

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

Which Statement Is Racist?

Racism: "A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior..." from dictionary.com

Marco Rubio was my candidate. Donald Trump was not my first choice. Nevertheless, I can't help but point out a double standard in the way Trump is treated. Here's an example.

Federal District Court Judge Gonzalo Curiel is assigned a case against now defunct Trump University. In response to an adverse decision by Judge Curiel, Trump criticized the judge.

Trump called Judge Curiel "a Trump-hater." He suggested that the judge could not be fair to him because "he is a Mexican." Judge Curiel is a U.S. citizen, born in the United States. His parents had emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico. Ethnically, he's Hispanic.

When questioned, Trump offered some reasoning behind his criticism. He pointed out that "I'm building a wall." Presumably, this would be objectionable to Hispanics, and would play a part in Judge Curiel's alleged unfairness. In fact, Trump's poor poll numbers among Hispanics suggest that many Hispanics might be disposed against him.

Trump's statement drew a firestorm of criticism from all quarters. It was widely denounced. Republicans did not step forward to support or defend Trump's allegation of unfairness. Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, called Trump's statement "the textbook definition of a racist comment." One Republican Senator actually withdrew his previous endorsement of Trump. On this issue, Trump couldn't find a friend.

Trump had declared that a Hispanic judge's ethnicity could influence his decision making. For this he was widely scorned and called a racist.

In May 2009, President Obama nominated Appellate Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court. At her confirmation hearing in the U.S. Senate, Justice Sotomayor offered the following for the Senators' consideration:

"I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences

would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."

Doesn't that sentence perfectly meet the dictionary.com definition of racism? Doesn't it in fact qualify as what Ryan called "the textbook definition of a racist comment"?

That sentence, or some variation of it, showed up in several speeches Justice Sotomayor had made previously.

So in Justice Sotomayor's view, a Hispanic judge's ethnicity could influence his or her decision making. In spite of this sentiment (or because of it?), she was confirmed with bi-partisan support to fill the U.S. Supreme Court vacancy.

I do not offer any opinion here regarding the role ethnicity plays in the decision-making by Federal judges---and I hope it plays zero. I only point out the obvious double standard. Trump was vilified for saying ethnicity played a role. Sotomayor was elevated to the U. S. Supreme Court for saying ethnicity played a role.

So apparently spoken words might be offensive and racist or might not. It just depends who spoke them.