important programs as it is. But the rules are complicated, and immigrants at all stages in the process are afraid of risking their chance at citizenship.

As a result, immigrant families will miss out on food and health care, whether they're citizens already or hoping to become citizens. We're already seeing stories of families walking away from essential assistance out of fear.

This new wealth test is a cruel maneuver to make our community and our country smaller instead of stronger. We shouldn't be a coun-

try that takes food and health from people — and denies them citizenship — because they aren't rich.

Immigrants have enriched our community. They've helped give new life to our downtown and neighborhoods. They've created new opportunities for learning and sharing. And they've brought vitality to our local economy, helping us keep more than a thousand manufacturing jobs local.

Leaders whose strongest message is division aren't real leaders. So, it's up to all of us to be leaders in our communities.

I try to do this in my business every day. Today I'm going to do it in one more way: by writing to the administration and telling them I'm against wealth tests and for immigrants in my community.

Drey Moore co-owns The Artist Studio & Gallery @ Annex 24 in Lancaster, Penn. Distributed by OtherWords.org.