



The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Strongly Condemns the Recent Statements of President Trump Telling U.S. Congresswomen to Leave the Country and “Go Back” to Their Countries

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by majority vote, strongly condemns statements by the President declaring that elected United States congresswomen should “go back” to countries they “originally came from,” notwithstanding that for all four congresswomen their country is in fact the United States. Such racist, nativist, and xenophobic statements undermine the equality principles to which this country aspires, instill and promote division and fear among Americans, and seek to denigrate some among us as less American than others.

Throughout the history of this country, racism and bigotry has often manifested itself in jingoistic sloganeering asking immigrants, or others regardless of citizenship or birthright, to “return home.” The Know Nothing Party – which began its life as the Native American Party – campaigned openly against Catholicism and advocated that Irish and German Catholics be returned to their “native” countries. Various movements in the 1800s sought to “resettle” freed African American enslaved people in West Africa, notwithstanding generations of living in the United States. Latin and Asian Americans have often been the recipients of slurs ending in “go back home.”

Particularly for many Americans whose roots, recent or deep, are not from white European ancestors, it has been an unfortunate truth that at some point in their lives someone – because of racism, bigotry, or ignorance – has told them to “go back home” to a country not of their birth, often not even of their ancestry, solely because someone does not like their skin color, their ethnicity, or their accent.

This claimed separation of true Americans from others is divisive, logically flawed, and undermines core American values. Americans—all of us – are at home here; none of us has someplace else we should go back to when we disagree with an elected leader and certainly no elected leader should suggest otherwise. Free speech, including the freedom to dissent, and the ability of all Americans to participate in a robust marketplace of ideas, are hallmark American ideals. In our democracy, the right of the legislative and executive branches, and individuals within each, to disagree, is a bedrock principle of the separation of powers enshrined in our Constitution. The Commission, which

Congress has for six decades charged to advise the President and Congress about status of civil rights, roundly condemns irresponsible rhetoric that castigates disagreement in a manner that renders Americans less safe and less welcome in their own country and divides this nation based on stereotyped attribution of values based on historic or recent national origin.

This Commission has already urged the Administration to increase hate crime enforcement to combat the rise of white nationalism. The President's recent comments only exacerbate the problem of white nationalism by normalizing one of their most racist tropes.

With this statement, the Commission uses our voice to reaffirm American values of inclusion and respect for dignity of all persons in our midst. We call on the President to use his platform likewise to lead, rather than to tear down, this country.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information, visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).